

ISD Critical Success Factors

Respondents were asked to identify two key critical success factors that contributed most to the success of their ISD initiatives. A content analysis of their responses revealed eight themes:

1. Leadership
2. Governance and Accountability
3. Partnerships – Relationship Management
4. Citizen-Centred
5. Culture
6. Demonstrating Value
7. Marketing / Communication Campaign
8. Technology
9. Buy-in

The following is a summary of what were noted to be critical success factors organised according to the above themes. In parentheses are the number of case studies in which these themes were cited.

Critical Success Factor: Leadership (11)

Passionate champions and visible leaders

Over half of all case studies identified leadership as a factor critical to the success of their ISD initiative. It was recognised that leadership needs to be provided by champions who are passionate about and committed to the project at all levels of the organisation. Champions at the senior level are required who are willing to make the ISD partnership a priority at the working level.

What was also found to be key is the visible, ongoing leadership provided by senior level management. For example, a proven success factor for the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal were the leaders who provided clear direction throughout the project and created enthusiastic champions at all levels of the organisation. Communication, in addition to visible, ongoing leadership, is also a significant factor. According to the executive director of Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services, at the early stages of transition senior leadership took action to get to know each other and to understand the challenges of frontline staff. This provided the opportunity to open communication

“The CSIO needs to develop a critical mass of ISD champions within government (who) will actively support and encourage new ISD projects within and across ministries.”

between senior management and frontline staff, in turn achieving greater co-operation and input from staff.

Senior executive support is key

Furthermore, BC's Service Delivery Project (SDP) was initiated in the Premier's office and therefore benefited from senior executive leadership and support. This support was demonstrated in several ways. First, either the Deputy or Assistant Deputy visited each of the pilot communities to communicate the government's commitment to the project. The senior executives from the SDP Working Group then "sponsored" one or more communities, thereby providing a more focused level of support. In addition, executives, acting as the communities' point of contact in Victoria, responded to the communities' questions or found solutions to their issues.

Respondents described leaders as enthusiastic and passionate individuals who understand the challenges of front-line staff and who have the ability to act as effective change catalysts. Resistance to change can be a challenge in implementing ISD initiatives and, as Victoria Connects has found, strong leaders committed to integration is an important component in resolving such issues.

Critical Success Factor: Governance and Accountability (7)

Forming successful partnerships is an integral component of ISD initiatives. However, since governments have a long tradition of operating in silo structures, partners come to the table with firmly entrenched accountability¹ frameworks and governance² models. When initiatives cross the traditional boundaries of ministry, jurisdiction or sector, it is critical that partners clarify their roles and responsibilities³ early within their relationship.

¹ Can be defined as the obligation to answer for results and the manner in which responsibilities are discharged. This includes accepting the consequence if goals are not met. Accountability cannot be delegated. It is important to distinguish between the external accountability of Ministers to the public, and the internal accountability of partners to each other.

² Can be defined as the processes through which individuals and groups exercise influence and authority in decision-making and implementation. Who participates, and how.

³ Can be defined as the obligation to assume a role or take specific action(s). Responsibility can be delegated or conferred by mutual agreement depending on the relationship.

If governance and accountability are not established or remain unclear from the outset of the partnership, organisational politics and redundancies have the potential to flourish, performance can suffer and “turf wars” can surface. These problems often emerge as a result of interrelated accountabilities, and stem from such challenges as:

- The matrix of accountability patterns – horizontal and vertical
- A lack of clarity around “who is accountable for what”
- Uncertainty about the new roles created within the ISD initiative
- Structures and processes as well as leadership and vision

The Canadian Centre for Management Development points out that often what appear to be accountability barriers are in fact rules and procedures required by individual departments. The make-or-break variable is not the requirement for accountability but the way accountability is managed.⁴

To ensure a successful partnership discussion and negotiation regarding governance and accountability should take place at a senior level at the outset of the relationship and should include such topics as:

- Steering committees
- Decision-making protocols
- Change management processes
- Issues management processes
- Information sharing protocols
- Implications of not meeting commitments
- Timelines for securing approvals
- Performance review and monitoring
- Balanced expectations and capacities
- Authorities⁵

Linked to accountability and governance are strong project management practices. Service Yukon found that clearly articulated mission, goals and strategy helped keep partners focused on the project. Alberta Government Services also noted that the establishment of a “project charter with agreed program objectives, project scope and deliverables” collaboratively with

⁴ Hopkins, 2001

⁵ Can be defined as the legitimate power to make decisions or take action. Authority can be delegated.

all partners (provincial, municipal and private sector) was a key success factor for their project.

