

R12 Applications Upgrade

*Tips and Useful Methodology to Help Deliver a
Successful Upgrade Project*



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Introduction

The R12 upgrade is a different animal than the 11i technical upgrades that organizations have been performing in recent years. Because of changes to the application's look and feel, as well as functionality and reporting, the impact to end users is significant and should be dealt with early (and often) in the Upgrade initiative. As a result, the dynamics of the upgrade have changed and the project needs to be handled as a Change Management initiative instead of a back-of-the-house IT technical project. This White Paper deals with the key R12 changes and provides tips and methodology to help prepare organizations for the Upgrade. We share secrets and lessons learned from multiple R12 projects and cover things that organizations need to prepare for and where to find answers. This information is for anyone who needs to plan, manage, or be part of an upgrade. Our experience has shown that organizations that properly address the functional Change Management aspects of the R12 upgrade are successful while those who "throw it in" and expect the users to "get it" fail.

Because this is a substantial project with implications to all Oracle application users, building a cross-functional team to handle the various functional and technical aspects is essential. Most organizations are grouped and managed by specialty. For this upgrade in particular, it is important that everyone involved know not only their individual role but also how their contribution affects the project as a whole. Whether the project manager has a technical or functional background, it is essential that the team be able to communicate and address the key elements to succeed in a Change Management project. The impact of the changes will either be addressed and digested as part of the project or experienced as a loss of productivity after the "go live".

Why Upgrade

The standard answer for why an organization upgrades is to do so only if there is a compelling business reason. Taking advantage of new features and functionality of the software (if it meets the organization's needs) should enable the business operate more effectively. By using the latest enhancements, and following shared Best Practices, organizations will be better positioned to keep their Information Technology functions aligned with changing Business Objectives and improve competitive position. Organizations who are expecting a positive Return on Investment for the Upgrade project would be better served accepting a reduction in the future Total Cost of Ownership. The most likely positive changes will be the reduction in future upgrades' complexity and costs resulting from the elimination of costly customizations. Unfortunately, that benefit will not be felt until subsequent upgrades while the pain and cost of customization elimination will be felt as part of the immediate upgrade project.

Realistically, one of the primary drivers for upgrades is the need to stay "in" support. If there is a problem with your Oracle system and you contact Oracle Support, there will be "issues" if you are not on a supported version of the product. The Oracle Lifetime Support Policy for Oracle Applications is available on Oracle.com and lists support coverage dates for all of Oracle's applications. There is also an Oracle Lifetime Support Policy Oracle for Technology Products. To locate these documents, query: lifetime-support-applications on Oracle.com. It should be noted that as of February, 2011 there are only two releases; R12.0 and R12.1 are currently under Premier Support. Release 11.5.10.2 is in the first year of Extended Support. Due to the rough economic climate of the past few years Oracle has waived the first year of the additional Extended Support premium fee. Starting in December of 2011, those organizations still running 11.5.10.2 will be subjected to an additional support charge of 20% of their annual applications support fee in order to opt for Extended Support. In addition, they will be required to maintain a minimum baseline patch level as described in My Oracle Document 883202.1. If the baseline patching requirement is not met, it is assumed that the existing customer is opting for Sustaining Support which does not afford them any new patches should there not be an existing patch for their Support issue.

A Few Words about Re-implementations

Because of the size of the upgrade, amount of application changes being introduced (features and functionality), and graduation to a new pre-fix (11i to R12), the question of re-implement vs. upgrade has resurfaced. Back in the old days, when organizations went from 10.7 to 11i, and the technical upgrade tools were very poor, many organizations took the re-implementation path in an effort to clean up problems with their existing implementations. Today, the upgrade process, technology, tools, and scripts are much improved and should be used where possible. A re-

implementation project is a much larger and complex initiative that will take more time, effort, and resources (\$\$\$) than an upgrade.

With that being said, there are certain circumstances when a re-implementation will be necessary. While there are many reasons while people are frustrated with their existing implementation that could cause them to want to “start over”, there are four primary considerations that could trigger a re-implementation. They are:

- There has been a change to your basic business / organization structure and your ERP configuration does not fit your business anymore. This happens in organizations that have made acquisitions of companies from different industries or changed the focus of their operations.
- Due to new application features and functionality, there are volumes of customizations that you would like to retire in order to reduce complexity on future upgrades. This effort also entails re-engineering and process changes designed to streamline operations and improve efficiency. It should be noted that in many cases it is possible to accomplish this objective as part of an upgrade also.
- The original implementation was botched and is effectively unusable. There are fewer examples of this these days, but they still exist.
- You have tons of really, really bad data. This is a more subjective criterion. Most organizations feel that they are carrying bad data they would like to fix. The question is whether it is necessary to go through the additional effort of a re-implementation to clean it up, or address the problem prior to the upgrade through a combination of clean-up and archiving initiatives. We recommend that companies archive and purge as much as possible prior to the upgrade project to reduce the amount of baggage that has to be addressed during and following the upgrade.

