It’s a watershed year for IT Leaders. In the face of many new developments, trends and yes, pressures, this year will demand big decisions—decisions that challenge the organization to stop accepting the status quo.

In this report, we summarize 7 common software development roadblocks that IT leaders must overcome in order to make this year the best one yet.

**Roadblock 1: Living with late project delivery**

In organizations today, the era of tolerating late projects that can overrun budgets by almost 200% on average has run out. Witness the fact that the average tenure of a CIO today is a mere three years, and it’s plain to see companies today want IT leaders who will effect measurable change, carry out innovative plans for cost reduction, and deliver real business value. 30%-40% budget overruns for rework no longer pass the scrutiny of executives who expect costs to come down.

So where do IT projects begin to go off the rails? The wisdom that “the project didn’t become late in the last month, it became late in the first month” rings true. It means that project delays and budget overruns are traced back to root problems in the requirements phase. Throwing resources at QA, testing and development processes typically only treat the symptoms that stem from inefficiencies in the requirements. Most IT leaders have woken up to this, as “fixing requirements” has now become a top priority for many organizations.

**Roadblock 2: Not equating business change with software change**

Any significant business change, ranging from a new strategic initiative to a merger or acquisition, will have some impact on your existing business systems software. The moment a business change occurs, a gap is born between your existing software and the new business process it must now support. The speed and quality with which that gap can be bridged depends on one factor above others: the health of your existing requirements process.
Any requirements process that produces high amounts of rework, change requests, and project delay will, every time business change occurs, suffer from these inefficiencies. The lost revenues and opportunity costs of project delays and quality shortcomings are easily calculable.

For Senior IT leaders, the first critical step in building a rapidly responsive IT team is to modernize the requirements process with technologies that enable efficiency breakthroughs leveraging capabilities like social collaboration, requirements visualization, and requirements reuse, throughout the entire application development process.

**Roadblock 3: Limited ‘visibility’**

It used to be that visibility could only extend down so far, and that as one went further down the organizational hierarchy, the details became less clear. Today this has all changed, with technology that gives senior IT leaders clear visibility right down to the ground level. IT leaders will need to invest in technologies that provide clear visibility to levels where inefficiencies were formerly allowed to flourish without scrutiny. For example, on software projects where vast amounts of rework due to poor or unclear requirements has become the norm, savvy IT leaders will make it a priority to remove these extraneous costs.

Fortunately, this is an area of ‘low hanging fruit’, as the inefficiencies brought on by poor requirements can be easily stamped out by automating many of the manual steps that take place in the requirements definition phase of a project.

**Roadblock 4: Progress held hostage by rigid process**

One tactical advantage that social tools introduce is that they allow people to identify and solve problems quickly in a highly collaborative manner. While this happens with less formality and ceremony, proper social technology allows the same meticulous attention to detail and auditability. Collaborative “swarming” around key issues and having productive conversations in such a manner expedites outcomes and improves quality.

By giving teams the flexibility to come up with their own ‘rules’ for collaborating with real-time feedback, review and approval milestones can occur more rapidly, with potential errors resolved much earlier.
Roadblock 5: ‘Going Agile’ without a helmet

Larger enterprises that develop applications to support their core business (especially in highly regulated industries such as insurance, financial services, pharmaceutical, and healthcare, for example) are struggling to ‘adapt’ an Agile approach that fits their environment. While the Agile approach to developing software is commonplace for smaller organizations and ISVs, “pure” Agile approaches don’t address enterprise realities, such as:

- Creating business cases with well-defined scope to secure funding
- Considering the broad range of stakeholders beyond the user, such as legal, marketing, and operations
- Accounting for regulatory compliance constraints and auditability
- Dealing with the reality of outsourcing and globally distributed development teams

What does this mean for IT leaders? It’s now critical to clearly define how your software requirements must evolve in order for you to pragmatically and incrementally introduce Agile practices that are right for you.

Roadblock 6: Chasing the outsourcing illusion

While outsourcing of application development functions can be highly beneficial to your company, horror stories abound about outsourcing gone wrong. Mostly, such failures can be attributed to poor communication and collaboration issues between third parties and internal stakeholders. And usually these can be traced back to earlier points of confusion or miscommunication that were never resolved and snowballed into major problems that surfaced downstream.

With the multitude of internal and external team members, countless requirements and sheer number of moving parts, IT leaders must introduce a “single source of truth” that every stakeholder – internal and external – can rely on from day one of the requirements definition phase. Strategic outsourcing requires a purpose-built centralized repository for requirements definition, management, and application-lifecycle management support. Not a frenzy of fragmented documents and emails accompanied by mild anxiety and lack of control throughout the process. But rather, a central platform where all players communicate using social and visual simulations designed to promote clarity, collaboration, efficiency, and airtight traceability.

62% of firms are less than satisfied with outsourcing of software project work. 
Roadblock 7: Not realizing the impact of requirements

The impact that requirements have on your key projects may have been debatable in the past, but this is no longer true. The jury has deliberated, and the verdict is in: fixing your requirements approach will yield huge dividends. Consider these statistics:

- On average, 30-50% of project budgets are wasted on rework, and 70-85% of this waste is directly traceable back to faulty requirements.
- Poorly defined applications contribute to a 66% project failure rate.
- 31% of all application defects originate in the requirements, and they are the hardest to both prevent and fix.

No IT leader who wants to make his or her mark can ignore the major impact that improving requirements will have on the organization as a whole. This is especially true when it comes to legacy modernization projects. The pressing need to transform into a digital enterprise means that the requirements definition process must become airtight, highly reliable, and more in-step with business needs than ever before.

Overcome these 7 Roadblocks with Blueprint

Don’t let these 7 software roadblocks undermine the big changes you’re expected to deliver this year. It’s time to make project failures, missed deadlines, rework and overruns a thing of the past with Blueprint—requirements definition and management software that’s purpose built to de-risk and accelerate your IT projects. Contact Blueprint for a live demo today.

Sources
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Blueprint helps organizations to accelerate large, complex IT projects and deliver enhanced business value. With its best-in-class requirements definition and management solution, Blueprint resolves many of the time-consuming, costly, and error-prone functions that challenge IT leaders, thus ensuring that mission critical projects are completed successfully, on time and on budget. Offering seamless integration with application lifecycle management tools, Blueprint works with different development methodologies, including Agile and Waterfall.

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