

# What to consider when shopping for a new ERP solution

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Businesses have wanted to automate their processes and capture transactions electronically for years and have had to rely on monolithic enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions to do this. As powerful and feature-rich the old-school ERP system is, it also has its drawbacks.



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It's expensive to implement, difficult to adapt to changing business conditions, and perhaps worst of all, often dictates how companies should run their businesses. Now, however, we are seeing a shift from traditional ERP to new-age business management solutions. Architected for an era of mobile, cloud, and big data technologies, these next-generation platforms are designed to support modern ways of working. They're built using the latest technologies, but offer traditional ERP benefits such as integration of processes and systems across the enterprise, a single view of corporate data, and the ability to improve process discipline.

Yet, because they are built with agility in mind, they are faster and cheaper to implement and change than traditional ERP systems. They are also easier to customise and change - meaning that they can be configured for the business rather than the business needing to reshape itself around the software.

This change is overdue, considering that more than 33 percent of businesses are dissatisfied with their ERP solution due to the high cost of maintenance and lack of flexibility and usability. If your business is one of them, here are a few things to take into consideration when shopping for a new business management system:

## Evaluate your company's needs

Start by performing a complete review of all of the requirements in accounting, manufacturing, engineering, data collection, and any other essential departments. Evaluate what is working now and what isn't. Take stock of which processes are inefficient and make note of why. This will help you improve your business rather than repeating old mistakes as you choose a new solution.

## Preparing for a new age of digital disruption

One of the most significant reasons to upgrade your ERP platform is to get ready for the next wave of disruptive digital

technologies, including big data, the Internet of Things, the cloud and the mobile enterprise. With the advent of trends such as Industry 4.0, we are rapidly moving to a smarter and more automated business environment, and our business management solutions must keep up.

Is your platform ready for a world of massive data volumes, and intelligent, connected sensors and devices in the workplace? A business solution older than five years will probably not be architected for collecting, analysing and processing data from millions of sensors, devices and end-users. Your business solution should give you the ability to react in real-time to business trends - an example is using data to interact with customers in increasingly personalised ways or to rapidly adapt your manufacturing output in response to a sudden change in demand.

## **Think about the user experience**

Whatever business management solution you choose should give employees the ability to access data anytime and anywhere as well as on the device of their choosing. It should also make it easy for them to access the data they need quickly and seamlessly. The user interface should be clean and tailored to the employee using it, no matter where they are in the world.

## **Insist on scalability and flexibility**

Today, growth means doing more with less. That means a system should support the growing demands of your business as it expands and changes. Find out whether the system has a growth path for your business, whether that means expanding into new geographies, adding more employees, or accessing new features and functionality as your business evolves.

## **ABOUT KEITH FENNER**

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