Accounting Software Implementation

Checklist

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Introduction

Implementing a new accounting software is a major transition that can bring significant improvements in efficiency, accuracy, and financial visibility as long as it is executed thoughtfully and methodically. Whether you're upgrading outdated technology or centralizing operations across departments or entities, a successful implementation depends on meticulous planning, clear communication, and thorough testing. Throughout, it is important to solicit input from staff to ensure buy-in.

This checklist is designed to guide you through each critical phase of the implementation process, from early-stage planning through post-launch optimization. It ensures that nothing falls through the cracks, whether it's mapping your chart of accounts, training your team, or running both systems in parallel to validate results.

Using the Gantt Chart With Your Accounting Software Implementation Checklist

The Gantt chart is a visual project timeline to complement your accounting software implementation checklist. It maps out each step, such as system selection, data migration, software configuration, user training, and go-live support, showing how tasks align over time and where key dependencies exist. By pairing the checklist with the Gantt chart, you gain a clear, real-time view of progress, upcoming deadlines, and ownership of each phase. This helps keep your implementation on schedule, improves team coordination, and ensures a smooth transition to your new accounting system.

Click for the Gantt Chart

Steps

Phase 1: Planning and Preparation

- **Define Goals and Objectives**
  - Clarify why new software is needed (reporting, scalability, complexity of accounting needs)
  - Set measurable goals for implementation success
- **Assemble the Project Team**
  - Include accounting, IT, operations, and leadership stakeholders
  - Assign a project manager and key user roles
- **Document Current Processes**
  - Map workflows and identify inefficiencies
  - List current pain points and compliance requirements
- **Determine Requirements**
  - Must- have features (bank fees, audit trail, multi-entity support, program expense tracking)
  - Integrations needed (payroll, HRM, CRM, POS)
  - User access levels and security controls
- **Set a Realistic Timeline and Budget**
  - Account for software costs, consulting and support fees, training, and contingencies
  - Create a project timeline and milestones

Phase 2: Software Selection

- **Research and Compare Options**
  - Cloud vs. On-premises
  - Industry-specific vs. general accounting software
  - Scalability and vendor reputation
- **Request Demos and Trials**
  - Test core features with real use cases
  - Involve end users in feedback
- **Check Reference and Reviews**
  - Speak with existing customers
  - Evaluate vendor support and responsiveness
- **Finalize Vendor and Contract**
  - Confirm deliverables, service agreement, upgrade terms, and data ownership
  - Ensure clear exit and data migration terms

Tip: Choose no less than 2-3 and no more than 4-5 systems to demo.

Steps

Phase 3: Data Preparation and System Setup

- **Prepare Legacy Data**
  - Clean and standardize chart of accounts
  - Reconcile balances
  - Archive unnecessary or outdated data
- **Plan Data Migration**
  - Determine what data will be migrated (historical, open balances, etc.)
  - Validate mapping of accounts, customers, vendors, etc.
  - Schedule dry runs and final migration
- **Set Up the System**
  - Configure chart of accounts
  - Define user roles and permissions
  - Set up tax rules, currencies, fiscal year
- **Integrate with Other Systems**
  - Connect payroll, invoicing, CRM, or inventory platforms
  - Test data flow and sync accuracy

Phase 4: Testing and Training

- **Perform End-to-End Testing**
  - Post journal entries, run reports, reconcile accounts
  - Simulate month-end close and invoicing cycles
  - Validate data integrity and system outputs
- **Run Parallel Systems**
  - Operate both old and new systems side by side for 1-2 cycles (at least one full month)
  - Compare transactions, ending balances, reports and reconciliations to verify accuracy
  - Address discrepancies before full switch-over
- **User Training**
  - Conduct role-based training sessions
  - Provide manuals, how-to-guides, or video resources
  - Offer support channels for questions
- **Refine Processes and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**
  - Update internal procedures based on new workflows
  - Document changes and assign responsibilities

Tip: If using integrations, it's best to first test the base system first to work out kinks before adding in other add-ons. It makes it easier to troubleshoot.

Steps

Phase 5: Go-Live

- **Set Go-Live Date**
  - Avoid busy accounting periods
  - Communicate the timeline to all users
- **Final Data Migration**
  - Migrate open balances, outstanding invoices, vendor bills, etc.
  - Perform reconciliation against the legacy system
- **System Monitoring and Support**
  - Monitor early transactions for accuracy
  - Log and resolve user-reported issues
  - Provide extra support during the first 30-60 days

Phase 6: Post-Implementation Review

- **Conduct a Post-Mortem Review**
  - What went well? What didn't?
  - Evaluate alignment with original goals
- **Assess User Adoption**
  - Check for usage gaps or workarounds
  - Gather user feedback and feature requests
- **Plan for Ongoing Training and Optimization**
  - Schedule refresher training
  - Identify opportunities for automation or additional modules
  - Keep documentation and SOPs current

Tip: Workarounds are red flags that the system was not properly implemented.

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