If your organization falls in to one of these categories and must re-implement instead of upgrade, it is strongly recommended that a rapid re-implementation approach is used rather than a standard re-implementation. The difference is that in a rapid re-implementation, the existing set-ups and configurations are used as the base, and emphasis is placed on working through the remaining 10% - 20% of the set-ups where changes are actually required. This would enable organizations to concentrate their efforts on the changes that should be made instead of re-inventing their ERP wheel and revisiting all past set-up decision discussions.

In order to reduce some of the increased cost of a re-implementation, a strategy has emerged to use Oracle Accelerators to reduce the scope of the project. The theory is that the accelerators will allow companies to eliminate customizations, reduce complexities, standardize processes, and bypass much of the planning phase, thereby shortening the project. While this is accurate (and logical) in theory, the reality is that organizations (and industries) are different and have unique and special requirements. Years of operating in an Oracle E-Bus environment has reinforced the flexibility of the platform. Moving from a tailored environment to a standardized configuration does some seem realistic unless it is accompanied by a wholesale “back-to-basics” re-engineering project. The analogy that I have heard used is that it is like going from a custom built home to a FEMA trailer.

Types of Upgrades

There are multiple ways to bring Oracle Applications to a current release state. In order to avoid the discussion of re-implementation vs. upgrade (a topic generally worthy of its own White Paper) we will focus strictly on upgrades and categorize the options as two, a Technical Upgrade and a Full Feature-driven Upgrade.

Technical upgrades are the prevalent method used for minor, dot-release upgrades. A dot-release upgrade describes an inter-version release (i.e. 11.5.8 to 11.5.9) that primarily entails technical product enhancements and bug fixes. Typically there are limited functionality overhauls involved in dot release enhancements and the focus is on the tech stack improvements. As such, this effort is usually led by the DBA and technical team with limited involvement from the functional resources and user-community. Involvement from Super Users and affected functional resources comes in the form of application testing prior to go-live and support once the new release is in production.

This is a less expensive, limited upgrade option and does not require as much planning, management, training, or testing. The primary cross-functional interaction is application testing and there are typically few or no changes to business processes to incorporate new application features. While the benefits outside of the tech stack aspects may be minimal, the investment in time, effort and resources is also limited. Customizations, extensions, and 3rd party

bolt-ons are continually maintained. Many organizations that perform regular upgrades generally limit the effort to Technical upgrade unless there is a compelling internal or external business reason to consider the wider ranging option.

For the most part, success for a technical upgrade is measured by the LACK OF CHANGE. For those end users who are not involved in the technical upgrade project or testing, the upgrade is a success if they see no difference in their system when they log on to the application the Monday following the technical upgrade. If the system acts the same and performance does not decline, it has been a successful technical upgrade.

Full Business-aligned upgrades are wide-ranging company initiatives that are inclusive across IT and Business areas and align software enhancements with Business objectives. They are treated as wide-ranging projects that require Executive Sponsorship and active participation throughout the organization. Significant effort is expended in the Planning stage to evaluate new application features and functionality and determine whether changes should be made to current processes.

Retiring customizations and implementing software-enhanced best practices would increase Change Management and functional requirements for the project and fuel the need for additional training and increased testing to support the new application processes. All of this increases the need for more management of the project and require active Executive support. While this effort is clearly more expansive (and expensive) than a limited technical upgrade, the benefits garnered from the changes would be expected to offset the increased short term investment and provide a positive return on investment or reduction in the Total Cost of Ownership or improve business operations.

R12 Differences

Our experience with multiple Release 12 projects has enabled us to come in to contact with the numerous applications changes and shape our delivery to allow organizations to prepare more effectively. We focus on illustrating what any current 11i customer will need to know in order to plan and prepare for a successful upgrade. Listed below is a small sample of the changes.

Because Release 12 contains modifications to key areas of the applications (most notably the user interface) it will require end users to re-acclimate to the look & feel and navigation. Exhibit 1 shows an example of an R12 screen that resulted from the “Swan project” redevelopment of the user interface. It’s not “just a blue screen”. The navigation has been changes and the degree of adaptation required is different for various applications.

