

Strategies for project success

This is how the right tools help in everyday
IT business

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Introduction

In everyday IT business we are constantly faced with new challenges. Through the skilful use of efficient tools, not only do challenging projects become child's play, you also automatically reach new customers. And the most important strategies for this can be easily integrated into day-to-day business.

1. Promote **standardization**. As obvious as it sounds, most projects are still reinventing the wheel. With a few small tools you can avoid these pitfalls and master even the most demanding projects with ease.
2. Focus on **individualization**. Even if that sounds like extra work at first: when individualization and standardization go hand in hand, unimagined possibilities open up. And you don't have to do much to develop tailor-made solutions.
3. Offer **added value** and engage your customers on an **emotional level**. Unfortunately, projects that run on their own have one disadvantage: they are rarely noticed. With a few simple tricks you can inspire every customer emotionally and create high visibility. The reference arises entirely by itself.

Learn efficient tools and simple tricks to implement the strategies and discover how they work together.

Overview of the most important strategies

When it comes to making good IT projects even better, three key strategies have proven to be particularly successful.

Standardization: Simplifying projects and methods through standards.

Individualization: Create tailor-made solutions for more flexibility.

Generate added value: Engage customers emotionally to generate more visibility.

Even if at first glance these strategies do not have much in common with each other, they are closely related and complement each other. Standardization lays the foundation for individualization and added value, because otherwise these two strategies would be far too complex. On the other hand, we need the added value, otherwise we would lose our visibility through standardization.

What this means exactly and how these strategies work together in practice is explained in the following examples.

How-to: Standardization and individualization

The first two strategies, standardization (simplification through standards) and individualization (creating tailor-made solutions), are two key strategies that complement each other and therefore must be considered together. These strategies are primarily about simplifying complex and extensive topics and making them understandable.

The most effective instruments for this are guidelines that provide orientation and security for everyone involved. These guidelines describe all the necessary steps, from the initial coordination to project handover, and serve as checklists. Larger companies use such guidelines even for simple projects, making them particularly efficient.

- Processes take place in the correct order and take dependencies into account.
- Everyone involved knows what needs to be done and feels safe.
- Important steps are not overlooked.
- Large and complex topics become clear.

Practice examples

Guidelines are suitable for almost all types of tasks, from small configuration steps to large projects.

- **Example of firewall rules:** Firewall rules are usually re-tuned in each project, after all every customer is different. However, if you look closely, 85% of the rules are always the same and are repeated in every project. Once these rules are described in a guide, coordination and setup becomes much easier. The individual rules are also repeated over time and can be queried in advance. This looks professional and saves unnecessary improvements.
- **Example of project preparation:** Customer data often has to be requested and important requirements must be met in order to be able to implement a project. Often, many of these important points only become apparent during setup and lead to waiting times or complex workarounds. Here too, the guidelines save time and prevent temporary facilities from being forgotten and falling on your feet later.
- **Example infrastructure projects:** Larger projects often require countless parameters to be configured. Most of the time a basic setup is done and then the parameters are set up from memory and readjusted until everything seems to be working. Not only can this take forever, important settings are often forgotten which require rework. Guidelines make setup easier and ensure trouble-free operation.

Function and structure of guidelines

Configuration guides provide a clear structure for projects by listing the necessary steps and requirements for successful implementation. Project employees can orientate themselves on them and thus gain more security. Requirements and tasks are made clear and even large projects become manageable.

Guidelines are usually structured like checklists, but not every step in the guide necessarily applies to every project. Things that don't apply to the current project are simply skipped. If new requirements arise in the project, they will be added to the guide and will therefore also be available in the next projects.

Examples of guidelines

Here are some links to exemplary guidelines and examples, how they are used in real projects.

Guidelines for simple and advanced system setup of an ICT manufacturer:

 [Config guide PBX and RP v13.xlsx](#)

 [Config guide Full v13.xlsx](#)

Examples of the associated customer data query and network overview:

 [Customer data query simple v13.xlsx](#)

 [Network design templates.pptx](#)

Introduction and use of guidelines

Creating guidelines is actually easy: the most important steps of a project are described in bullet points and then repeated and expanded upon for the next project. This quickly develops into a guide that finds a high level of acceptance.

However, the challenge with the introduction (as with most of our projects) is always the first step. Here are a few tips on how you can overcome this hurdle:

- Find someone who enjoys documenting, this could also be someone who is not an expert. Don't give the tasks to someone who is opposed to it. If in doubt, it is better to resort to external support.
- Emphasize the benefits of documentation and its importance as a resource for everyone. Technicians in particular could perceive the documentation as monitoring.
- Involve all employees. Anyone who finds their suggestion in the guide will be proud of it.
- Use a team meeting to ask about project requests and include answers as the first points in the guide. And the starting shot has already been given.
- Use existing documents, everyone can find a little something. For example, existing project documentation or manufacturer information. Maybe someone already knows another guide that can be used as a template.

