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7 Common Workday Implementation Pitfalls and How to Overcome Them

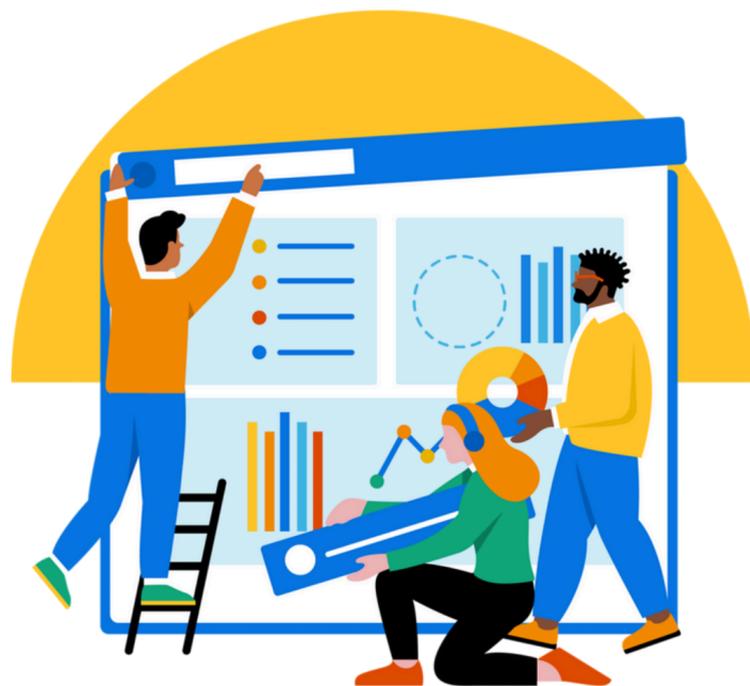**IF YOU'RE ROLLING OUT WORKDAY, THIS WILL SAVE YOU MONTHS OF PAIN.**

workday

Pitfall #1
Customization Overload

The problem:
Everyone wants their Workday to be "special."
So you customize. Then tweak. Then regret it.

You overestimate what gives your company an edge,
and you underestimate which policies you can change to fit
better with the system.

What to do instead:
Stick to standard wherever possible.
Only build custom when it drives clear, measurable value.

Establish clear design principles on when deviations are allowed.
Make sure your project sponsor signs off and is behind this
messaging, and then repeat, repeat, repeat.
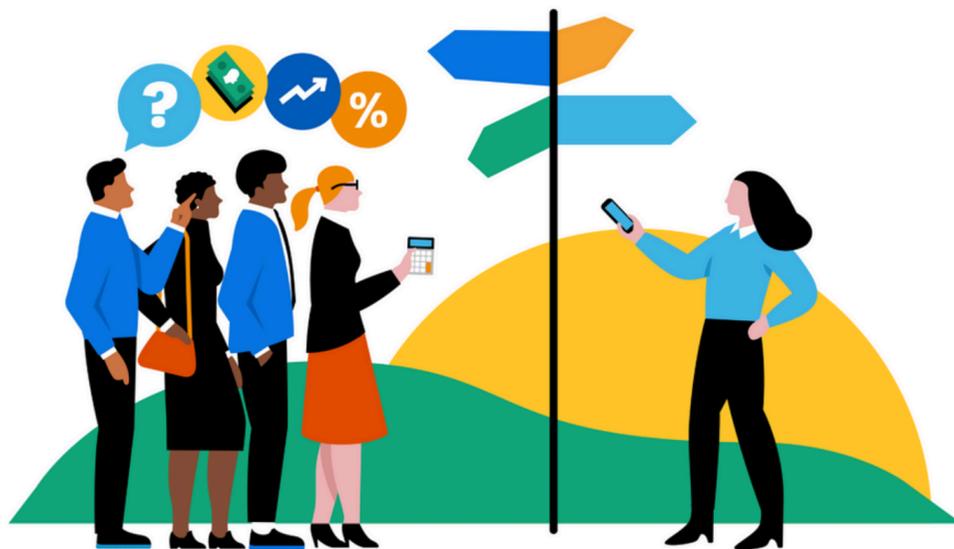
CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Pitfall #2
Change Management is an Afterthought

The problem:
You spend months designing the perfect solution and then assume people will get it. You think you'll save some cost on expensive change services, and just ask someone in your team to take it on.
But adoption doesn't magically happen.

