

Your rollout didn't fail. **It exposed flaws built in before you signed.**

Most rollout failures are design flaws that only became visible at rollout. Requirements were written off process maps instead of site realities, then stayed hidden through procurement, build, and a quiet pilot.

What consultants blame **versus the reality.**

CHANGE MGMT

Assumes the software was fine and the workforce just lacked enthusiasm.

USER RESISTANCE

Blames frontline operators instead of drop-down menus that cannot describe the actual work being performed.

THE REALITY

Every standard excuse measures management effort. None measures specification quality or physical site fit.

Blaming change management protects advisory retainers. A design flaw offers no follow-on billing.

The pilot succeeded under **the easiest conditions.**

WHERE YOU PILOTED

Volunteered or corporate-assigned
flagship site: spare staffing, reliable
Wi-Fi, and a dozen full-time EHS
specialists with desk time to
tolerate slow screens.

WHERE YOU SHOULD HAVE

Short-handed crews, non-standard
tasks, high contractor turnover,
weak cell coverage, and supervisors
under production shift pressure.

When the form takes a minute to load on weak cellular,
near-miss reporting dies silently. No one logs a ticket for
a report they abandoned.

Central category lists force "Other" to the top.

- 01 **Central list misses local work.** Routine tasks at regional processing units never made the central corporate dropdown menu.
- 02 **Shift pressure forces a workaround.** Facing a mandatory field, the supervisor chooses "Other" to keep operations moving.
- 03 **Data quality collapses.** "Other" becomes the largest category in the database; management responds by adding more rules.
- 04 **Shadow reporting takes over.** Real hazard communication migrates to messaging apps and paper notes.

Shadow reporting is not a compliance violation. It is the official system failing. The free-text beside "Other" names the work your list never covered.

Data entry moved. **Accountability didn't.**

PRE-LAUNCH • OWNED

A dozen specialists own data quality

They set the formatting rules

They quietly fix record errors

POST-LAUNCH • UNASSIGNED

Entry transfers overnight to
hundreds of supervisors

Never written into job descriptions
or reviews

Production targets take priority over
forms

The diagnostic: when a safety record has an error, who gets the phone call? If it is still EHS, accountability never shifted.

Usage by facility tells you **which failure this is.**

MANAGEMENT

Flat and low everywhere

Same weak training, same silence from leadership: sponsor gone, training budget cut. Fund the training or get leadership back on board.

DESIGN FLAW

High at most, zero at a few

The setup does not fit daily work at those sites: physical tasks, cell coverage, contractor access. More training will not move it.

Pull usage by facility before you accept anyone's explanation. If it holds at most sites and collapses at a few, effort was not the variable. The work was.

What launch symptoms actually tell you.

SYMPTOM	BLAMED ON	WHAT IT MEANS	WHERE TO LOOK
"Other" leads all growth	Poor training	List misses routine site tasks	Free-text beside "Other"
Excel reports at 6 months	Old habits	Cannot build the views leadership needs	Who approved the requirements
Pilot passed, rollout failed	Lack of change mgmt	Pilot site was not representative	How the pilot site was picked
Near-miss reports drop	"Cleaner data"	Form friction killed voluntary reporting	Minutes and fields to log one report

Dashboards show identical numbers whether reporting improved or workers gave up. The only way to tell is to stand next to one submitting a report.

Before contract: scoping. **After launch: resistance.**

POST-CONTRACT "ADOPTION"

Roadshows, champion networks, and drop-in sessions forcing acceptance of a setup workers never saw. The form field is easy to change; the spent budget and months of green status reports are not.

PRE-CONTRACT SCOPING

Shadowing shift handovers, testing input with heavy gloves, and building categories with frontline supervisors. Adjusting requirements here costs almost nothing.

A technician keeping a paper checklist beside the tablet is a free, unprompted bug report: paper is faster, or survives the conditions better.

Four decisions to make **before contract signature.**

1

Choose the harshest pilot site

Terrible cell coverage, high contractor turnover, non-standard tasks.

2

Build categories with frontline supervisors

Pair "Other" with a required text box a named owner reviews monthly.

3

Route validation to site supervisors

Error notifications land on the line, not in the EHS team's queue.

4

Record pre-launch operational baselines

Reporting rates and report prep time, while the old system still runs.

None of this is change management. It is software design work—the only phase where fixing a mistake is cheap.

One hour in the field **before final sign-off.**

You do not own these four decisions—procurement, IT, HR, and the vendor do. You do own sign-off, and that is all the authority you need.

Refuse to approve the setup until you watch a frontline supervisor submit a report outdoors in the cold, in the heavy gloves the job requires, on the weakest connection at your worst site. If the schedule has no room for that hour, you have your answer early.

A software rollout is a stress test of requirements scoping. Either fix the design now, or spend the next year blaming your crews.

serhat.bio/insights/enterprise-ehs-rollout-failure