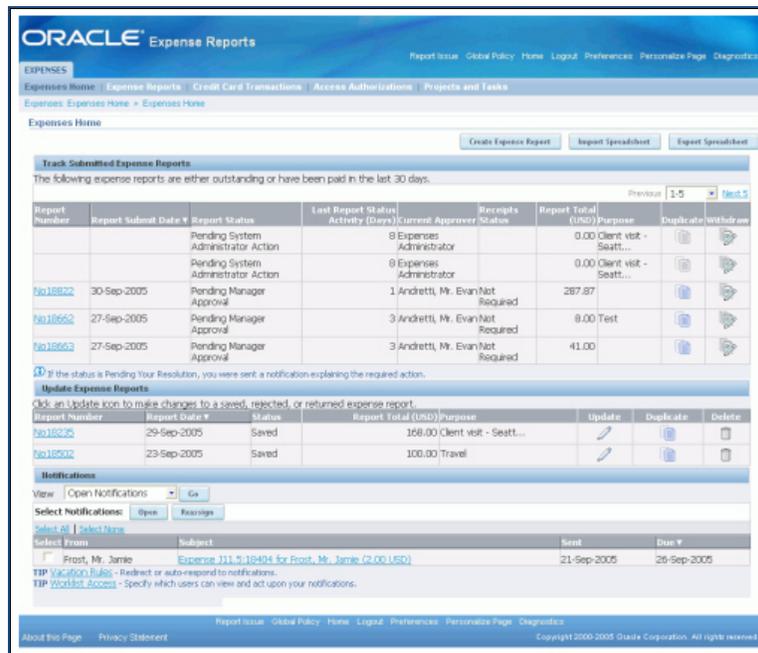


Exhibit 1: Example of an R12 screen

In addition to the user interface and various functionality changes, all of the reports and reporting tools generated from the EBS suite have changed and will need to be checked early and often through the upgrade project. Reports and the generation of reports will have to be addressed as part of the upgrade.

Certain modules had significant modifications and enhancements to features and functionality

- General Ledger
- Accounts Payable / Payables
- Accounts Receivable
- Procurement services

These happen to be are the applications that have the greatest numbers of users. As such, familiarity training will need to be provided prior the point where users will need to assist as part of the testing process. We recommend recruiting and using as many testers as possible. This will assist in acclimating end users prior to going live and thereby decrease the lost productivity that comes from using an application that is different.

There are other differences in features and functionality that user will need to overcome. They include:

- Sub ledger Accounting (SLA) for Operating Unit flexibility
- E-Business tax setups for each financial module have been removed and are now centralized.
- Multi-Org Access Control (MOAC) - Provides role based access to Operating Units. It can be confusing and dangerous to set up due to access to multiple operating units
- Accounts Payable
 - Invoice workbench and Invoice Processing. New look and feel for the workbench.
 - iPayment functionality now included and affects vendor consolidation for AP, CE, and Advanced AR
 - iSupplier portal integration had been rough when product was first released. Has been cleaned up, but test thoroughly.
 - Information expansion (TCA arch.) led to long upgrade steps and blown table extensions
- Web ADI
 - Lost functionality/issues: Desk Top ADI > WEB ADI
 - When moving from Desktop ADI to Web ADI, you lose the ability to create financial statements in ADI. Use of Reports Manager will be necessary and replace some of the lost functionality

There have been significant improvements in the Procurement functionality for not only basic procurement, but also with services procurement. In keeping with the theme to alert you to potential pitfalls, areas of concern include:

- New extended e-business Tax module has an impact on iProcurement.
- Approvals Management Engine (AME) has been enhanced and is a tremendous application, but there are a couple of features that have been eliminated in the process.
- The new Catalog upload feature is a significant improvement because there are no manual processes to run.
- Integration with procurement contracts is good and personalization in the self services pages makes iProcurement extremely flexible.
- The Professional Buyer's Work Center is a more dynamic and comprehensive approach that positively affects vendor management but will also require additional training and testing as users learn about the new features.

Release 12.1 has many additional enhancements in the advanced procurement area. For information on Release 12.1 new features in Advanced Procurement as well as Human Capital Management, check out My Oracle Support note 806593.1 and the R12.1 Info Center. Releases 12.0 and 12.1 of the Oracle E-Business Suite provide an impressive step up in features, functionality and technology. The purpose in sharing the pitfalls is to prepare organizations for a realistic upgrade experience and plan accordingly for a successful upgrade.

Upgrade Overview

The process flow diagram shown in Exhibit 2 illustrates a typical Upgrade Process Flow regardless of whether it is a Technical migration or Full Feature-driven upgrade. As shown on the diagram, the key variable component is the amount of effort expended in the “Evaluate new release” / planning step.

