

# ROADMAP FOR SUCCESS

## THE 3E DATA CONVERSION PROCESS



**INTRODUCTION**

3E is designed to help a firm move to an entirely new way of processing its financial and practice management systems. Indeed, 3E offers firms a completely new way of looking at how they utilize their software. Whereas before software may have been a tool to help a firm conduct its business on a day to day basis, 3E helps a firm streamline, automate and explore new avenues to grow and become more efficient.

With this flexibility of software capabilities comes new challenges, namely the moving of the firm’s historical data into 3E so that it continues to support the firm’s historical reporting capabilities. The Elite Data Conversion Team relies upon a complex and thorough process to meet this challenge.

When a company determines that it is ready to move to ELITE 3E, there may be many questions relating to the conversion process. What really happens in a data conversion? What type of resources will be needed? Will the integrity of the firm’s historical information—data—be compromised? Because understanding the process is the first step to a successful conversion, this white paper will explain in detail the ELITE 3E data conversion process.

**What exactly is a data conversion?**

In simplest terms, data conversion is the process of moving a firm’s existing data into the new data format required by any new business application software and database.

The overall process may also include additional types of activities or services, such as:

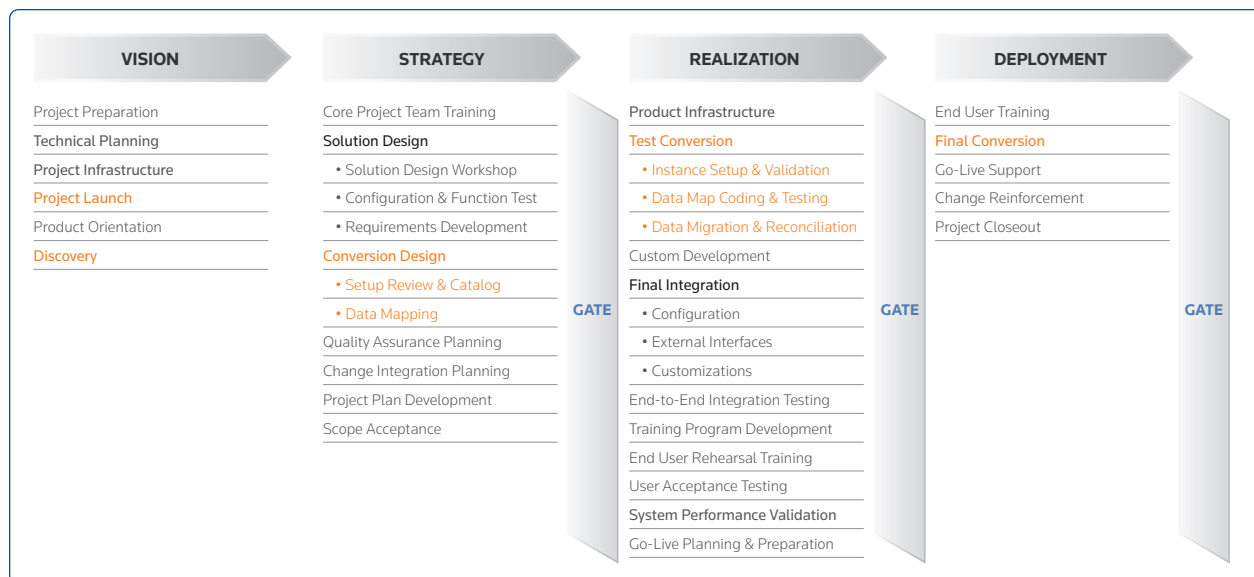
- Identifying noncompliant data
- Identifying or correcting incomplete records
- Filtering out unwanted data and/or consolidating data via automated script/processes

**The Elite Difference: A Data Conversion Methodology Overview**

Data conversion is an integral part of the overall Elite implementation process governed by the Elite Project Quality Model (PQM), a world-class approach based upon the internationally accepted, ANSI-standard principles from the Project Management Institute. Elite PQM serves as a roadmap for the entire implementation lifecycle, using a series of distinct but interrelated processes.

During the implementation process, the Elite Project Team establishes a strong partnership with the client, providing project management and technical expertise and guiding the firm through the intricacies of the implementation. Together with the client’s project personnel, the Elite Project Team works diligently to ensure that the 3E solution is successfully implemented within the agreed timeframe.

Each firm is assigned a Elite Data Conversion Team, a dedicated subgroup of the Elite Project Team, that uses a complex and thorough process to ensure a successful conversion. The conversion team works closely with the Elite Project Manager and the firm’s project team through the lifecycle of the project. The conversion team’s objectives include conducting its own discovery meeting(s) as part of the Vision Phase; developing a setups catalogue and detailed data maps during the Strategy Phase; executing test conversion(s) and validation during the Realization Phase; and delivering the final conversion handover and reports after the firm is live on 3E.



