billtrust

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

Best practices for PSO implementations

The ultimate guide to successfully implement AR solutions, from Billtrust experts

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Introduction

Software implementation projects can be complex. Every project is unique, but the challenges faced across projects are generally very similar.

Account Receivable (AR) automation solutions are no different. You might think you don't have the required expertise to successfully initiate and deploy an AR solution in your IT environment. Or you wonder what the operational impact of implementing changes is for your organization. And then there is the aspect of time. How do you juggle these new project tasks with ongoing daily workflows and keep getting things done?

These are all perfectly legitimate questions. That's why a good implementation of an AR technology shouldn't leave anything to chance. You should have confidence that you're in good hands. The implementation process should be well defined and structured, and use a consistent and proven implementation methodology.

A new AR solution should help you meet your organizational goals, reduce cost & DSO, while providing customers with a better experience managing bills, payments, and more. But implementation of a new AR application or platform is no small feat. Implementation failures can inflict a great deal of pain on any organization. It could be cost overruns, software that fails to meet the needs of the business, employee acceptance issues and so on.

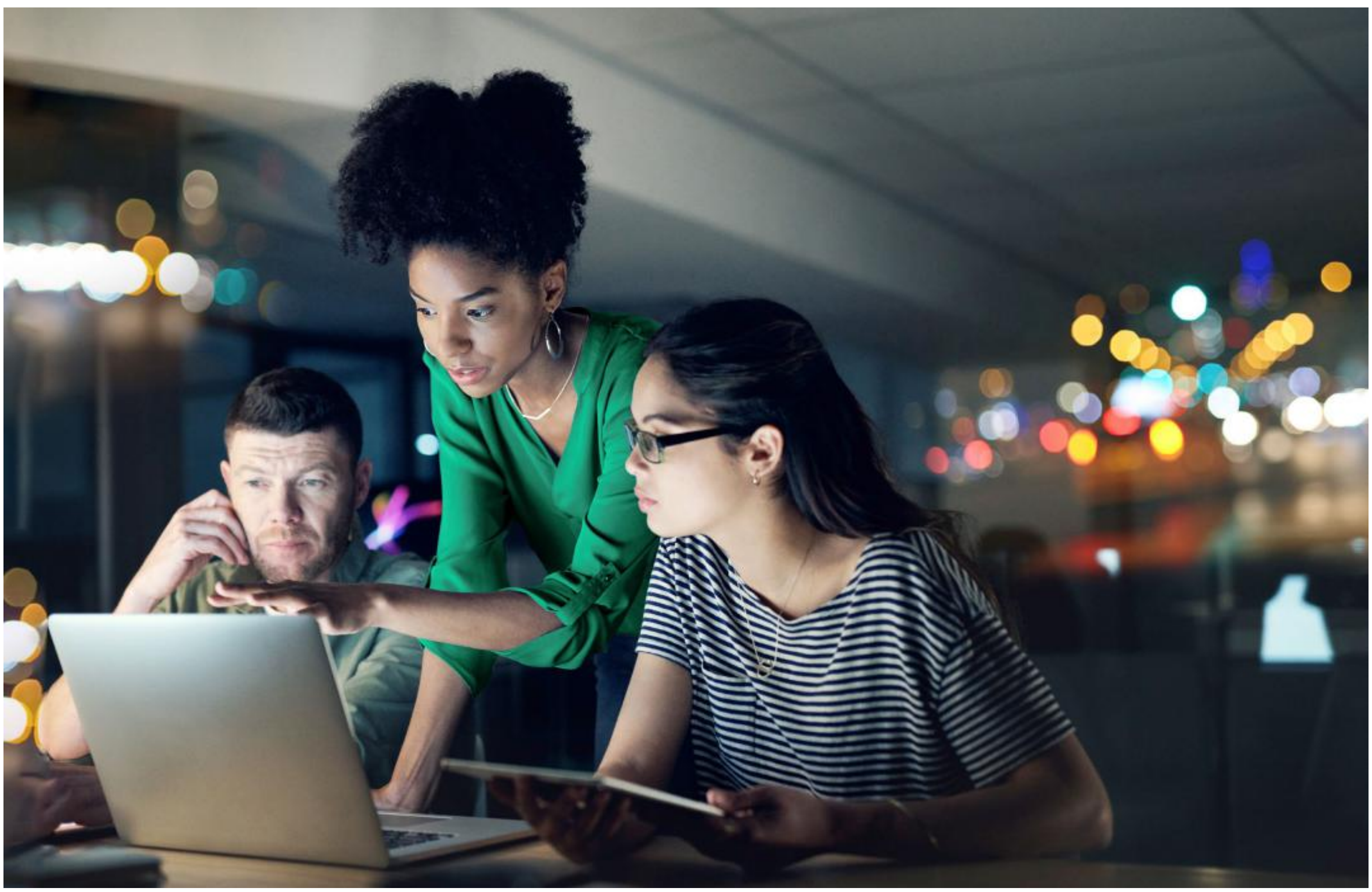
However, when implementation is done right, it can generate knock-on impacts and changes throughout the enterprise and beyond. The results can be impressive and risks can be minimized by taking a phased approach that gives beneficial returns at each step.