HIGH LEVEL R12 UPGRADE TIMELINE / OVERVIEW

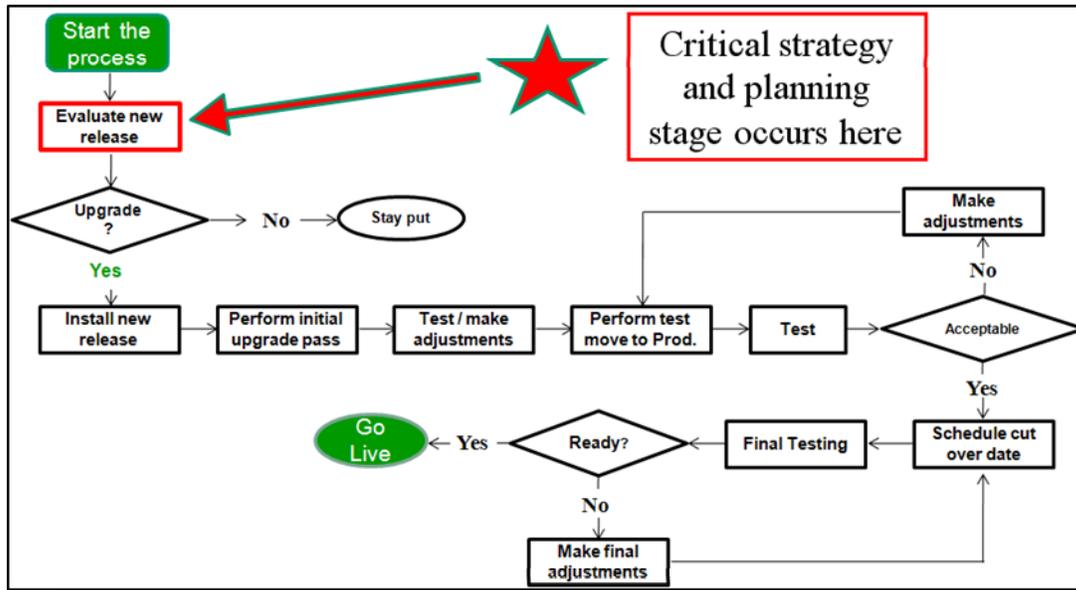


Exhibit 2: Typical Upgrade Process Flow

Exploring, assessing, and understanding the new features and functionality of the new software is key part of the early planning process. Significant investment and effort has been invested in improving key features and functionality in certain areas. Early evaluation and measurement of the application differences will drive the training and change management efforts that will be required as part of the project. Some organizations adopt well to change while others do not. Release 12 applications will require end users to learn new screens and most will be impacted by changes in functionality. This upgrade (11i to R12) can't be treated like a simple dot release that is handled as a small “back of the house” project that has little impact on end users. Thinking back to the success criteria for a technical upgrade, it is the “lack of change”. Clearly that will not work for the R12 upgrade due to the changes that will be dictated by the application. We are aware of organizations who have failed to prepare their users for the changes in R12 and have gone live. The lost productivity and organizational frustration was tremendous and resulted in months of dysfunction and angst.

There are many benefits to the Release 12 upgrade. The product has been improved in many areas to shift towards a process orientation and away from a silo management approach. Significant documentation exists on the Oracle website, My Oracle Support and other places that highlight product improvements in many areas. Organizations that had implemented earlier releases of the e-Business Suite and have not reviewed customizations and bolt-ons recently have found that standard functionality will enable them to streamline operations by eliminating time-consuming customizations. By taking this step, it reduces support cost and inefficiency and improves an organization's capabilities for subsequent upgrades.

One essential element that it is not readily apparent from Exhibit 2 above is the iterative nature of the process. It is critical that at least three iterations of the upgrade are performed prior to the move to production. If timing will allow scheduling of more than 3 iterations it should be considered. Every iteration contains testing that is stepped up from iteration to iteration as it progresses from the DBA testing in Iteration 1; to super-using unit testing in Iteration 2; to integration / stress testing and more extensive end user testing in Iteration 3. The third iteration is also considered the dress rehearsal as critical timings are captured and used to estimate the outage time for the cut-over schedule.

There are a few critical task elements that cause tremendous variability in the timing of an Upgrade project. As mentioned above, the amount of effort expended in the planning step can add significant time to the project timeline depending upon how widespread and comprehensive the planning process is. In addition, should a substantial Change Management, process redesign, or training effort be required, they would all have to be schedule in conjunction with the upgrade. The third area of variability is present in all upgrades and is the amount of technical development work that will be necessary to update and test any customizations or 3rd party bolt-ons that are being brought forward. Exhibit 3 illustrates a potential upgrade timeline using a three iteration process.

