



## Rapid Software Implementation - Fact or Fiction?

### *Rethinking the Value of Complexity*

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Have you ever seen the movie "There's Something About Mary"? It contains a funny scene where the Ben Stiller character picks up a psychotic hitchhiker who pitches him on his new business idea - 7 Minute Abs. The guy tells him, "You walk into video store, you see 8-minute abs sitting there and then you see 7-minute abs on the shelf right beside it. Which one are you gonna pick man?" Stiller then proceeds to tell him that his is a great idea, until someone comes up with 6 minute abs.

I am reminded of this scene when I hear some of the vendor claims on how quickly customers can implement their ERP, PLM, or other business software solutions. Perhaps you too have heard the 30, 60, or 90 day claims being tossed around. Is this really possible? What are buyers to believe when they see some high profile fashion companies engaged in massive, multi-year implementations of the same technology?

Accelerating software implementation cycles is very important in the fashion industry; where success depends on the ability to rapidly respond to changing business requirements. While it once took years to complete full scope implementations, today's fashion companies often need to go-live with critical system components in a two to six months to meet competitive pressures.

Some buyers attempt to shortcut implementation by installing new software without redesigning their related business processes. While this might be quick, continuing to perform tasks in the same way as before virtually removes the greatest opportunity to achieve sustainable benefits from the project. Keep in mind that the system implementation is, first and foremost, a business project that also has a technical component. Technology is simply a means to support business initiatives and achieve business goals.

Recent changes in business and technology have opened up new opportunities to permanently reduce long implementation timelines. The custom application development that was common in older business systems has given way to packaged software that can be quickly configured to meet specific client needs. Modular software design enables buyers to take on smaller, focused projects rather than massive, full scope implementations.

These and other changes have shifted much of the control and responsibility for implementation timelines to the buyer. So, that vendor claim of rapid implementation may not be a pie in the sky after all if you are ready and willing to do what it takes to make it happen. A few of the things you can do to insure your rapid implementation include:

- **Select the Right Solution** - while no package solution will meet 100% of your requirements out-of-the-box, 80-90% may well be possible; the closer the fit, the easier and faster the implementation.
- **Start with Pre-Configured Software** - for the initial phase, implement the standard pre-configured software version with no changes to source code and little or no changes to configuration parameters and reports.
- **Make Quick Implementation Decisions** - it is not practical to review all of the alternatives with everyone that will be affected; make system and process decisions quickly in a small, highly focused project team.
- **Pick the Right Consultant** - supplement your team with an experienced partner that can help you manage the risks, remove barriers to completion, minimize surprises, and increase the odds of overall success.
- **Rethink the Value of Complexity** - consider a hosted ASAP solution to reduce resource requirements; look for quick and easy configuration opportunities rather than customization; implement in phases.

Of course, there are many other steps you must take to achieve a rapid and successful system implementation. The good news is that we now have solid options that will enable us to quickly gain tremendous business benefit from technology without the time, cost and risk that once defined business software. And don't worry about the claims; the 7-minute abs guy guarantees his workout will be just as good, or he will send you the extra minute for free!

Productive Solutions, LLC is a boutique consulting services firm specializing in the fashion industry's concept-to-delivery processes and enabling technologies. It brings a uniquely focused and personalized approach to an international client base of retailers, brands, manufacturers and vendors. Contact Rick Ludolph at [r.ludolph@productivesol.com](mailto:r.ludolph@productivesol.com) or visit [www.productivesol.com](http://www.productivesol.com).