A proven blueprint

Software companies with **dedicated Professional Services teams** have perfected the art of implementing through many years of experience and dealing with all kinds of customers, projects and processes. To get maximum value from your investment **proper professional implementation** of an AR technology solution is essential.

During literally thousands of implementations Billtrust's PSO team has identified the **critical steps** organizations should take at each stage of an AR automation implementation. The goal of this best practices guide is to present businesses with guidelines available today on how to get the most out of every stage and ensure a smooth ride.

So let's get started on your implementation journey and find out all the tips and tricks Billtrust experts have learned over the years.



Why implement with a Professional Services team?

The success, performance, and ultimate ROI from any implementation depends largely on how well it's been planned and executed. That's where a Professional Services Organization (PSO) comes into play.

These experts help you get the most out of any AR solution. They assist with implementation and are responsible for customer success by sharing their technical expertise in order to unlock the full business value from a suite of AR solutions.

Let's review the reasons why enterprises should engage with a Professional Services team during implementation of an AR solution:

THE HIGH COST OF BAD IMPLEMENTATION

A McKinsey-Oxford study found 17% of IT projects fare so poorly they actually threatened the existence of the company.

YOU GAIN ACCESS TO EXPERTISE

Your PSO team is thoroughly knowledgeable about the software and has probably dealt with any number of implementation scenarios (and the experiences that come with it).

GOOD PSOS ARE GREAT COLLABORATORS

PSO teams know the advantages of working with your own developers, system architects and other stakeholders to make sure everyone is satisfied with the end result.

YOU'LL CONSERVE RESOURCES (AND EVEN YOUR SPEND)

Your IT team may have limited resources, spread across a lot of needs, so PSO teams can spare them from getting oriented to a new solution and carrying out a long list of implementation details, which can devour time and resources. When adopters total up the costs of using internal devs versus a dedicated PSO team, they'll often find the latter proves to be a more efficient investment.

YOU'LL INSULATE YOUR TEAM FROM IMPLEMENTATION CHAOS

Rather than getting bogged down in the potentially disruptive, even dispiriting details of implementation, your IT (and finance) teams can attend to the important work of managing current operational or strategic needs.

ACCELERATE PAYMENTS AND REDUCE TIME-TO-VALUE

The experience of PSO teams with the product and past experience means they're proficient in timely implementation, meaning you're realizing value sooner.

YOU'LL MAXIMIZE YOUR INVESTMENT

An AR solution may deliver solid results even without PSO implementation, but with their help? You're guaranteed it's perfectly aligned with your objectives and roadmap, better integrated, and fine-tuned for optimal ROI from day one...with the results only getting better from there.

1. Defining the three Rs: Resources, Roles & Responsibilities

There is a case for implementation to refer to bridge-building, and that analogy particularly applies to this first phase of overall planning. An implementation project needs architects, engineers, and resources, all available and delivered at the right points on the timeline. A good provider PSO team will have these resources and in-depth understanding of how to manage a complete project partnering with your team.

So before the project gets underway, we've found it's vital that everyone involved – the internal stakeholders, the IT department, the PSO team and any other key participants – have a **clear, strictly defined understanding** of the **resources** needed, and the **roles** and **responsibilities** each of them must assume to build a successful bridge.

The PSO team can help in developing and documenting these three R's. They can tell you what person is needed based on the solution that is being developed and they can define levels of projects based on complexity.

"The chasm between purchasing software and receiving value is crossed with a successful implementation project. To build the bridge we need materials, a plan, and qualified engineers. Technology provides the raw materials, and Billtrust project managers have already designed the blueprint. We'll provide engineers with certified business analysts, data analysts, quality assurance, and architects that will get you across the chasm to real outcomes."

CHRISTY GREEN
SR. VP PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
BILLTRUST

TIP: DEVELOP OR REFINE THE ROADMAP

If an organization is making a software investment without a well-defined roadmap, then it should consider stepping back and reassessing its plans. This is a point where many organizations actually call in a highly regarded provider PSO to help them refine their roadmap.

