A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MVP WHEN IMPLEMENTING SALESFORCE

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The phrase 'MVP' or Minimum Viable Product is now frequently used in the context of a new technology implementation.

Is it just a buzzword or can it contribute to the success of your Salesforce project? Hyphen8 has been designing and implementing Salesforce solutions for over 8 years. Having witnessed first-hand the benefits and implications of MVP, we wanted to share this practical guide.

What is MVP?

The term Minimum Viable Product became more popular after it was referred to by Eric Ries in his best-selling book **The Lean Start Up**. It is a version of a product with just enough features to satisfy early customers and provide feedback for further development.

Used in the context of a Salesforce project, it means keeping functionality simple for the initial go live instead of trying to do it all.

At Hyphen8, for some clients, we suggest using the term MLP – Minimum Loveable Product. This can change the emphasis from sounding like something inferior to something they will love using.
Of course, what users consider loveable might not be the minimum product, so it needs to be balanced, but it can be a helpful term to use.

What is MVP?

When you embrace the concept of a flexible technology platform like Salesforce rather than a fully functional fit for purpose product, you are accepting that your solution should never really be 'done'.

Technology is continually evolving and can become outdated very quickly

The way that people engage with organisations is continually changing

We all need to keep nimble and adapt our processes as our strategies change

The beauty of a platform is that you can start using it and benefiting quickly and take a phased approach. So instead of having to plan for a 'big bang' where all features are configured and rolled out at the same time, MVP allows you to establish a culture of continuous improvement from day 1.

When considering the benefits of MVP, let's consider the alternative. Effectively this is seeking perfection – ensuring that all the bells and whistles are incorporated before you consider going live. There isn't a right or wrong as the approach really does depend on the project budget, and the culture of the organisation.

MLP	Perfection
Engages users earlier and delivers value faster	Increased likelihood of launch delays
Users are able to influence what comes next	Avoids need for manual workarounds where not all features are available
Minimise implementation costs	Increased implementation timescales and costs
Prioritise must haves	Include all nice to haves so users get more of what they want from day 1
Can be more difficult to manage project scope as you have to say no	Risk of scope creep without rigorous project management
Important to manage user expectations from the start	Users are disappointed if their expectations are not met from day 1
Start simple and evolve complexity	Start complex and risk spending more to simplify later
Faster feedback loops: Learning from initial deployments can influence what comes next	

How do you decide what minimum is for you?

If you are going to follow an MVP approach then obviously compromises have to be made. You have probably already asked users for their wishlist of requirements.

There is a spark of excitement that the new system will save time, eliminate workarounds and make life easier. So you need to ensure that you can clearly communicate the rationale for the scope of the day 1 solution.

It's also worth pointing out that the standard features of Salesforce often have enough of a wow factor to generate user enthusiasm.

Every project is different but in our experience, the following guidelines can provide a useful starting point:

1 Focus on current pain points to ensure the new solution ticks enough boxes to please users

2 Don't just recreate current complex processes – think whether it's time to ditch the way things are currently done as simple is often better

3 Consider external audiences and their experience engaging with you – after all

4 Follow the money! Don't compromise on financial processes – whether you receive money or give away money, you can't afford to cut corners

5 Take a user led-approach. Finding out what your user needs are will inform what your MVP is. Avoid the temptation to design the system 'on behalf' of the users. Make sure they are involved throughout.

What could minimum look like?

✓ Start manual – automate later

✓ Keep some processes offline and bring them online later like document generation or

✓ Import and export data – dynamic integration can come later

✓ Consider whether you really need so many user profiles and track fields instead

✓ Standardise page layouts for day 1

Are you geared up for MVP?

Some organisational cultures respond to MVP more easily than others, but all organisations can benefit from the approach.

It's important that you carefully consider the implications of this approach and that your project planning is designed to ensure success.

> Does the Project Manager or System Manager have the authority (and personality) to push back when users insist on complexity?

> Does the project team have the authority to sign off solutions?

> Do you have the capacity to go live with any agreed interim workarounds?

> Do you have a clear plan (and budget) for phase 2 evolution?

> Are you considering how user feedback will be collected and evaluated?

Want to find out more? Get in touch today

If you have any questions, we would love to hear from you.

Give us a call or drop us an email to find out more about how we can help your organisation.

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