

# **Getting to 'Good to Go'**

by

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## Executive overview

### Introduction

You've spent months crafting and delivering communications to raise awareness, build understanding and obtain buy-in. For weeks you've been out on the road meeting with managers, supervisors and other key business owners. Their understanding and support for the upcoming changes assures you that they're on-board, good to go and the forthcoming implementation is headed for success. But can you really know?

Don't take a leap of faith when it comes to delivering change. In this paper I share the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to implementing new business processes and systems to a busy workforce focused on field operations. You'll learn how our bumps and bruises lead to a unique sponsorship strategy that includes measurements to ensure that leaders are engaged, taking an active role in leading change, and that their employees understand exactly what's expected of them before they show up for training.

### Key Learning Points

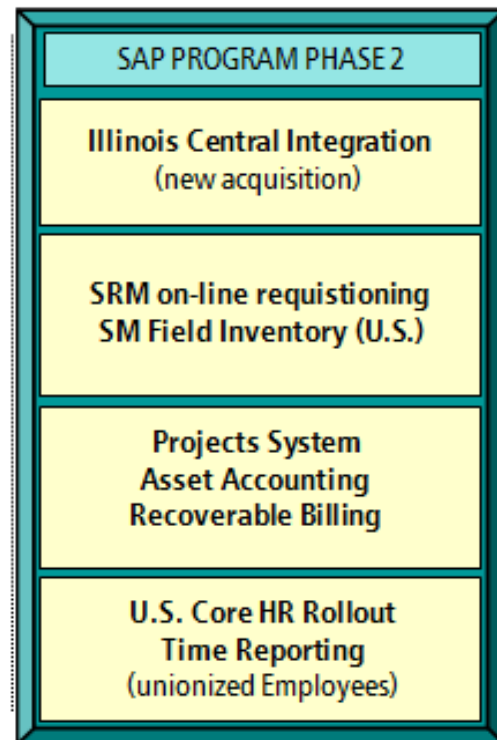
1. Demonstrating visible commitment from the top: if you don't have it, you're sunk before you start.
2. Validating local engagement: the key to a smooth and successful implementation.
3. Delivering effective change management and communication: you can't have one without the other.

### An Unexpected Surprise

The elevators doors opened, and I was greeted with a splash of purple and green balloons floating above a large "Congratulations!" banner strung across the wall. The mood was festive across all three floors of our headquarters building that the SAP project team occupied: last night's cut-over went exactly as planned and we were now live with phase two of our corporate SAP implementation.

Sixteen months earlier, we delivered phase one of our first SAP project to 2,500 employees whose work involved materials management, procurement to payment processes, the company's general ledger and financial reporting processes, along with employee master data and gross to net payroll for some 4,000 non-unionized employees. It was an outstanding success by all measures, exceeding even the most cautious expectations.

In addition to adding SAP Supplier Relationship Manager (SRM) on-line requisitioning processes, SAP timesheet and HR master data for 18,000 or so unionized employees, the second phase also included smaller releases such as project systems, asset accounting and recoverable billing functionality. Added to that was the integration the newly acquired Illinois Central Railroad which included bringing some 2,800 new employees into the fold.



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↑  
4,800 users  
Canada & U.S.

Using the same strategy as phase one of the project, the project team was confident that this phase would be equally - if not more successful, given the growing experience and expertise within the group.

Last night's flawless cut-over was a reassuring indication that we were off to a good start and the team was buzzing with excitement.

And then it started. At first the noise appeared to reflect the normal transition pains expected with a large-scale implementation. After all, we were introducing new systems and technology, and asking a whole lot of employees across Canada and the U.S. to work differently.

Within ten days, however, we had a full blown crisis on our hands as managers and employees scrambled to enter time so 18,000 unionized employees would get paid as planned. Added to that was the confusion and slow down in acquiring goods and materials using the new on-line system, and people trying to understand who does what in this new environment.

Managers, supervisors and employees from coast-to-coast, in two countries, were rebelling and expressing their unhappiness in a not-so-subtle way.

How could this happen? We stuck to our tried and true deployment recipe, completed readiness assessments, and personally reached out to all areas and individual managers. We were personally assured that they were ready to go. What happened, what was going on out there, and how do we fix it?

With the project team already ramping up for an SAP upgrade and starting work on phase three, our biggest and most complex phase to come, this was an unexpected and very unwelcome surprise.

### ***Getting to the Bottom of Things***

Within days, a small team was mobilized to go out into the field to find answers and get a better understanding of where all the noise was coming from and why.

After meeting with dozens of senior managers, front-line supervisors and employees across Canada and the U.S., listening to their gripes, frustration, belly aches and legitimate concerns, the team began getting a clear picture of what was going on, and how things got off-track.

They determined that the system was stable and that more than 75% of the noise and resistance was related to people and their understanding of new business processes and policies.

Another 15% of issues were related to finding help and support (users wanted a single source for all help, regardless if it was process, policy or technology related); while the remaining 10% was normal technical/functional data issues related with major implementations.