The length of the Planning phase is determined by the organization’s desire to evaluate current processes and adopt new features and practices as part of the upgrade. For the purposes of the illustration we have assumed that the customization development work is minimal and proceeding in parallel.

HIGH LEVEL R12 UPGRADE TIMELINE / OVERVIEW

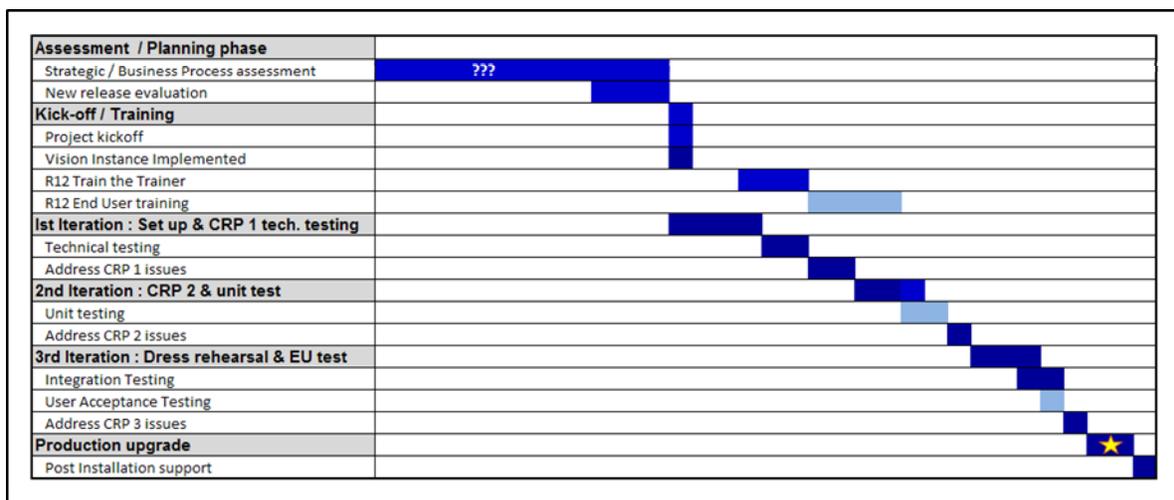


Exhibit 3: Example of High level Upgrade Timeline

The level of effort and depth of participation throughout the organization would vary based on the extent of the change to business processes as well as the complexity and adoption capacity of end users. More training, project management, and Executive sponsorship will be required in relation to the size and speed of change required.

Upgrade Project Planning

Planning processes vary from organization to organization in both frequency and scope. Because upgrades are not an annual occurrence, it is important that a repeatable, comprehensive process be employed when assessing an upgrade. Whether it is to be a Technical or Full Feature-driven upgrade, the elements for consideration should be consistent. Determination needs to be made of how big of an effort an organization is willing to take on and what the expected benefits will be. A resource assessment, in addition to who is going to the work should include the following areas: Hardware / platform / network capacity, application testing strategy, training tools and capacity, and Oracle product strategy. Effective facilitation of the upgrade planning process will heighten focus, decrease scope creep, and yield a more concise project charter to guide the upgrade. Many organizations struggle with this planning process because its lack of frequency and ultimate importance. A successful Planning phase should generate a viable Roadmap as a deliverable. This, in turn, should be approved and signed off on by Management. A well defined Roadmap will reinforce priorities and decrease the tendency towards “scope creep” and change orders.

Upgrade Project Methodology

Years of experience performing upgrade projects have enabled us to build a repeatable process that yields successful upgrade projects. There are eight components that contain significant detail and depth. For the purposes of this paper, we are presenting a high-level fly over of the basic elements.

Secure Active Executive sponsorship and support: The extent of the upgrade project will determine the level of activity needed by the Executive sponsor. If the project is important to the organization, this is a critical requirement. There needs to be high level, visible support to validate project importance and provide crisp, timely decision-making. Too often this element is over-looked and ends up affecting the outcome of the upgrade project.

Communication and transparent reporting on progress: The importance of widespread, effective communication escalates as the expected change increases. In other words, the more end users will be impacted (both in number and intensity) by a project, the better the upfront communication needs to be. Knowing your audience and what is important to them is a key element of this aspect. Relevant information needs to be disseminated at the right frequency to maintain interest and excitement about the coming changes. The tone should be positive, but, above all, it must be transparent and honest. Previously mentioned changes to the R12 user interface and functionality changes to widely used modules dictate that a substantial Communication and Change Management effort will be required for this upgrade.

