Go-Live Readiness:

5 Steps to Ensure Your Users Are Prepared

John Hrusovsky, Managing Director, Synexis Consulting

Launching a new system is a pivotal moment for any organization. A successful go-live can drive operational efficiencies and improve business outcomes. But going live before users are ready can lead to confusion, lost productivity and frustration among those end users, ultimately draining value from your organization's investment in the system.

The challenge for leaders of a new system launch is knowing when the users are ready — well prepared and confident in their ability to perform their tasks without intervention from trainers, support staff or "super users." These aren't just boxes to check; they're critical success factors.

Once you've determined what readiness looks like, you need to be certain when your organization has achieved it. It cannot be determined through assumptions or completion of broad-stroke training plans. Instead, readiness must be measured, validated, and reinforced through structured user testing and outcome-driven learning approaches.

Defining Readiness: Moving Beyond Training to Measurable Outcomes

Too often, project teams rely on generic training plans that emphasize system features rather than business outcomes. The assumption is that if users receive training, they will know how to operate the system effectively. But following a training regimen is not by itself a readiness strategy; real preparation requires making certain that users can successfully execute their daily tasks within the new system.

A structured approach to readiness ensures that:

- Users can complete critical tasks without intervention from trainers or super users.
- End-user competency is validated through hands-on testing.
- Readiness gaps are identified early and addressed through targeted retraining.
- Go-live decisions are based on data, not assumptions.

A Five-Step Approach to Measuring Readiness

1 Define User Groups Based on Roles and Needs

Readiness is not one-size-fits-all. Organizations must first segment their users into logical groups based on roles, system interactions and complexity of tasks.

You may, for example, decide to categorize your workforce as:

Power Users: Staff who frequently use the system and handle advanced functions.

Standard Users: Employees who engage with the system as part of their daily workflow.

Casual Users: Staff who interact with the system only occasionally for specific needs.

2 Identify Key Outcomes for Each User Group

Rather than focusing on system features, define what each user group must be able to do using the system.

Process maps, RACI charts and user interviews can help you answer questions such as:

- What tasks do they need to complete?
- What processes must they navigate?
- What are the critical success factors for each role?

By identifying expected outcomes, organizations can design training and validation processes that reflect how the system actually will be used. Involving users at this stage will help ensure the training is based on realistic and relevant goals.

3 Develop Targeted Training Aligned to Business Outcomes

Generic system training often fails because it teaches the tool but not the workflow. Instead, develop curriculum paths tailored to each user group with:

- Role-based scenarios reflecting actual business tasks.
- Hands-on exercises that simulate real workflows.
- Guided learning experiences that reinforce best practices.

It is equally important to remember that adult learners have specific educational needs and expectations. Some are auditory learners, while others are visual learners. A mix of training formats is essential.

4 Test for Competency — Not Just Completion

The only way to validate readiness is to test it. Organizations should conduct:

- Live user testing sessions, where employees complete tasks under real conditions.
- Scenario-based assessments, evaluating if users can navigate exceptions and edge cases.
- Performance tracking, to identify areas where additional support is needed.

If users can perform tasks independently and efficiently, they are ready. If they struggle, targeted retraining should be conducted before go-live.

5 Address Gaps and Reinforce Learning Before Launch

Even well-structured training programs will reveal knowledge gaps among users. Instead of pushing forward regardless, successful organizations:

- Identify weak points in user readiness and address them proactively.
- Offer supplemental training to fill knowledge gaps before go-live.
- Ensure leadership has data-driven confidence in system adoption.

The Key to a Successful Go-Live: Measured, Validated Readiness

For true readiness, a properly functioning system isn't enough; users must be enabled. Ensuring that employees can independently execute critical tasks is the ultimate measure of success.

Organizations that follow a structured, outcome-driven approach to readiness will:

- Minimize post-launch disruptions and reduce support tickets.
- Improve user adoption and confidence from day one.
- Maximize the business value of their system investment.

Final Thought: Recognizing True Readiness

If your go-live strategy doesn't include structured user testing and competency validation, then readiness remains an assumption rather than a measurable reality.

The key question remains: Can your users perform their tasks independently in the new system? If the answer isn't an unequivocal yes, then you're not ready — yet.

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