This confirmed that the technical implementation was a success, but that our problems lay squarely with people and their awareness and understanding of process and systems.

### ***Examples of the findings:***

**Process Related:** approving time; cross charging, the need for timely staff actions and time entry; and understanding processes for a large segment of employees who need to continue entering time in a legacy system.

**Policy:** SAP role-base security; clarifying the roles between corporate HR, our Disbursement Management Centre (DMC) and HR reps in the field.

**Support:** Understanding the support organization (DMC vs. Help Desk); slow handling of exceptions (Help Desk); DMC/Help Desk lacking knowledge to provide support; resources constrained in the payroll area; and field employees needing additional training.

**Technical and Functional Data:** Field staff needed custom work schedules created in SAP timesheet, a payroll listings report, remote access to SAP, configuration to handle exceptions for work schedules, stat holidays and vacation time.

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With 4,800 employees currently using SAP, an additional 4,200 users planned for the upcoming phase (primarily in field operations), and an upgrade in between, the team had its work cut out to smooth the waters and prepare for the next big wave.

The first priority was to quickly address current concerns - so employees could get back to business as usual. Second was to rebuild trust and establish credibility. With even more change coming in the next phase, we had to get the business prepared. There was no choice and we only had one chance to do it right.

### ***The “Reach Out/Roll Out” Team***

A task force was established to continue resolving existing issues while paving the way for the changes ahead. This ‘business engagement’ strategy included:

- creating five field-based positions to provide local support and training for the next 3-6 months;
- providing core team subject matter experts to deliver two weeks of additional coaching to DMC staff to escalate their learning curve; and
- conducting face-to-face meetings at the zone superintendent level to gather more feedback on phase two issues, review upgrade requirements, and provide an overview of phase three.

An additional position was also established within the Change Management Team to work exclusively on obtaining closure of all outstanding issues and communicating information back to the field regarding resolution.

The project vice-president also committed to attending each division's cabinet meeting to review and discuss CN's SAP project, and also made himself available to answer and address all concerns.

### ***Ensuring History Doesn't Repeat***

Trying to understand why our approach worked so well in phase one, yet failed so miserably in phase two quickly became very clear. The answer was found in the profile of our target audience.

Phase one primarily touched employees in our administrative and support functions who were eager to see improvements, readily available for training, and had close and regular contact with their managers and supervisors. Because they were primarily ‘back office’ employees in headquarters, many were part of the project team or had regular contact with members of the project team. Phase two, on the other hand, primarily affected front line operations employees who were much more focused on running train operations, and less concerned with the administrative side of the business and completing those types of tasks.

Another key implication was the amount of work SAP pushed out into the field. While capturing data entry and other administrative work at source (i.e. field) was good for CN's overall efficiency and profitability, it added new work, extra steps and more visibility in the field. While the messages got out, field managers weren't quite prepared for the implication of what that really meant.

Since operations employees have many competing demands, communications from managers didn't always reach lower levels. Nor did supervisors take the time needed to really examine the custom training plans prepared for their areas prior to signing off. As a result, many employees showed up for training without a clear understanding of what to expect. In some cases, they didn't even need to be there.

In response to these findings, we adjusted our phase three readiness assessment strategy to include more checks and balances to ensure employees at all levels and in all areas were ready for the implementation. A number of more disciplined activities were conducted prior to local go-live dates as follows:

**Change discussion guides:**

To help employees better understand upcoming changes, along with the timing and business reasons, brief PowerPoint decks with speaking notes were prepared to support supervisors in their discussions with employees. Content included what was happening, why and reiterated specific behavior changes that needed to happen at go-live along. Management's expectations were also clearly outlined.

The change discussions guides were distributed one month prior to training and scheduled go-live in each area.

**Business readiness measures:**

About two weeks after the Change Discussion guides were distributed (and about two weeks prior to training), the team conducted audits to assess employees' understanding of key changes within each supervisor's territory. In addition to gauging employee awareness and understanding, this also helped confirm whether the meetings even took place.

The audits were coordinated with local management and involved a random sample of employees using a brief survey consisting of 3-6 yes/no questions. This helped determine employees' awareness and understanding of their new roles, changes in process, and indicated whether they felt the changes were beneficial to their group.

Once data was collected and summarized, we shared the results with the divisional VPs and each manager/supervisor indicating whether follow-up action is needed to ensure success.

**Post-training assessment of capability and accountability:**

At the end of training, individuals were also asked if they felt confident that they had acquired the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform in the new environment. This included asking if they believed their new responsibilities were important to their managers and would help

them perform their jobs better. Feedback was again shared with the business sponsor closest to the audience assessed.

Training material was also tested by users prior to go-live to ensure it adequately met their needs, was simple to follow and easy to find for ongoing support.

