



## Top 10 PLM Pitfalls to Avoid

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**Free white paper from John Stark Associates and SofTech helps companies improve odds of success**

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More than one new PLM-related white paper has been introduced to the CAD scene recently ([click here](#) to view *Cadalyst* news), but none has a theme as irresistibly practical as *Top 10 PLM Pitfalls to Avoid*, from [John Stark Associates](#) and [SofTech](#).

Based on their years of experience guiding companies in their PLM (product lifecycle management) pursuits, consultant John Stark and PLM provider SofTech have jointly produced this guide to help manufacturers overcome the fundamental obstacles commonly encountered when planning and executing PLM -- potentially saving money and time and improving odds for success.

Jay Pappas, SofTech product management director, told Cadalyst, "Companies know they need PLM, but many struggle with the best way to start. The reality we've seen at SofTech is that companies can succeed with different approaches, whether it's top down, bottom up or other.

"Education is key to gain a clearer understanding of what PLM is -- and isn't -- and the benefits that can be gained specific to their business, with insight on how to spot and avoid the common pitfalls. Beginning with a pilot implementation or implementing in incremental phases can also help to prove success and accelerate the roll-out process."

### **10 Pitfalls to Avoid**

Avoid these ten common mistakes when you undertake a PLM initiative, according to John Stark Associates and SofTech, and your company will greatly improve its chances for success.

1. Starting before everyone is informed
2. Proceeding before everyone agrees/is educated
3. Driving PLM as a department effort
4. Having unclear project objectives
5. Not planning for setbacks and rejection
6. Proceeding without a sense of reality
7. Running a major product risk
8. Thinking you can hold off on PLM a little longer
9. Believing you can't fail
10. Not measuring and promoting your success

Here, we provide a brief outline of each pitfall. The full white paper, *Top 10 PLM Pitfalls to Avoid*, is available free from John Stark and Associates and SofTech (when you provide your contact information) at [www.softech.com/whitepapers/](http://www.softech.com/whitepapers/).

### **1. Starting Before Everyone is Informed**

It is very important to promote awareness and to make sure everyone has a clear understanding of PLM from the top down throughout your company before you start. One of the very critical elements of your PLM initiative should be an educational presentation to top management/VPs to educate them.

**2. Proceeding Before Everyone Agrees/Is Educated**

Many PLM initiatives fail because those spearheading them don't get clear agreement and support from top management. It's at the CXO or VP level that action has to be taken if the expectations of PLM are to become a reality. No organization can make a widespread change, like PLM, without consensus resonating from the top down.

**3. Driving PLM as a Department Effort**

PLM should not just be an IT effort or an engineering effort; it must be a company effort. Your PLM team should consist of individuals from all areas of your company and represent a true cross-section of the company.

**4. Having Unclear Project Objectives**

Just as there is no single view of PLM, there is no single objective; there can be many. In fact, objectives and targets for meeting those objectives may differ depending on the person's level in the organization. Set your project objectives with clearly defined targets of success.

**5. Not Planning for Setbacks and Rejection**

Just as with any major program, setbacks are inevitable in a PLM initiative, as is rejection. Success is achieved by overcoming these obstacles. Don't be shocked when setbacks occur, and plan for their inevitability with education and realistic program schedules and plans.

**6. Proceeding Without a Sense of Reality**

Many PLM initiatives fail because companies have an unclear sense of the reality of their business and of PLM. If the project team does not fully understand the reality of how their business currently works ... no new technology, infrastructure or system will help. Also, it's important to understand that PLM is a system implementation not an application implementation like Microsoft Word, where you install it on a few PCs and you're done. The additional reality of PLM is that it requires a commitment of time and resources that can span several years.

**7. Running a Major Product Risk**

Managing a product all the way across its lifecycle allows a company to take control of what happens to it at each and every state. Keep in mind (and communicate whenever possible) that if your company loses control of a product, there can be very costly risks.

**8. Thinking You Can Hold Off on PLM a Little Longer**

You may understand the value of PLM but you may be hoping to hold off on implementation until business gets a bit better or for some other reason. However, PLM is an essential value-adding investment that can not be put off or avoided.

**9. Believing You Can't Fail**

Well, the truth of the matter is you can. Because PLM is so important, it is sometimes assumed that once a PLM initiative is started, it will succeed. Yet in practice, some PLM initiatives fail. Understanding the risk factors will help you avoid or overcome potential roadblocks.

**10. Not Measuring and Promoting Your Success**

As noted earlier, part of your project work is to lay down clear targets of quantifiable success you expected to be gained with PLM. But it is equally important to measure your success against these targets and to promote your team's PLM success as you go forward -- up your chain of command and even to customers for that matter. PLM delivers many benefits for companies and as a result has elevated the careers of many people involved with its success. You'll know you've succeeded when other departments in your company knock on your door asking for assistance in applying PLM to enhance their business area -- or you get that next promotion!