What to do instead:
- Have someone experienced lead change (internal or external).
- Make sure senior leaders know they *own* adoption.
- Use proven methodologies with existing templates, and start on Day 1.
- Embed change leads into every stream, they need to know what's really changing.
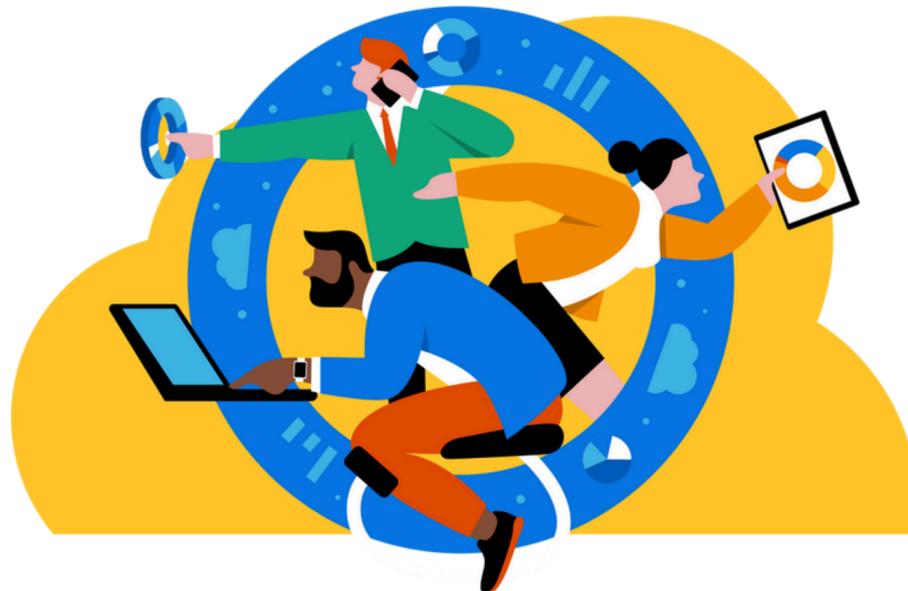
DATA MIGRATION

Pitfall #3
Data Migration Drama

The problem:
It seems simple, just move the data over, right?
Until you realize:
- Data quality is poor
- Workday's data model is very different than your legacy's
- Your team doesn't have the right capability or capacity

What to do instead:
- Data can be the bottleneck of your whole project.
- You need a strong team with Excel chops, legacy system knowledge, and enough time.
- You'll run multiple cycles, but don't wait to bring your A-game.
- Spend serious time on validation, and make sure your partner gives you the right reports.
- And don't forget to appreciate your data heroes.

TESTING

Pitfall #4 – Testing Treated as a Checkbox

The problem:
Someone clicks through a few tasks.
Everything "looks fine."
Then go-live hits and you find many things that should have been found during testing. Testing isn't just about clicking, it's about proving your design holds up in real-life situations.

What to do instead:
- Make it clear: issues found now = fixed by the partner.
- Issues found later = your team's headache.
- Don't just use standard scripts. Build detailed testing scenarios.
- Assign an experienced test manager.
- Set clear entry and exit criteria.
- Put testers in the same room with experts and protect their time. Testing means testing.

STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

Pitfall #5 – Executive & Stakeholder Disconnect

The problem:
Leaders sign off the budget, then wait until they hear their support is needed.
Stakeholders give input once, then go quiet.
At go-live, they're surprised when it doesn't match expectations.

What to do instead:
- Your CFO or CHRO should be your biggest ambassador.
- They should actively show senior stakeholders how this transforms work, even mid-project. Think: a live demo of an exec dashboard.
- They must delegate day-to-day decisions to the teams and empower them, but keep the door open for escalations.

And your team?
- Make sure leadership is well-informed and ready to back you when it matters.

LACK OF OWNERSHIP

Pitfall #6
No Ownership or Day 2 Plan

The problem:

You go live… and then what?

Your partner rolls off.

Your team is tired.

There's no plan, no roadmap, and no one owns the backlog.

What to do instead:

From day one, build for self-sufficiency.

- Have your team shadow your partner: take notes, ask questions, own config decisions.
- Document everything that's not "out of the box."
- Start drafting your post-go-live roadmap before go-live.
- Have a detailed plan for the first 2 months, this will shape how your system is received.
- Set up a clear support model: structure, processes, roles.
- And make sure you've got expert boots on the ground for tier 1 and tier 2 support.
- This is your team's best learning window, give them someone to learn from.

MANAGING WORKLOAD →

Pitfall #7 – BAU Overload Kills Momentum

The problem:
You're trying to build a rocket while flying the plane.
Your team is expected to run payroll, support users, and launch Workday, all at once.
What happens? Delays. Burnout. Shortcuts that cost you later.

What to do instead:

- Be honest about capacity and act on it.
- Don't be afraid to bring in temporary contractors to backfill or support the project (just don't hand off too many critical roles to temps).
- Make detailed weekly capacity plans for both project and BAU.
- Do this with your partner, and adjust early when people get overstretched.

Give your team space, and they'll deliver magic.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT →

Wrapping It Up

Workday projects don't succeed by luck, they succeed with planning, clarity, and the right people.

✅ Get your foundation right
✅ Protect your team's time
✅ Focus on adoption, not just config

If you plan well and partner smart, you can deliver a Workday project your team is proud of.

💬 Any other pitfalls we missed? Share your experience in the comments!
🚀 Interest in more advice for Workday? Follow Rick, Matt Komendolowicz and Incubane for more.

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