

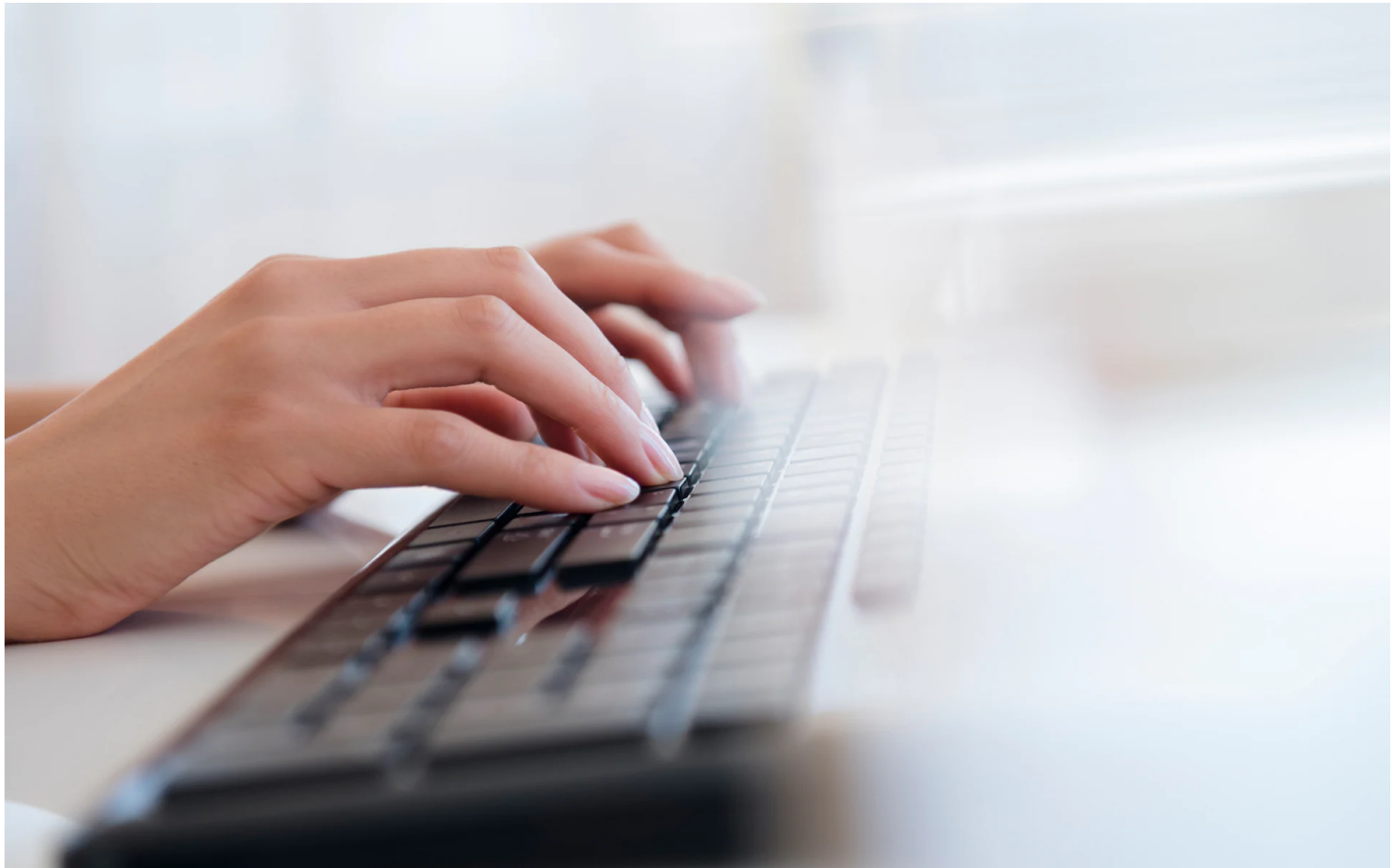
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Three things to consider when introducing tech changes

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Implementing a new tech system? Planning and scoping should account for a big chunk of your project timeline CREDIT: JGI/JAMIE GRILL

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Experts share the challenges associated with implementing new technology into a business and how to overcome them.

One of the most challenging undertakings for any business is rolling out new technology on a large scale.

Whether it's a new content management system that an entire workforce will have to get to grips with, or a new way of streamlining a worldwide delivery system, the challenge is taking that step to modernise without alienating staff, crippling processes and losing clients.

“No two projects are the same, even within the same business,” says Dan McMillan of [Deloitte](https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en.html) (<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en.html>). “There’s isn’t a one-size-fits-all [approach] in terms of structure.”

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But there are some key steps that companies should take when dealing with a large-scale technology roll-out, he explains, and it all starts with planning:

“We’ve seen organisations begin projects without a good understanding of how to structure a programme. Many lose out in the planning stages without a clear vision of what they’re trying to achieve.”

Plan and scope

One firm that embarked on a radical overhaul of the way it does business is independent drinks wholesaler, [LWC](https://www.lwc-drinks.co.uk/) (<https://www.lwc-drinks.co.uk/>).

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To help, the company dedicated a quarter of the entire project timeline to scoping and planning, and hired two freelancers.

“Employing extra people turned out to be incredibly important, because we found that without them, the project team’s workload would have been at capacity, denying them the flexibility to roll with the punches as issues arose,” she explains.

Communicate clearly

When a company's workforce is spread across multiple sites, rolling out a new tech system can pose additional challenges.

Lingerie chain, [Ann Summers](https://www.annsummers.com/), needed a way to enable its staff to interact across its 130 UK stores, so it implemented [Yapster](https://www.yapster.info/), a chat app through which employees can message each other securely to arrange shift cover, share updates, photos and videos, and see news from head office.

“The best way to engage staff was for them to connect directly via the device that they use most often – their smartphone,” says Ann Summers retail director, Marek Laskowski

One of the early challenges was getting staff to use only this app, rather than Facebook or WhatsApp. “There has been some resistance from colleagues who enjoyed using consumer apps,” he says.

“Employees are involved in new feature testing”

Kim Atherton, OVO Energy

It tried to win employees over by explaining the limitations of the other apps, such as personal and business data protection issues.

Mr Laskowski adds that clear communication is key: “We also produced how-to guides and held meetings so that we can all speak openly about the change.”

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Kim Atherton, the firm's chief people officer, says that the design process had its own teething problems, as staff pushed for it to have different functions.

"As we built the platform, we went down a number of dead ends," she says. "Being so closely involved with our users is great, but it can lead to conflicting demands."

Time was wasted on building features that were only suitable for certain segments of the business. The system also required a culture shift because, for the first time, staff were able to see each other's goals.

Still, the system has been a resounding success, thinks Ms Atherton: "We've built a product around the staff's needs. Employees are involved in new feature testing and our chief executive will also use it at monthly town hall meetings."

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