The Elite Project Quality Model outlines each process, each of which includes a series of defined tasks. Conversion-related items are shown in orange.

**VISION PHASE**

During the Vision Phase, firm and Elite project stakeholders work together to define corporate project objectives, key business drivers, solution expectations and scope parameters that govern the project.

Business areas which would most benefit by the new system are initially identified and that information is shared with the conversion team. The conversion team continues to learn about the firm's current processes and business requirements. This process in turn helps enable the firm make informed decisions about the scope of the project.

At the completion of this stage, key deliverables will include a Conversion Scope Document, which outlines in detail the data to be transferred and the responsibilities of both Elite and the firm in producing and validating the resulting data.

A clearly defined conversion process ensures that both the firm and the Elite Project Team are fully aware of what is needed for a successful conversion. The Elite Project Team takes care to ensure that the goals outlined in the Scope Document can be met by defining measurable outcomes for each stated goal.

**Data Discovery**

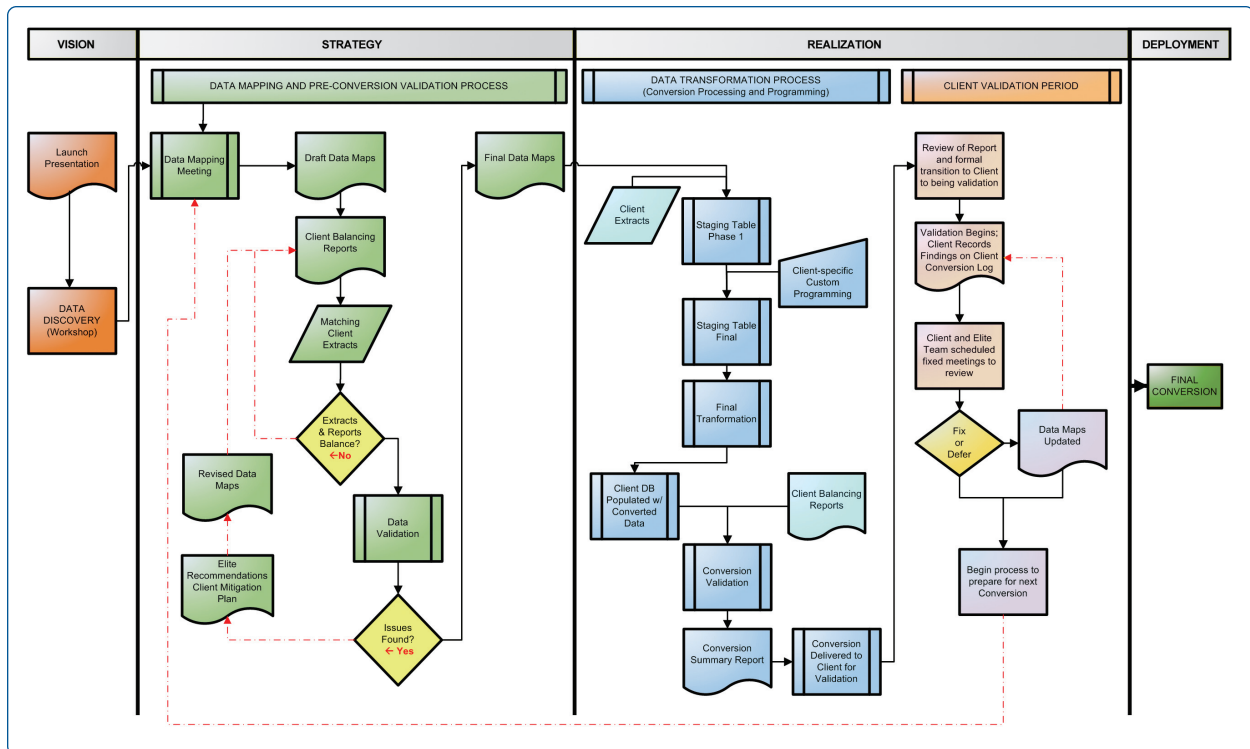
The key goals of the discovery process are to learn about the firm's current business processes and identify those that are to be reworked during the 3E implementation. This includes

gathering and analyzing data pertaining to organizational structure, the legacy data available for conversion, and the as-is business processes, including interfaces and reporting.

The Data Discovery Workshop is part of the overall project discovery process. During this workshop, the firm's project team is guided through a detailed discussion of the Conversion Scope Document and firm legacy financial and billing data. This allows the conversion team to conduct a module-by-module assessment of the available legacy data and any compliance or data integrity issues that must be dealt with during conversion.