Gather the proper materials: There is a significant amount of information available through Oracle's My Oracle Support to guide organizations through upgrades. The key is to not get lost and bogged down in information overload. Among the various Implementation and User Guides is the E-Business Suite Upgrade Guide that can be found in My Oracle Support note 461705.1. In addition, the eBusiness Suite R12 Information Center is valuable resource that also contains Release Content Documents that detail the changes to the applications. Caution is advised when reviewing these documents and they should be cleaned up before being distributed to non-expert users.

Other critical documentation that should be compiled in the early stages of the project (as early as possible) includes a comprehensive list of customizations and extensions. This includes all reports, forms, views, extracts, triggers, custom reports (in all forms), and interfaces. Workflow and Account Generator definitions should also be documented as well as oracle supported extensions and anything that touches Oracle that didn't come shipped from Oracle Corporation. This investigation needs to be exhaustive in order to guard against any "gotcha" customizations surfacing late in the project and derailing the development efforts. Remediation of RICE objects / customizations is the iceberg in the path of the project plan. Underestimating this effort will either derail the project plan, cause an emergency increase in resources in mid-project, or deferring certain development aspects (usually reports) to post go-live or "next phase". None of these alternatives is ideal and can be potentially deadly to the project. When estimating bandwidth for in-house developers, always assume they will have less availability than expected due to unexpected emergencies and "stuff" they will need to address during the course of the upgrade project. The existing application will not be getting any more stable as it nears its end date.

Identifying and securing a library of viable test cases and detailed test scripts will improve testing and eliminate unnecessary re-work. Always include and use test cases from past 11i implementation or upgrades and be prepared to add some test cases for new features or functionality. Test cases should be modified to reflect any and all new or changed functionality. The new user interface will certainly impact all cases that contain screen shots. Be sure that your test cases have specifics about test data and expected results and check them back in to the library for next time / upgrade.

Because all aspects of the Technology Architecture should be evaluated in the planning and assessment stage, all hardware, storage, network, and desktops should be mapped, inventoried, and classified. Particular attention should be paid to availability of adequate server space necessary to handle a viable instance strategy to allow flexibility during the upgrade.

Recruit the right team members: Many times organizations focus on the expected hardware and software costs and downplay the internal soft costs. To soften this impact, organizations have a tendency to under staff an upgrade project or use inexperienced resources. Both of these are dangerous to the project and could have a serious impact. Exhibit 4 illustrates the Extended Team responsibilities that need to be covered in an upgrade. It should be stressed

that these are responsibilities and not necessarily people / headcount. The extent of the involvement will be determined by the scope of the upgrade.

EXTENDED PROJECT TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES FOR R12 UPGRADE

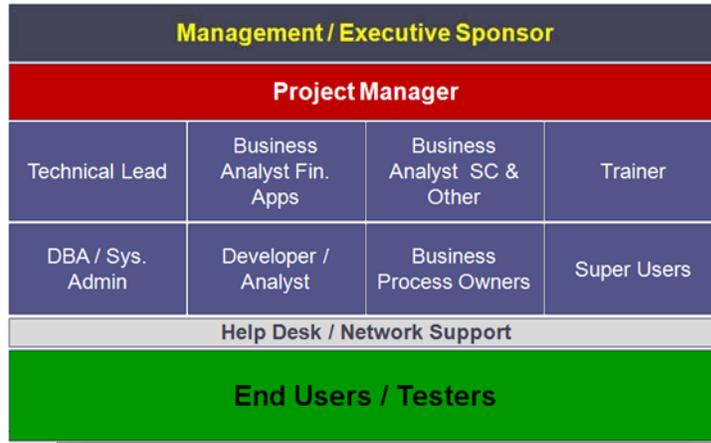


Exhibit 4: Extended Upgrade Team – Responsibilities

As previously discussed, it is imperative that there be active, legitimate Executive Sponsorship and support of the project. The larger the effort, the greater the expected support. Depending upon the scope, the Project Manager effort could range from part-time internal to full-time internal and external staffing. Change management and active communication are two key elements of the Project Manager role. The eight technical and functional responsibilities represented by the boxes assume a fairly basic Oracle Apps environment and are not at all representative of the level of effort needed in a typical project. All upgrade resources should have specific project responsibilities and accountability that is documented and published. This will aid in the understanding of all facets of the upgrade project.