**Conclusion: Good to Go**

This revised approach with more formal audits and measures, helps validate that managers and supervisors in the field are really engaged and visibly demonstrating their support among employees (rather than verbally assuring the project team that they are good to go). It brings visibility into each area and ensures key business owners take the time and effort required to prepare their employees for training and upcoming changes. It also helps ensure that employees understand what they can expect in the weeks ahead and what's expected of them moving forward.

In some implementations (high risk or high change), we work with senior managers to incorporate metrics for a successful go-live within the frontline supervisor's annual performance scorecards. This helps keep the right focus.

From the employee's perspective, they now understand exactly what they can expect in the weeks ahead as the company prepared for go-live, and what is expected from them in terms of behavior changes after go-live. And they hear from the people they trust most – their direct supervisor.

This “no surprise” approach to getting to ‘Good to go’ continues to serve us well and is incorporated as a best practice model across many project implementations.

## Change Discussion Guide Sample

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### SAP for Signals & Communications

SAP GLT Integration

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**What do you need to do differently after training?**

- Use the portable pc (SETS) to maintain up-to-date status of all equipment at each signal location
- Use SETS to identify specific locations affected by service bulletins. Close Service bulletins in the system by the required completion dates
- Perform & report completion of regulatory testing in a timely manner using SETS;
- Report all Time Distribution using the telephone (NLU) or directly into SAP ;
- Requisition materials through SAP ePro Buyer.

**Benefits for Signals & Communications field personnel include:**

- Maintainer and Testmen will no longer have to create and maintain paper Inspection and Test Records
- Service bulletins will be displayed on SETS for ONLY the applicable defective equipment. The Maintainer will no longer need to check every site and all equipment.
- Assignment of inspections and tests required for each signal location and specific equipment will be automatic via SETS.
- SAP reporting will allow the user to view outstanding test and inspection workload and plan their daily work activities better.
- SETS units with integrated bar codes reader and their mobility will simplify the asset management process permitting users to retrieve and change equipment / test records quickly.

**Benefits can only be realized once all equipment is identified in the system**



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## Survey Sample

In this case, 13 audiences fell below the desired threshold (70%) for levels of awareness and/or accountability. The team recommended follow-up action by the appropriate business sponsor.

Area	Audience	% of individuals indicating awareness of specific expectations	% of individuals indicating belief that changes are important to managers
<b>Prairie</b>	Freight Car Lead Hands/Billers - Symington	68%	68%
	Freight Car Lead Hands and Billers - Lakehead	19%	19%
	Work Equipment Maintenance Mechanics	67%	67%
	Track Supervisors – Manitoba	31%	31%
	Field Specialists	63%	60%
<b>Eastern</b>	RTC Montreal	67%	67%
	Track Supervisors – Atlantic	40%	40%
<b>Midwest</b>	Work Equipment Field Maintenance Supervisors	100%	50%
	RTC Troy	0%	0%
	Work Equipment Maintenance Mechanics	87%	67%
<b>Pacific</b>	S&C Maintainers and Testmen – Edmonton	58%	52%
	S&C Maintainers and Testmen – Vancouver	38%	32%
	S&C Maintainers and Testmen – Engineering	52%	51%

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### **Lessons Learned – Communications**

Emphasis on customization and validating face-to-face delivery from managers/supervisor:

Phase Two	Phase Three Response	Challenges
Face-to-face primary vehicle - didn't work as well as P1 - large operations audience with competing demands (messages didn't reach lower levels).	Change team assigned to key business areas - accountable for working with local managers to get buy-in and deliver key messages.	More resources required.
No common understanding of big picture "Why are we doing this?"	Equip managers to better communicate job impact/expectations.	Commitment from mgrs to demonstrate support.
All emails short/concise and targeted only to those needing to see.	Target more specific communications to key audiences (i.e. front-line supervisors).	Time & resources for customization.
Message strategy good for most - fell short of preparing users for impact of change.	Conduct audits/focus groups to check 'pulse' of user community. Adjust effort as required.	Time/resources and business participation.

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### **Lessons Learned – Training**

Emphasis on validating requirements and testing materials with users prior to delivery:

Phase Two	Phase Three Response	Challenges
Several job aids created, but not all were validated – didn't meet all needs.	Business reps and master trainers to sign-off all training material.	Commitment from business for process sign-off and resources. Ongoing maintenance of job aids.
Some trainers felt unprepared with two weeks of train-the-trainer.	Trainers brought on board earlier and more emphasis on dry runs/practice.	Requires more business resources with good training/process skills
Stabilization was a long process and not all players fully on-board prior to go-live.	Business power users/trainers given responsibility for ongoing support. Other groups brought onboard well before go-live (Help Desk, CoE).	Commitment and support from business for resources.
Many CBTs and iTutor lessons developed were not used.	On-line job aids created for user support with paper copies printed as needed.	Ensure easy access and encourage users to use on-line help (used extensively in classroom training).
Training material development late resulting distribution delays.	Closely monitor development with aid of database. New supplier better equipped to handle volume.	Continuous monitoring with supplier and with field trainers.

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