During this period, the Elite and firm teams explore ways to make the conversions run as quickly as possible. For example, they might examine volumes of data, years of history, and items that could be converted in summary rather than detail mode without losing any functionality in 3E. Depending on the robustness of the legacy system, the firm can dramatically decrease the run-time of the conversion extract and load programs by making some of these decisions. In addition, the workshop may point to areas of legacy data that should be cleaned up before converting to 3E, such as redundant data, closed matters that could be archived, vouchers that could be closed, and so forth.

Ultimately, the Data Discovery Workshop prepares the firm's project team for the Data Mapping meetings that are conducted in the next phase, the Strategy Phase.



The Strategy and Realization Phases are interconnected so that after the first test conversions, data is validated in the Client Validation Period and then routed back to the Strategy Phase for the next conversion.

## STRATEGY PHASE

### Solutions Design Workshop

In the Solution Design Workshops, the Elite Project Manager works with the firm to thoroughly review and analyze current business process workflows and to align them to the new 3E business processes. A complete setup checklist that defines the configuration is also produced.

During these workshops, firms can fully realize the power of 3E and see how quickly and powerfully the system can transform their business processes. For example, a firm might consider the following scenarios in the workshops and how 3E can enable them to meet these challenges:

- Will you be working with multi-national currencies and languages?
- Do you need set-ups for multi-national tax rates?
- For firms with multiple units, are there certain processes that stall or slow down?
- What are the areas in the firm that need to be updated?
- If the firm were to grow by 10, 20 or 30 percent over the next five years, in what areas could the firm stand improvement?

These are just a few of the areas in which 3E can solve your business operational challenges. The answers to these and similar questions will drive how and to where your legacy data will be converted.

After the business processes have been agreed upon, the joint teams develop a 3E configuration profile to be used as a complete environment for function testing, specification development and test cases for custom components, which, in turn, is used by the conversion team.

### Setup Review and Catalogue

The Setup Review and Catalogue step is one of the most important in the entire conversion process, because it establishes that the conversion environment has been set up exactly as defined. In this stage, the Conversion Analyst works with the firm’s project team to verify the discrete SQL database instances that contain all conversion configuration and setup codes.

A master 3E database is established for the firm by the Elite Project Team at the beginning of the strategy phase. This database becomes the “gold standard” for the firm’s new operating environment. All validation codes, setups and other configurations—including customizations—are established in the master database. During

the Setup Review, the conversion team checks that all codes and other configuration requirements for conversion have been correctly established. This process of checking configurations will occur again immediately before migration of the legacy data, giving the client and Elite project teams time to review and correct as needed.

### Data Mapping

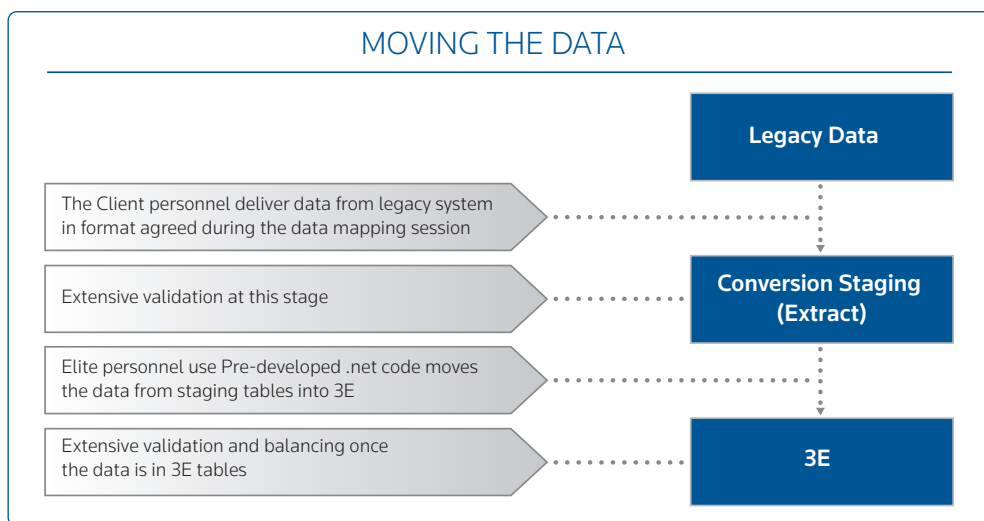
The next step of the Strategy Phase is Data Mapping. In the Data Mapping process, the Elite conversion analyst works field-by-field through the data mapping requirements for the firm’s legacy data. The conversion team works with the firm’s subject matter experts to complete a series of predefined maps for each module that is being converted.

All data sources to be converted are reconfirmed, and any rules or logic that will be applied to the data during conversion will be explained, discussed and agreed upon. Data from the legacy system is mapped to its appropriate place in Elite, and the volume of data, the extract plan and any unique logic associated with the data conversion are all clearly defined and documented.