In an R12 upgrade, whether it is small or large scope, the trainer will be necessary to manage the changes that will be required by both the user interface look and feel as well as the new functionality of the key applications. This will also require that your support staff be trained and ready to assist with support issues that will arise as part of the go-live process. End users, the largest category will be involved in the testing process and will determine success or failure of the upgrade. As such, they should be given as much opportunity as possible early in the process to experience the new applications. Many organizations employ a train the trainer approach for this effort and supplement with on-line training, FAQ's, and Computer Based Training (CBT's) that include videos. Organizations that own Oracle User Productivity Kit (UPK) have found it to be an excellent tool for addressing distributed and / or repeatable training. That has proven helpful for retraining purposes as well as new employee orientation processes.

Organize, create, and update critical documents: In addition to the previously discussed documents that are gathered in the Assessment phase (i.e. customizations, hardware architecture, etc.) it is important to create two specific project communication documents. The two documents are a Master Checklist and a Master Impact List. It is important to build a Master Checklist and list every step. We recommend downloading the Maintenance Wizard to a spreadsheet and using that as starting point. Make sure to capture timings for pre, during, and post patching activities. It is imperative to list and assign every task.

The other critical document is the Master Impact List. It is a complete listing of all potential changes that should require investigation or possible retesting and it drive ALL testing activities. It applies to standard Oracle features and customer-created impacts and covers items sorted by module. Exhibit 5 shows an example of a Master Impact List.

EXAMPLE OF A MASTER IMPACT LIST FOR PAST PROJECT

Master Impact Analysis - Upgrade to 11.5.10 Initial version							
Item	Module /Impact Description	Classification	Status	Assigned (Who)	Pack?	Ranking (H,M,L)	Notes
PO							
	Custom Pricing APIs	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Custom pricing date api, Custom requisition pricing api, Custom PO/Release pricing api.
	Purchasing Documents Open Interface Enhancements	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Add new lines and associated shipments to an existing standard PO in Approved or Incomplete status and then initiate the approval process.
	Autocreate and PO Entry Usability	Mandatory	Open			11.5.10	Increased size of autocreate window to display more requisition lines; Increased size of Enter PO window to display more order lines; Reduced pop up messages; Provided "Reassign Buyer" option in the AutoCreate window
	Procurement Contracts - See Notes Below	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Contract Management capabilities (Oracle Procurement Contracts)
Sourcing							
	Negotiation Scoring	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Negotiation Level Attributes; Scoring Templates; Subjective Scoring; Analysis Scenarios.
	Award Summary	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Provides a complete view of the award recommendation for sourcing team members and designated award approvers
	Award Approval	Optional	Open			11.5.10	List of approvers is automatically generated based on rules set up in Oracle Approvals Management
	Amendments	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Manage changes to a published sourcing event even after suppliers have begun responding
	Document Printing	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Buyers and Suppliers can generate copies of the sourcing package in PDF format
ENG							
	Increase Change Type Name Length	Mandatory	Open			11.5.10	
	Electronic Names and Electronic Signatures (ERES) Support	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Oracle Quality
	MLS Support for Change Types	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Change types can be entered in Multiple languages
WIP							
	Outside Processing Enhancements	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Improved communication between mfg and procurement functions when qty or date changes occur
	Component Picking Enhancements	Optional	Open			11.5.10	Link a Supply Subinventory to a Machine resource
	Electronic Records and Electronic Signature Support (ERES)	Optional	CLOSED			11.5.10	For FDA Regulations

Exhibit 5: Master Impact List example

Among the information captured and reviewed are classifications, statuses, assignments, prioritizations, and notes. Examples might include items such as 3rd Party Check Printing System may need to be retested or replaced with XML / BI Publisher or a custom form that may need to have the customization reapplied to standard Oracle form or a new report available as standard functionality.

Analyze and Plan: Use a three round iterative method: As previously discussed it is critical to use an iterative process with graduating level of testing through iterations one through three. An important aspect of this process is to get clarification on unclear steps early in the project. Missed steps are costly and a serious risk to the project timeline. Another important aspect of the first iteration is the creation of an R12 vision instance in order for the functional team to begin to gain familiarity with the R12 applications. Establishing a viable and available sand box environment is important in the R12 upgrade. In addition, another key element is to gather timings and statistics related to patching.

Use of the Master Impact List will help drive testing as well as investigation of technical impacts. Work with the full project team to continually gather, address, and resolve issues on the Impact List. Once issues are being resolved and timings have been established the detailed cutover plan should be finalized and properly communicated. Experience has shown that an effective cutover will entail the use of a War Room and detailed processes to quickly handle any issues that arise. At the end of the project, the ability to effectively address End User issues may end up being the lasting impression the influences the perception of a successful or failed upgrade.