Critical Success Factor: Partnerships (6)

Six of the case studies attributed much of their ISD initiative's success to their partnerships with other organisations. Key to building a strong partnership is relationship management.

Nurturing the partner relationship

Efforts towards managing the relationship amongst all partners must be an ongoing focus throughout the partnership. Effective communication, a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, and a collaborative method of resolving issues were among the factors cited as key to a successful partnership. A partnership also depends on a basic assumption that all partners have a valuable contribution to make to the goals of the project. Larger partners should not assume that their point of view amalgamates that of all other participants.⁶ To sustain their relationship with their partners the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal found that holding regular meetings with their partners assisted with successfully defining all aspects of the transition to integrated service delivery. Furthermore, relationships are dynamic; thus, the details of any agreements should evolve based on the changing needs of those involved.

“There is a shared culture of co-operation and commitment to continuous improvement by each of the stakeholders.”

Critical Success Factor: Citizen-Centred (5)

Consultation: Know your customers

The fourth most commonly identified theme of success factors is the ability of the organisation to be citizen-centred. To be a citizen-centred organisation, the focus must be on the customers, on their needs and on meeting their expectations. In order to achieve this, the organisation should consult the customers and other key stakeholders on an ongoing basis. It should be remembered that, as Service Manitoba noted, efforts to consult must be genuine; in other words, if organisations engage customers and other stakeholders in consultation they must be serious about taking comments received under consideration.

“Consult key stakeholders / users in order to ensure that technology solutions provide benefits and meet user needs, it is necessary to consult your target user markets.”

Ongoing consultation has also proven to be a factor of success. From the onset Service Alberta has based their vision on

⁶ Rounce, 2002

feedback from citizens. Consultation with citizens conducted through focus groups and surveys during two consecutive summers (2001 and 2002), assisted Service Alberta, for example, with successfully developing and organising their website.

Alberta Revenue also found that it is necessary to consult their target user market to ensure success of their ISD initiative. In doing so, the organisation is designing their initiative, *Net File*, to provide technological solutions that meet users needs.

A common commitment to being citizen-centred

The extent to which an organisation is citizen-centred is influenced by the other partners of the project, therefore, it is important that all partners are committed to the same definition of customer service and the same common desire to increase customer service. Sustaining the knowledge amongst all partners that the initiative is being undertaken for the public good made it easier, as Service Manitoba has experienced, to continue when the work gets frustrating.

Critical Success Factor: Culture (4) and Demonstrating Value (4)

Culture

Culture, in relation to critical success factors, refers to both intra- and inter-organisational culture. Intra-organisational culture involves human resource issues internal to the organisation. Internally, a culture of growth and service improvement needs to be cultivated amongst the staff. This has been achieved by the various organisations through staff consultation and staff training. Appropriate staff training was found to be an important component that enabled the effective translation of customer service policy into customer service practice.

Inter-organisational culture in this context concerns the culture that is developed between organisations through partnerships. Respondents noted the importance of the partners developing a shared purpose or vision. To be successful, these common goals should be developed collaboratively by all partners, thus creating a common working culture amongst all partners.

Demonstrating Value

The incremental approach was commonly used to demonstrate the value of ISD initiatives. The incremental approach is the implementation of initiatives on a smaller scale in the form of a pilot or “one-off” project. This approach allowed organisations to “watch and learn what other provinces were doing and incorporate best practices into their own model”.

Organisations, by demonstrating value of their ISD initiatives and thus their own ability to achieve tangible results, found themselves in a stronger position to move forward with new goals and objectives. In addition, organisations that communicated positive customer satisfaction and initiated dialogue amongst the parties found that they were able to build confidence and trust amongst their stakeholders in their initiative.

Critical Success Factor: Marketing / Communication Campaign (2)

A marketing / communication campaign is closely related to the previous theme as it is one method of demonstrating value of ISD initiatives. A key factor of success is the implementation of a dedicated marketing campaign to communicate the ISD initiative. Successful marketing tools include the Internet, newspaper, posters, postcards, and presence at career and trade fairs.

Critical Success Factor: Technology (1) and Buy-in (1)

Technology

The information technology structure refers to the technology and support system that is essential to a project, therefore, a key success factor is ensuring sufficient investment is allocated towards the technological aspect of the project.

Buy-in

Buy-in from all stakeholders particularly from politically linked stakeholders and senior level bureaucrats has been found to accelerate ISD buy-in from all levels of government. Senior level bureaucratic buy-in is linked intrinsically to whether support is attained from political stakeholders. A project, to be successful, requires buy-in from senior bureaucrats across government who

will then actively promote the ISD initiative within their own organisation.