

# Success by saying no

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A few years ago we were approached by a customer. To support its business (where maintenance was an important part of) they made use of an Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) system, which contained many customisations. That system was in service for about 6 years. The failure frequency and costs of failure of the system began to increase. The vendor of the EAM system periodically provided patches and new releases of the system, which however could not be implemented due to the customisations in the system. Due to the processes were continuously improved, the system and the actual processes differed because it was not able to adjust the system to the processes. Also, the system required a lot of maintenance and support. We will write a column on the analysis of the failure frequency and failure cost later. The result of this analysis was that it was decided to introduce a new system. Previously, we described reasons for the failure of projects<sup>1</sup>. That column mainly describes failure factors. In this column we now discuss the success factors of the implementation of the new system.

We can learn from these success factors and these can also be applied to asset management projects, because the project was on time and within budget. This is fairly unique for an information technology project with a budget of more than 1 million Euros.

The relative company had a director who was very clear in what he wanted and what he did not want. The latter included customisations. In addition, he could well say 'no', with a motivation. After the director had decided to replace the Enterprise Asset Management system and a software selection was carried out, he appointed an employee who could oversee the maintenance profession. The director granted that employee (the 'business representative') authority to decide on functionality. In addition, an experienced project manager was appointed as well, who has successfully implemented information technology systems. The director gave the project manager a very strict budget as target. Both the business representative and the project manager could also very well say 'no'.

The director stated as a requirement that he wanted to decide on every customisation himself. Employees asked for more than 50 customisations. The business representative was able to say 'no' to almost all of them including a reason, except for two. So with these two, users went to the director, who also said 'no' with solid reasons and took efficiency losses for granted.

In the project focus prevailed. The goal was clearly kept in mind and scope changes were not accepted. Everyone was very much aware that the schedule was not the bottleneck, but what could be done in the available time and budget.

If there were issues, the business representative could immediately set priorities and make a decision. This happened every morning in a 'gatekeeping' meeting, as is often done in a maintenance organisation. So the project could stay up to speed. Because the business representative and the project manager formed a real team, they were not set up against each other by people who had a change request. 'No customization = no customization' was the motto for both. The scope was well defined, and additional wish lists were not accepted.

The project team consisted of people from different parts of the organisation (e.g. maintenance execution, shift, asset management, finance, purchasing, warehouse management) but also the EAM supplier and external consultants were involved. The project manager steered on achieving a strong relationship between the project staff. Not only product but also relationship oriented management gave involvement. And if annoying meetings had to be held, it was also done.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.assetresolutions.nl/en/column/successfully-work-on-a-client-vendor-relationship>

With the introduction of the new system major steps were made. There were no major issues after the Go-live. In the preparation another project was already conducted to define the data management process and improve the data quality with automated scripts which cost relatively little effort<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the intended goals of reducing the maintenance and support costs were achieved.

With the introduction of automated asset management systems, but also with the introduction of PAS55 for example, organisations can learn from the above. Have focus. Better have a system, in which 50% of the functionality is really used, than to aim for a 100% solution that is never reached<sup>3</sup>. Because before you have achieved the 100% solution of the latter case, the environment already changed so you never reach that ideal situation. It is also clear that an enforced maximum budget is a very good tool for scope stability, with the precondition that the project management staff keeps the back straight. In every complex project (to which asset management projects belong) something goes wrong. Discuss it and find out what the real cause is.

Finally, we return to the EAM implementation. Were there no negative points to mention? Yes, there were. First there was a lightning strike to the office where the project team worked during the Go-live. This caused the fire alarm to go off and it did not switch off anymore. So the project team had to wait for over an hour wait before the situation was again released. Fortunately the lightning rod worked fine.

A second point occurred during the final project dinner, in which was celebrated that the project was on time and within budget. An offender attacked an elderly man in front of the restaurant. Brave project members overpowered the offender and kept the man in control during half an hour, after which the person was handed over to the police. This could be read in the newspaper. So you see, every successful project has its 'success story'. What will your success story be?

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V**

**GEERTRUIDENBERG**

**Dronken man gooit  
met fietsen op Markt**

Een 25-jarige man uit Raamsdonks-  
veer is maandagavond aangehou-  
den op de Markt in Geertruiden-  
berg. Een dronken man gooide met  
fietsen en schopte tegen passerende  
de auto's. Een 78-jarige man deed  
aangifte omdat de man tegen het  
mandje van zijn scootmobiel trap-  
te. Klanten van een restaurant  
brachten de man onder controle.  
De verdachte zit vast op bureau.

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*John de Croon is partner at AssetResolutions BV, a company he co-founded with Ype Wijnia. In turn, they give their vision on an aspect of asset management in a weekly column. The columns are published on the website of AssetResolutions, [www.assetresolutions.nl/en/column](http://www.assetresolutions.nl/en/column)*

<sup>2</sup> See for hints <http://www.assetresolutions.nl/en/column/the-next-step-implement-data-management>

<sup>3</sup> See our column 'Asset management made simple. No bridge too far'  
<http://www.assetresolutions.nl/en/column/asset-management-made-simple-no-bridge-too-far>