Execute a Serious and Dedicated Testing Process: Testing is one of the most important aspects of an upgrade project and the one that organizations are most likely to cut corners on. This can't be allowed to happen. At times companies take the attitude that the applications should "just work" so they don't need to waste time testing everything. Another bad idea is the notion that things can be fixed after the "go-live". That is called testing in Production and is a recipe for disaster. My favorite is when people state that "Oracle has already tested" the product so they can scale back the testing scope. As previously discussed, there should be graduated levels of testing through the three iterations and time scheduled after testing to fix any problems.

Other things to keep in mind when testing include bringing back your veterans from prior upgrades to assist with the testing. They will be faster and more efficient and able to recognize issues more readily. Always know what results you are expecting and use real data and assign test cases to specific individuals. There should always be a procedure or system for logging test results and resolutions. The process should require details and screenshots and the there

should be a sign-off to ensure accountability. Some organizations rely heavily on testing tools. While they are invaluable, effective, and provide additional value in certain circumstances (i.e. stress testing), they can't fully replace user involvement.

Experience matters. Have a leader and bring back the vets: It is highly recommended to use experienced team members to speed up successive iterations. For consistency and efficiency we recommend that an upgrade Tiger team be established to push the effort forward. Previous plans can be re-used as a reference point in building the new plan. We also recommend that Oracle Release Content Documents on New features be scrubbed before giving to End users in order to simplify them and make them less intimidating. Communication with management also needs to be straight forward and the project complexities should be adequately explained to ensure transparency and heighten support.

Other Sources of Information

In addition to My Oracle Support and the Oracle website, there are other information sources that contain excellent Release 12 and upgrade information. User group conferences (local, regional, and national) generally supply speakers who have real world experience working with the applications and can supply valuable lessons learned. From a blog perspective, Stephen Chan's is highly recommended. It is honest, straight-forward, and readable. You can't beat that! It can be found at: <http://blogs.oracle.com/schan/>. In addition, the Oracle Applications - Tools and Technology on Oracle.com has a wide assortment of articles, White Papers, presentations, and a good summary on new features. They can be found at: <http://www.oracle.com/technology/products/applications/index.html>. And last, but not least, excellent consulting organizations like O2Works are an excellent source of real life Release 12 information. We have completed more than a half dozen successful R12 projects and have more than a dozen under way. O2Works was recognized by Oracle for our work on one of the first successful R12 Implementation projects. We would be happy to hear from you.

Last Word

For organizations using competitive ERP systems, upgrades are a part of life. Whether it is a limited technical upgrade that occurs every other year, or more extensive Feature driven company-wide project, there are basic methodology components should be used and re-used for successful results. As an organization who deals with upgrades on an on-going basis we have the tools and skills to assist in delivering results.

Because of the changes to the Release 12 applications, it is an upgrade that requires widespread cross-functional participation and active Executive Sponsorship. It is not a typical dot release upgrade and treating it as such will minimize results and generate frustration and disappointment among end users. Take the opportunity to assess the new features and functionality delivered with Release 12 and determine if it is time to retire old customizations or, at a minimum, plan to augment your planning timeline to address the additional training and Change Management needs that the R12 upgrade will require.

About...

O2Works LLC – Founded in 2001 with its principal offices in Dallas, Texas, O2Works focuses strictly on providing expert, hands-on consulting resources for the Oracle e-Business suite of applications. *Putting Oracle to Works* means getting the most out of your Oracle investment. O2Works' highly skilled consultants have more than 12 years of applications experience as well as strong business backgrounds and have worked the Oracle Applications dating back to release MPL5. They are involved in, or have completed, multiple R12 implementations, re-implementations, and upgrade projects and were cited by Oracle for its work in completing one of the first successful R12 implementations for American Transmission Company.

Since its inception more than seven years ago, O2Works has grown its client base to more than 160 satisfied customers. All of its clients are 100% reference-able. O2Works is a Certified Oracle Partner firm and are very active in the Oracle Application User Group, where it is a Level 3 partner. The management team and consultants invest significant amount of time and effort in Oracle Application User Group (OAUG) activities. In addition to being presenters at numerous events, they hold a variety of positions for various national and regional groups. Contact O2Works at info@o2works.com.

This paper and author – This White Paper accompanies a presentation that was delivered at the annual Oracle Applications User Group (OAUG) Collaborate 11 Conference in April, 2011. Variations of this presentation have been delivered at more than 18 Regional, National, and Local OAUG conferences.

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