TIP: INCLUDE SUPER USERS!

Make sure your best users get familiarized with the new software as part of the implementation process. They can provide useful insight into everyday functionality and serve as evangelists (or actual trainers) for the solution once it's been rolled out.

TIP: INCLUDE ADOPTION AND CUSTOMER SUCCESS KPIS

Internal and customer adoption of your AR software is key to your success.

So what are the best practices to follow during this stage of implementation?

BEST PRACTICES	
Let the PSO do the heavy lifting	The PSO team supplies the blueprint, personnel, and resources that relieve your team of most of the burdens involved. When working with the Billtrust PSO team, they'll develop this plan, which will guard against scope creep and keep the implementation targeted on its initial goals.
Assemble a core group of stakeholders	It doesn't take a lot of people to remove obstacles, provide guidance and supply final approvals. Most of the time a decision maker, the end-user and IT people with knowledge of the ERP and/or data will do, but escalation resources should be designated and communicated with the PSO team.
Identify initial goals and key performance indicators (KPIs)	The PSO team should help you establish KPIs early on in the process. The better the KPIs at the outset of an implementation, the more aligned the implementation will be with a business's ultimate goals.
Designate internal IT and subject matter experts (SMEs)	If you engage a vendor PSO, you'll remove much of the need to burden IT with implementation. But even then, there should be an IT lead who will liaison with the PSO to ensure technical and operational alignment SMEs are advisory roles in your company who already have knowledge of the specific operational areas that the new solution will impact.

2. Initiate the project with successful data intake

Project intake is indispensable to a smooth and efficient implementation. The foundation of an implementation project involves gathering all needed data up-front **before** more resources are deployed to the project. When done right, intake shaves time off the rest of the project.

What are the best practices for a successful intake stage?

BEST PRACTICES	
Hold an intake meeting and do it before project kick-off	Brief key stakeholders on the deliverables they'll be asked to prepare. By assembling the necessary data and assets, organizations can save time and avoid holding costly status meetings.
Start with a standard set of data file specifications	Based on the AR solution, guidelines are provided by your PSO team, ensuring the right data is entered into the right fields. Customizations can always be added later on versus building the entire spec from scratch.
Ask your vendor for existing integrations	See if the provider or their PSO has integrations with ERPs, external portals, etc., where they already have data mapping in place that can be utilized.

TIP: PDF COPY OF THE DATA

To help PSO teams validate the intake data, a PDF copy of the data is always useful.

TIP: AVOID SIMULTANEOUSLY EXECUTING PROJECTS

For instance, carrying out an ERP migration at the same time may consume the time and attention of stakeholders and involve competing priorities that impede the intake process for an AR automation implementation.

"I can't overemphasize how really useful and important a good intake process is to the success of an implementation. The things you do at this step can save the customer a lot of time and money down the road."

D'MITRI TISDALE
BUSINESS ANALYST, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
BILLTRUST

3. Align resources to goals in the project kick off

Assuming you've had a successful project intake, now you're ready to swing into the next step in implementation. The kick-off meeting, **led and managed by the PSO team,** aligns goals with the end-users and technical teams to drive success and make sure a company recognizes the benefits they expected. During the kick-off all goals and other key objectives of the implementation are discussed.

BEST PRACTICES	
Get the right people on board	It's important to get full alignment between the executive, AR and IT teams at this point and address key questions.
ERP: transparency appreciated	Suppliers should be transparent about the degree of knowledge they possess about their ERP system. It's helpful if an ERP vendor representative is on hand to assist the supplier and/or clarify data-related concerns, during and after kick-off.
Draft a kick-off checklist	In this checklist the PSO Project Lead will closely define all the actions, roles, and deliverables involved at this stage of the project.

TIP: BENEFITS OF THE PSO TEAMS BEHIND THE WHEEL

The expertise of the PSO team guarantees that the implementation aligns with your company goals. Some of what should be covered:

- A project brief and plan outlining key details of the project, including KPIs/metrics, project schedule, stakeholders, and more.
- Project scope to set boundaries on what work is (and isn't) included in the implementation.
- The project roadmap, including any milestones.
- Process details such as what frameworks and collaboration platforms will be used, how status reports will be configured and shared, and so on.

TIP: THERE'S LIFE AFTER THE TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION

PSO teams are great at spotting key factors that often go overlooked because everyone is so laser focused on the technical part of the implementation.

- Are education and training part of the go-live requirements to guarantee the software will be broadly used from day one?
- Is there an internal marketing or incentives plan in place that will encourage organizational adoption of the new software?