As a simple example, in the legacy data, there may be only two fields for a firm client’s name and address. In 3E however, the client first name, client last name, street, city, and if relevant, state and postal code are all held in separate fields.

In another example, the firm’s legacy data may only mark billed timecards with the bill number to which they should be attached, but not include any indication of mark-up or mark-down on the timecard. The conversion team could establish the correct timekeeper allocation of fees on each bill and generate adjustments. As a result, the firm could now see not only the worked value of each timekeepers time, but also the billed value.

The final data maps provide full instructions for creating a set of conversion staging tables that hold the legacy data in a predefined format. If the firm does not have the resources available to set up and populate these staging tables, Elite offers an additional service to carry out this activity.



Staging tables during the data transformation process provide an arena in which data can be validated prior to it being moved to 3E tables.

## REALIZATION PHASE

### First Test Conversion

During the Realization Phase, “it’s all about the data” as the Elite Project Team conducts the first test conversion.

Using a proprietary set of utilities, the firm’s data extracts are pre-validated and loaded into 3E. The conversion analyst continues to validate the 3E data using a combination of automated validation utilities to verify data integrity, and manual spot checking throughout the data transformation tasks. Post-conversion and prior to delivery, the conversion analyst reconciles the conversion to the equivalent legacy system totals, through reports provided by the client, for such major areas as billed time and costs, works-in-progress, accounts receivables, accounts payable and so forth.

The firm is kept up-to-date on the progress with regular updates provided during the conversion. In addition, a full conversion report confirming reconciliation totals and any action items is provided at the end of the conversion. The data is then turned over to the firm for validation. During this period, called the Client Validation Period, the firm’s project team will test the data and record any items of note, or questions, requiring supplemental information from the conversion analyst.

During this phase, the firm and the Elite team will hold regular review meetings to determine any short term actions that may need to be taken. The data maps are then updated with any new or modified rules to be applied during the next test conversion.

### Second Test Conversion

The second test conversion reflects the refinements garnered as an outcome of the first conversion. The firm completes a second cycle of validation and testing and continues to maintain the Conversion Validation Log.

During the second test conversion, both the firm and the Elite teams work towards several objectives. One is to have a clear picture of the data in the context of 3E and the new business processes. Another is to refine and change the data maps as needed. And finally, to improve the timing of the data migration process. By doing so, the original estimate for the duration of the final conversion can be improved.

## DEPLOYMENT

### Final Conversion

By the time the firm is ready for the final conversion, the conversion process is a well-known, predictable, and practiced sequence of events. The primary difference between this and prior conversions is that in preparation for the final, the firm also takes steps to prepare to “go live” on the 3E software and for a time, cease all but essentials operations in the legacy system. This period, known as “going dark” involves the preparation of a plan by the firm’s project team to cover only the most essential processing tasks (usually only conflict checks or accounts payable to critical vendors).

Elite’s conversion methodology typically excludes the concept of running the new 3E system and the legacy system in parallel during this time. While it can be accommodated, most organizations choose not to given the requirements for additional resources and the exponentially more difficult and time-consuming client-side validation process that would be required.

The Elite process for the final conversion includes:

- a hard cut-off of data
- a utilization of existing resource allocations
- a standard validation process (proven through prior tests)
- a comparison of data from one static environment to another

In this final stage, the project management lifecycle for the project comes to an end and the ELITE 3E solution is fully deployed and ready for use. Ownership of the system is transferred to the firm. The ongoing maintenance becomes the responsibility of the Elite’s Support Team, which is fully prepared to assist clients in troubleshooting any future issues that may arise.

At the conclusion of the closure and transition process, plans are often made for future meetings and discussion regarding upcoming firm requirements for additional product implementations, enhancements, optimizations or upgrades.

## CLIENT SATISFACTION – THE ULTIMATE BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS

3E provides a multi-dimensional data structure that allows users to slice, dice and report on data in almost unlimited ways. In order to take advantage of this data structure that is so much more rich and powerful than any previous legacy system in existence, the conversion process is vital to the success of any firm’s overall 3E implementation.

The combination of Elite’s highly experienced team of conversion resources and the mature and robust conversion methodology enable new users of 3E to take advantage of all of 3E’s features in the future. 3E capabilities to report, query and analyze historical data allow each firm a 360 degree view of its business and enable best practice trending and strategic analysis with a true, full picture.

Elite is committed to providing firms with the highest quality financial and practice management solutions. In addition, Elite respects the level of trust that its clients place in us when implementing Elite solutions. With the utilization of the Project Quality Model, Elite’s consultants are well equipped with a process that maximizes the time spent with clients and further ensures the successful delivery of Elite solutions to our clients.

To learn more about ELITE 3E Data Conversion Services or for a global list of office locations, call **323-642-5200** or visit [elite.com](http://elite.com).