

Why do most DLP systems integration projects fail?

The key factor of projects going nowhere is the lack of will on the part of the client to participate in the implementation process, says Andrey Dankevich of InfoWatch

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Many large-scale implementations, which require consultancy services, end up going nowhere. The result is just a completed project, with little measurable effect or real value for the customer in terms of increased productivity, control or cost savings. This applies to business applications, automated banking systems, and information security solutions.

There are many reasons for this, but a key factor is the lack of will on the part of the client to participate in the implementation process. The principle "We pay you money, so you do the work," has taken firm root as the basis for relationships between clients and integrators. The managers of client companies are interested in the results of the projects and the financial returns, but often do not see the point in working together with the project team contracted to carry out the work.

It seems to me that this is down to psychology. In the mind of the client, the boundary between 'boxed' products and complex solutions, which need to be integrated into existing infrastructure and require additional consulting services, has become blurred. The producers of smartphones, mobile devices, cars, and software products have trained us to believe that technology is simple: one button, two pedals. We only realize that the automatic gearbox is a complicated piece of equipment when we get to the service center. And then only indirectly, as a result of the number of zeros on the bill for the repairs.

There is a well known recipe for the best CEO programs. They have two functions: to show how much we need them, and how much they need us. The requirements for an automated banking system are just as strict -- it must be simple and easy-to-understand. It is just the same for information security products: a pre-configured policy and simple anti-virus reports, intuitive functionality, and a simple method for configuring firewalls. The time it takes for users to become familiar with the product should be minimal, the procedures required to interact with it should be as intuitive as possible, and the 'functional part' should be securely locked down.

The way we perceive information technology has been transformed from seeing it as part of a sacred cult into something lay, ordinary and simple. Technicians in white coats, computers in cabinets in dozens of machine halls -- all this is in the past. We don't use technology but products, tools to carry out our tasks, and we are now able to interact with IT without intermediaries.

Can you imagine an iPad or Windows user writing a multi-page bug report for Apple or Microsoft? I can't. The user pays money for a product, for that button which they can press to bring them happiness. He switches off the feedback collection function in MS Office as soon as the pop-up window reminds him it's there. He is only prepared to use and, if I am honest, I am in no position to judge. Consumerization, a focus on convenience and business advantage instead of a functional approach -- this is the contribution product marketing has made to the user's ideology. CEOs are also users. When they sign off on the budget for an expensive ERP, DLP, CRM or BI system, they are not acquiring a solution, but a marketed product. The business is accustomed to believing in a 'magic pill' or 'happy button'.

The managers of client companies are genuinely surprised when the 'buy - it'll work by itself' approach breaks down, when, in order to achieve results, it is necessary to put in some effort, sometimes in line with the cost of the solution itself. This kind of situation can be seen in the relatively new DLP (Data Loss

Prevention) system market. Here, the client is required to carry out a whole range of actions: to understand the volumes of confidential data which they need to protect, to classify their information, to localize where it is stored, and finally, to define the criteria for the effectiveness of the project.

The process of DLP system integration is a large and complex project, since it is particular to each individual organization. A whole range of factors — industry specifics, rules pertaining to document circulation, security policy and regulatory requirements — come into play. ‘Boxed’ solutions are not applicable and standard methodologies for adapting business processes to a system do not work. To achieve the required result, co-operation with the client’s project teams is the only possible solution. Otherwise the client makes the same old mistake, relying on their subjective feeling that modern IT is simple.

Of course, it is impossible to find a universal recipe to correct clients’ perceptions. Not all developers of information solutions are prepared to describe complex things as complex. So, the need to produce a collision between illusion and reality remains: take the client by the hand and lead him through a pilot project, showing all the difficulties of the forthcoming implementation. During the pilot process, between the agreements, meetings, and test runs, the main client will understand that a complex IT system can be built only through collaboration with systems integrators, it cannot simply be bought.

To address this issue, DLP should not be sold as a software product, it should be offered as a solution, where software is only a small part of the whole. The rest of the solution should include audit, consulting and analysis services. Only then does the project stand a chance of success.

http://www.informationweek.in/Security/12-06-04/Why_do_most_DLP_systems_integration_projects_fail.aspx