"There's no such thing as over-communication; learning about an implementation and about not just what but why a particular function or integration is important are essential to a good kickoff, because that's when everyone who's touched by a new solution should really get to share their feedback. That way, no one has to backtrack to resolve questions or issues during Requirements & Design."

DEE KETTLES
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
BILLTRUST

4. Design and define requirements from the user and customer point of view

For an implementation to be successful, it's got to launch a product that's expressly designed around the customer's requirements. That means the requirements & design stage of the project has to observe best practices in three areas that the Billtrust PSO team has ratified in practice during literally thousands of implementations.

1. Know your data

TIP: PREPARE AND SHARE DATA MAPPING

Sharing a data map can help in clarifying situations like these, and a PSO expert will ask questions that add context to help sort them out further.

BEST PRACTICES	
Definitions differ	Get clear definitions of the input data. While different organizations may have similar data, how they each define those fields may differ based on how they use that data.
Be sure data is available	During kick-off, PSO teams will identify when data needs to be on hand in order to avoid delays in the project timeline.
Include third-party processors	Many companies outsource data processing to ERP vendors, then work with output files the vendor provides. If that's the case, the vendor should be included early so your PSO can get explanations about inputs and outputs from the processor.
Provide samples	Sample data and sample invoices are a great help for any specific pieces of custom logic that need to be created.

"Knowing your data is so crucial. One business may use the label 'Total Due' to refer to the total due on an invoice – while another applies it to the total due on the account."

SHAUNA BARNASEVITCH
BUSINESS ANALYST, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
BILLTRUST

2. Be available

BEST PRACTICES	
Ensure all SMEs stay available	Sometimes SMEs move on after kick-off. PSO teams will need to ask clarifying questions in design.
Set a timeframe	Your PSO partner will set expectations on when Requirements & Design will take place. That's to help schedule resources that admittedly have other work.
Decide on the best way to communicate	Specify email, Slack, or whatever platform works best for everyone, and create team channels or distribution lists within that platform.

3. Confirm and review

BEST PRACTICES	
Confirm business rules for using data	Toward the end of the Requirements & Design phase, PSO will share a Business Requirements Document (BRD) to confirm the business rules for using data.
Review the configuration	During the configuration review it's all about the user and customer experience. Internal users need to verify if the system is providing a productive user experience for them, and a positive and error-free experience for their customers.

From here, we'll go to UAT to test (and stress test!) the approved design.

"Requirements are the longest part of an implementation project because there are so many pieces involved, but it's absolutely crucial to get them right."

SHAUNA BARNASEVITCH
BUSINESS ANALYST, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
BILLTRUST

5. Validate your configuration with UAT scenarios

Configuration and User Acceptance Testing (UAT) of your new software when it's reached a pretty final degree of features and functionality is where the rubber truly meets the road: It's essential to get this step right.

Why? In the case of B2B AR solutions, it's where your implementation team or PSO can validate whether or not the product will satisfy both your internal users and your customers.

TIP: A MORE AGILE APPROACH

UAT workflows can also be implemented way earlier in the implementation process. When pursuing a more agile approach to UAT, UAT itself is not a separate phase or project step but rather a continuous collaboration between all stakeholders.

BEST PRACTICES	
Don't rely on a single UAT scenario	Since there's no one-size-fits-all-sellers B2B customer, there's no one-size-fits-all testing scenario when it comes to UAT. When setting up UAT scenarios, start by considering the user experiences you'll want to deliver for your most complex and your least complex customers and work from there.
Review the UAT test plan in depth	Decide which features you want to turn on, and how those features should get tested. How your company uses a software solution may vary from how other companies use it, so features need to be tested against your own expectations.
Prioritize feature releases	During UAT, bugs may be identified due to features customized to your business needs. Rather than delay the entire launch, consult with your PSO team about the options; you may choose to go live with the rest of the product, but delay release of some features until the bugs are resolved.
Don't skimp on training	Get your teams ready to go-live.

"A good example of implementing features iteratively is when we went live and later released a feature that provided multi-language support for pay-on-email, where English was available for initial go-live and Spanish and French were developed later."

REGINA CHOICE
BUSINESS ANALYST
BILLTRUST

6. Go-live with success

When it's time to turn on the switch, it's not the time for the implementation team to walk away. Far from it, in fact. They may be faced with unexpected issues, such as bugs and system failures, or not well trained users.

