

## THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

By Colleen M. Niese

The business case has been presented, the green light given to fund a new technology-based solution—a pay-and-display system, an automated monthly parker program, or perhaps an upgrade to a corporate support function—and you're in the driver's seat to source the right vendor to provide the deliverable. At first, it seems straightforward, but it can become really complicated, really fast. A quick glance at any industry directory, such as the *IPI Parking Buyers Guide & Consultants Directory*, might show you have more than 75 vendors from which to choose, so while finding a solution is possible, finding the right solution for you proves the devil lives in the details.

Navigating your way through the sea of offerings, functions, and promises any option may present while balancing the priorities of the project can be a daunting task. While there are several factors that affect a project's outcome, there are three that consistently play key roles no matter the ultimate goal: team composition, solution evaluation, and training.

### Who's on my Team?

Inclusion is the name of the game when leading this type of project. Inviting every role from a user, customer, and stakeholder perspective insures that you'll identify the right solution efficiently, on time, and within budget. I once sat in a meeting where the marketing department presented to operations a customer webpage that was to launch later in the week. It was slick and user friendly, and had all the bells and whistles. It was also the first time operations saw the page, and their feedback set the project back weeks, costing the organization unallocated dollars, time, and resources, with everyone involved becoming a bit disengaged from the original goal of the project. Before kicking off any initiative, answer the question: Is everyone who's going to touch this system in the room from the start?

### Kick the Tires

When reviewing solutions with providers, the language, functional options, and overall workflow can sometimes



leave a team a bit disconnected from their original set of needs and priorities. We like to draft an evaluation template with the project team that lists their requirements related to the solution—internal system integration, new efficiencies, management reporting, etc.—with a priority ranking next to each. This agreed-upon scorecard is used during each vendor presentation to validate both the existence of each criteria identified and its degree of relativity to the organization's needs. Using this type of system keeps the team focused on the requirements, agreed on the definition of each, and aligned around what's in and what's out when it's time for final selection.

### How do I Plug This Thing In?

The ideal time to figure out how to best get the ship into the bottle is not after it's built. One of the more commonly overlooked components to project completion is its implementation, specifically user training. Ensuring that all users fully adopt the new solution requires a hefty amount of effort, support, and reinforcement. Training is the best vehicle to achieve full user integration. Work closely with your vendor and your project team throughout project development to design the supporting training materials so your users can perform their respective responsibilities in the new world. Education on what the system does and how to use it during implementation and in steady state will largely drive the initial success and long-term sustainability. **P**



**COLLEEN M. NIESE** is a principal at The Marlyn Group, LLC and a member of IPI's Consultants Committee. She can be reached at [cniese@marlyngroupllc.com](mailto:cniese@marlyngroupllc.com).