Usually, simple Word or Excel documents are sufficient as a guide. Online tools cost additional training time and licenses and are more likely to be used by large companies, usually just to manage documents centrally.

Maintenance and Use of guidelines

Anyone who has ever worked with project guidelines will no longer want to be without them. To ensure that the guidelines remain helpful in the long term, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Guidelines are intended as support, not as mandatory regulations. This is important so that they are accepted and used in the long term.
- Guidelines must be kept up to date. Project reviews that ask about particular challenges of recent projects are helpful. Such reviews usually only take a few minutes.
- Establish responsibilities for maintaining a guide. As with the creation, this can also be someone from a non-specialist background or external.

Conclusion on standardization and individualization

Configuration guides are always helpful when it comes to simplifying processes, dealing with more complex topics and providing assistance with setup.

Getting started with guidelines may be challenging. But as soon as the process gets rolling, they become valuable tools that sustainably support the success of the project.

How-to: Create added value and engage customers emotionally

Another very important strategy is to generate emotions, because what use is a successful project if no one talks about it and it is quickly forgotten.

Emotions create an unimagined impact. Customers recommend us without asking, and we remain permanently in the minds of consulting companies without having to do much about it.

Creating emotions in the IT sector does not mean limiting yourself to technically flawless solutions, but rather creating experiences and positively surprising customers. Even if it feels strange at first, it's easy to do with a few tricks.

Set up features the customer didn't expect

Exceeding expectations is the easiest and most effective way to delight a customer and stay top of mind. Because what excites us more when we get something we didn't expect?

Set up functions for your customer that were not asked for and are probably not even needed. Because these are exactly the things that are remembered and talked about later. Even if they are just gimmicks, the crazier and more unexpected the feature, the more the customer will talk about it afterwards.

Tips for classic network and firewall projects:

- Create reports that the admin or IT manager receives by email, even if they didn't ask for them. The trick here is not to send long and detailed reports, but rather to highlight and graphically display only the most appealing things such as utilization and blocked packets. Things like that are always well received. Use plugins for real-time performance monitoring and hardware information.
- Set up application-based network restrictions, e.g., throttling Internet traffic for browsers when network load is high. Even if this has a real effect in very few projects, demonstrating the performance of a system always creates enthusiasm.
- Set up streaming buffer functions to reduce the load on Internet connections. This makes no sense for small and medium-sized projects and is therefore never required, but it is just as exciting as the previous point.
- And the same applies here: Use your own unusual functions that you have already set up for another customer and that you remember.

Tips for projects in the ICT and UC environment:

- Simply get the customer's logo from their website and integrate it into the UC interface. There has never been a customer who wasn't thrilled.
- Set up Exchange and Office integrations, even if the customer didn't request it. If suddenly and unexpectedly the calendar entries appear in the UC client or a dial button appears in Outlook, that will also delight every customer.

- Set up unusual features, even if the customer doesn't use them, and have them turned off again afterwards. He will remember it and be amazed at what his new system can do. The fancier, the better.
- And the same applies here: Use your own unusual functions that you have already set up for another customer and that you remember.

Default tools for generating positive emotions

Delighting customers is the key to long-term success, and not just in the IT sector. Below are some general strategies and suggestions that can be excellently adapted for IT projects:

- Make the customer feel like they got something special and unique. For example, by printing his individual project overview on a mug, calendar or similar. It only costs a few euros, but the project will be remembered forever.
- Make what you set up great. Don't get tired of emphasizing what innovative, state-of-the-art technologies your customer has received.
- Exceed your promises. It sounds simple, but most of the time we act in exactly the opposite way. We tend to promise the customer the best, be it in terms of appointments or functions, even though we already suspect that it is almost impossible to keep it. If something doesn't go as promised, the customer is disappointed. Instead, we should be more careful in our commitments. A service that exceeds expectations will pleasantly surprise the customer and remains in their minds.
- Get feedback. But the order is important; ask first for suggestions for improvement and then what he particularly liked. This means that the positive memories stay in your mind last.

Conclusion on added value and emotions in projects

In IT projects, the effect is particularly high if we manage to generate emotions, as these projects are often very technical and specific.

Even if it seems challenging at first glance to generate emotions in IT projects, numerous examples and success stories show us that with the right tricks it can actually be quite easy.

Important basics/requirements

When we start implementing new strategies, we should always keep a few basic things in mind. By the way, these apply not only to the strategies presented here, but to all of our projects:

- Always talk about new aids or tools that we provide to make work easier. We should never talk about necessary “changes” because that often creates rejection. The reasons for this are a topic in themselves, the only important thing at this point is that we take them into account.
- Allow time and patience for the introduction of new aids and tools. It's not enough to just roll out new tools and expect everyone to adopt them immediately. It is important to offer support and training.

If we take this into account in all our projects, it will be easier for us to successfully implement our strategies.

Contact

Do you have any questions about the content, interest in my service or any other concerns?

I look forward to your message!

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