Here are the best practices for go-live that help you begin maximizing positive outcomes from the very first minute you've turned on your new platform or application:

BEST PRACTICES	
Maintain resource availability	What may happen during the course of implementation is that IT will be involved early on, but will move over to other projects prior to go-live.
Ensure key stakeholders are happy	Prior to go-live, it's a good move to re-engage decision makers to make certain they're satisfied that business objectives will be met.
Go-live data must match UAT data	If the data used for go-live differs from what was employed during UAT, there's no way to guarantee outcomes. When everyone is on the same page about data requirements, a go-live will run far more smoothly.
Have go-live contingency scenarios ready	Set up a blueprint, just in case, on how to triage and resolve issues that could potentially arise.

TIP: EDUCATE FROM THE VERY START

Starting from the kick-off, users across the organization should be viewing education and self-service training videos on the software to drive internal adoption.

TERRI MASKE
SENIOR DIRECTOR, CUSTOMER EDUCATION
BILLTRUST

"I've had a couple customers do their own testing at go-live by sending invoices to themselves so they can verify, 'this is working the way we expected it to, now let's roll it out to the larger business.' That's actually the kind of diligence and follow-through you love to see from everyone involved in an implementation."

JAMES PARKER
SENIOR BUSINESS ANALYST, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
BILLTRUST

7. Think beyond implementation

Once the "bridge" has been built – an AR solution has been launched – a company's pursuit of ROI from that application should have only just begun. A modern software company recognizes that your journey continues after you go-live and helps your company achieve year-over-year value with a customer-centric support model. What best practices does Billtrust's PSO team suggest for ramping up post-implementation success?

TIP: UPGRADING YOUR ERP?

Plan ahead for your ERP upgrade and communicate with the same PSO team that did your implementation.

BEST PRACTICES	
Partner with your vendor to drive insights and action	Data alone doesn't provide context or supply deeper, actionable insights. Align with software providers who interpret performance data to generate insights that continually increase your ROI.
Focus on education for continuous improvement	Make sure that users receive all the ongoing training and opportunities necessary to become capable users, even super-users. Explore ways the software can be applied to processes and pain points that might not have been part of your initial scope as part of a "continuous adoption" strategy.
Keep updating to meet evolving business objectives	It's one thing for an AR solution to meet its initial goals, but your goals for the solution will change over time. Regularly update the goals and KPIs you're using with the solution, and how it leverages data; keeping the solution current with those goals, as well as with any advances in data utilization, systems integration, and changes in customer behavior.
Always prioritize the customer experience	Continuously review and improve the UX to keep it current with your customers' needs. Deliver "surprise and delight" by working with your provider to turn on any relevant new features and functionality that have been developed.

About Billtrust PSO

With Billtrust's Professional Services Organization, you'll accelerate time-to-value with a proven AR implementation program. To bridge the gap between purchasing an AR automation solution and realizing value from it, you need materials, a plan, and qualified engineers.

Technology provides the raw materials, and Billtrust project managers have designed a proven blueprint.

We'll provide engineers and certified business analysts, data analysts, quality assurance, and architects to bridge the gap to real outcomes.

Billtrust Professional Services have built over 3,700 of these implementations, and we continue to evolve to stay on top of the latest industry trends and incorporate them into a blueprint for customer success.

80+ professionals providing 20+ years experience in O2C implementations

Order-to-cash solutions for 40+ verticals

1,800+ satisfied customers with a 98% satisfaction rate

5,000+ implementation learnings

Consultative approach to assure your success, with an outcome-focused planning team

A proven balance between speed with quality

Professional certifications including PMP, Six Sigma, and agile scrum certification

Get started

Contact our sales team to talk to an expert today.

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

1009 Lenox Drive, Suite 101
Lawrenceville, New Jersey 08648
United States

HAMILTON

11 South Gold Drive, Suite D
Hamilton, New Jersey 08619
United States

SACRAMENTO

2400 Port Street
West Sacramento, California 95691
United States

GHENT

Moutstraat 64 bus 501
9000 Ghent
Belgium

AMSTERDAM

H.J.E. Wenckebachweg 200-III
AS 1096 Amsterdam
Netherlands

KRAKÓW

ul. prof Michała Życzkowskiego 19
3 piętro
Kraków 31-864
Poland

ABOUT BILLTRUST

Billtrust is a leading provider of cloud-based software and integrated payment processing solutions that simplify and automate B2B commerce. Accounts receivable is broken and relies on conventional processes that are outdated, inefficient, manual and largely paper based. Billtrust is at the forefront of the digital transformation of AR, providing mission-critical solutions that span credit decisioning and monitoring, online ordering, invoice delivery, payments and remittance capture, invoicing, cash application and collections.