PERFECTION VS. SUCCESS?
Thoughts on the Perfect SAP Project!

In our April Titan News, we published an article "The Perfect SAP Project." We discussed the rarity of those "Perfect Projects" as well as key components.

A day after publishing, I received the following email from a long-time associate of ours, Andy J. Huerta.

I just read your article on the "Perfect ERP Project." I think the article emphasizes a topic that is a fallacy as there isn't a "perfect" project, ERP or not. I think you're setting yourself up for failure if perfection is your end objective.

That being said, I am an SAP professional with 22 years of experience, and I have been on several ERP projects that I consider very successful. The one that stands out the most is the very first one I participated in while I was at Pentax in 1994 (release 2.1c). This particular project was one of the first successful SAP implementations in North America. That is, we unplugged the old mainframe driven COBOL code system and plugged-in SAP... and it w as implemented in six months by a team of IT professionals that learned to spell SAP in January of 1994.

As I think back, I can think of two things that made this project successful. First, the 'Keep It Simple Stupid' principle was applied. We implemented base SAP configuration (SD, MM/WM, FI-CO, and PP). Our focus was on the 80%, and our strategy was to adjust our business processes around the SAP solutions as much as possible.

Second, we had upper management's support to say "no." When user requirements deviated from base SAP (after review and consideration) we were empowered to push back on the users as we had a hard deadline that was not allowed to waiver.

So, was the project "perfect"? It depends on your definition. The users didn't get everything they wanted. But we were live, taking and shipping orders, invoicing and collecting money. We addressed the remaining 20% after the go-live. It was a very successful project if not perfect.

Andy addressed some key points and hit on a central theme. Perfection and Success aren't always the same. Many successful projects weren't perfect. Most projects have major bumps in the road, but with the commitment of the team AND management, they overcome them. To attain a successful project, you must have some key components – the same elements of a "perfect project" – and ensure that you are aligned with all stakeholders.

- Commitment of the Team
- Support of Management
- Good Communication with the End Users

It reminds me of how we coach our boys to hit a baseball. The goal of the batter each time is a perfect hit. That takes preparation on his part: batting practice, watching the pitcher before stepping into the box, communicating with the coaches on game awareness.

Does he ever get a perfect hit? We prefer that he be successful and keeps the ball in play. We define success in many ways. A ground ball to the right side of the diamond with runners on 2nd and 3rd could score the winning run. We would gladly accept a line drive to the gap or a sacrifice fly.

However, just as in an SAP project, success is preceded by preparation for perfection.

We appreciate Andy's insight and feedback on our article and welcome your comments on how you have successfully managed your projects or challenges that you seek to overcome. Contact Warren Norris, warren@titanconsulting.net; or call him at 972.679.5183. You can also contact your Titan Sales Director as well.