**Blog Brief**

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| Date | September |
| Persona |  |
| Stage of Funnel | Middle |
| Campaign | ERP - Healthcheck |
| Article Type | Blog |
| Keyword | ERP Systems |
| Secondary Keywords | ERP, business systems, business strategy, erp solutions, ERP Projects, Business change projects, business change. MS Dynamics, SAP, Baan, |
| Suggested Title | Our ERP Healthcheck Methodology Part 2: Systems – Selection and implementation. |
| Main points blog should cover (be specific, and make sure the main points relate to the Take Out) | Commitment to finding the right system  Expert knowledge of systems. Not just  100% impartiality = No system bias. |
| Take Out (what should the reader feel and want to do after reading this blog - think about how this aids conversion) | The Optimum approach, focusing on people and processes before systems assures that selecting the right system for a business.  Optimum should be considered for any business change projects we undertake. |
| Product tie-in | ERP Project Healthcheck |
| URL link to product | N/A |
| Call to action at bottom of blog | Request a Healthcheck |
| Additional Comments |  |

**Social Schedule**

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**Notes for consideration:**

As part of our analysis, we harness the resources of our team’s extensive knowledge of the ERP market, as well as our ERP solutions database, business requirements database, quantitative analysis model, 30-point technology assessment, organizational readiness assessment, and benefits realization plan to find the ideal ERP software for each client.

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Poorly run and ill-defined evaluation projects can lead to poor implementations," says Tom Brennan, vice president of Marketing, FinancialForce.com, a provider of cloud-based ERP solutions. "Dicey requirement definitions and vague priorities can lead to the wrong vendor selection."

In addition, "lack of participation and input from key stakeholders in the evaluation stage can lead to poor acceptance and user adoption. And don't forget that delays running the evaluation project itself ultimately delay the go-live date and the time to benefit."

"Another item many organizations miss during the selection phase of an ERP system is reporting and metrics," says Tiffani Murray, an HR technology consultant. "What do you want to be able to gauge from the system? Is this possible via the existing, prebuilt reports in the system or will you have to pay extra to get custom metrics that will drive your business, hiring and resourcing? Find this out in the selection phase and not after you've signed a multi-year contract."

Also, do not forget about integration. An ERP solution that does not work with your existing legacy and/or critical office systems is not a solution but another expensive piece of unused or unusable software.

Finally, "find a partner that specializes in your industry," says Jim Shepherd, chief strategy officer, Plex, a manufacturing ERP provider. "Better yet, find one that is dedicated to your industry. Those trying to tackle the entire ERP world can't offer the same expertise."

5. Get references. "First and foremost, when shopping for an ERP solution provider, ask the vendor for at least three references," says Reuben Yonatan, founder, GetVoIP.com, a VoIP shoppers guide. Then "ask the customers what went right, what went wrong and what they might have done differently. If a vendor can't provide at least three verifiable, happy customers, they may not have the experience you need."

Similarly, if you are a member of an industry association, ask colleagues for ERP recommendations.

6. Think before you customize. "Consider the amount of customization required to configure and deploy," says Steve Bittner, vice president of Professional Services, Unanet, a provider of Web-based software for managing people and projects. "Highly customized systems will generate higher cost, not only in the initial deployment but when upgrading from release to release," he says.

"Those businesses with unique requirements need to consider whether those requirements can be mainstreamed to eliminate the steep cost curve," Bittner says. In addition, businesses need "to understand [their tolerance] for longer implementation cycles, longer ROIs, more instability, [which can come with customization]," he says. "A turnkey solution may offer less flexibility but more stability, and less initial and ongoing cost."

"Generally speaking, many companies' basic business processes are virtually the same (like paying invoices, collecting revenue and procuring supplies)," says Greg Palesano, executive vice president, Applications Services, HCL Technologies, a global IT services company. "This is why ERP was built in the first place. Companies can take advantage of standard processes that are leading class and have been tested by many other companies," he says.

"If a particular business function believes they have a case for a customization, make sure they prove it," he argues. "Remember, the cost of the customization is not only writing and testing the code for initial implementation, but providing long-term support of the custom code and treating any customizations as exceptions every time you upgrade your software," he says. "Keep it simple and try not to allow customization into your ERP program."

7. Factor in change management. "Organizational change management is pivotal to the success of your project," says Matt Thompson, vice president of Professional Services, EstesGroup, an ERP managed services and technology solutions provider. "Typical ERP projects facilitate massive change in organizations that can include changing of day to day job descriptions or eliminating job descriptions in total. [These] changes impact the culture of your company and without careful control and communication plans and workshops you can create an adverse reaction to ERP [resulting in] barriers [to] implementation and adoption."

8. Appoint an internal ERP product champion -- and surround him or her with good people. "Do not rely on the vendor-appointed project manager only; have someone on your staff for this," says Morris Tabush, principal, the TabushGroup, a provider of managed IT services. Select someone within the organization, who knows or is comfortable managing software systems, to serve as the project manager," he advises. "This person will be responsible for "collecting all the end user requirements, learning the new system inside and out, working with the vendor on data conversion, coordinating training and acting as the point of contact for all employees."

"One of the most common mistakes made by companies during ERP implementation is spending significant time, energy and money selecting the right software and implementation partners, only to assign their own 'B' team to the program," adds Palesano. "This results in numerous issues during design and implementation, slow decision making and delays. While it's difficult to free up your brightest resources from their full-time jobs, ERP implementations are not simple and they can be extremely expensive," he points out. So it's important to "put your best people on the job. Not just your best IT people, your best people, period."

9. Provide the necessary time and resources for training on the ERP system. "Learning a new way of operating will require a significant time commitment for everyone, so the project team must take proactive measures to reduce the burden on employees," says Joel Schneider, cofounder, Liberty Technology Advisors, an IT consulting firm that specializes in ERP, business processes and project rescue. "Identify department-specific needs, allowing for sufficient time to develop and deliver training programs."

Furthermore, it's important to "recognize that the most effective training may not come from outside sources. Tech-savvy employees within departments can be given the opportunity for more in-depth instruction to become expert resources for their fellow employees," he explains. "Having a readily available support contact within an operational group reduces the 'us vs. them' dynamic that can poison the implementation process."