

Columbus®
Once you *know* how...

SPECIAL REPORT SERIES
**ERP IN 2014
AND BEYOND**



**SEVEN WAYS TO OPTIMIZE
YOUR EXISTING ERP SOLUTION**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
MAKE ERP A STRATEGIC CONVERSATION	4
EVOLVE YOUR ERP SYSTEM	6
TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF MOBILITY	8
ALIGN SOLUTION AND TRAINING WITH USER NEEDS	10
UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS POTENTIAL RISKS	12
ESTABLISH A DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN	14
HARVEST THE TRANSFORMATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OF ERP	16
YOUR BEST-PRACTICE CHECK LIST	18
CONCLUSION	20
ABOUT COLUMBUS	22
Columbus RapidValue	22
Columbus Care	23
Columbus SureStep+	23



Introduction

Implementing a new ERP solution is one of the biggest and most important investments your company will ever make. It is the technology at the heart of your business that can help you drive efficiencies, streamline processes, manage the complexities of your supply chain, reduce costs, increase customer satisfaction, and sharpen your competitive edge. By taking a few relatively simple steps, you can continue to maximize the value of your technology investment for years to come. Even if you are perfectly happy with your ERP system, you might be able to generate more value with it and make it a more powerful asset to help you stay ahead of the competition.

Maximizing the value of your ERP solution involves taking a close look at the technology involved, but your

organization, employees, processes, and company culture are at least as important. Some of the steps we recommend may depend on whether you have gone live recently or your solution is already a firmly established cornerstone of your business and well-adopted by the company's employees. How you implemented the solution will also make a difference in how you can evolve it. At any point in the solution's lifecycle, it is likely that there are opportunities to improve the strategic alignment, help users be more effective, implement a more effective data management strategy, and enhance the uninterrupted continuity of the ERP system. Maybe best of all, the diligent, strategic management of an ERP system can help you bring about a long-term cultural change to boost the company's success.



ACTIONS



Ensure
you have an
executive sponsor
for the full lifecycle
of your ERP
system



Evangelize
the strategic
role of ERP
among company
executives

Make ERP a Strategic Conversation

Asa key enabler to meeting your business objectives, your ERP solution needs to be understood and supported by company leadership in the board room and the executive team. If the IT group is the sole owner of the ERP system, its effectiveness and value will be limited. The IT department may be the facilitator to ensure that the ERP system meets expectations and integrates with other key systems, but it needs company leadership to support and promote the strategic alignment between technology and business goals.

The first step in making ERP strategic needs to be moving the ownership of the ERP solution to the boardroom. Once board members and executives are engaged in a vital conversation about the potential of the ERP system to help the company move forward, you can identify sponsors in both groups and invite them to commit to remain involved in translating the ERP opportunity into real business advantages. At the same time, you need to verify the alignment of



Find additional information here:

www.columbusglobal.com

SPECIAL REPORT SERIES
**ERP IN 2014
AND BEYOND**



the solution's capabilities to the goals of the business, and continue to monitor progress against these goals. Some solutions allow you to integrate your business objectives, strategy, and business process definitions directly with the ERP system, which makes the tracking of milestones, benchmarks, and results easy.

After you complete the initial implementation and business groups are working with the ERP solution, interest and engagement can quickly drop off. Be ready to involve your board and executives in supporting the next steps and help set a productive direction for the entire ERP lifecycle.

Your sponsors may change, but you cannot make do without at least one active, firmly committed ERP sponsor in the executive group and on the company board. Those sponsors can also help you put the resources in place to evolve the ERP infrastructure as the company grows, customer preferences and market trends change, and competitors present new challenges.

Evolve Your ERP System

When you acquired your ERP solution, you no doubt evaluated its flexibility and scalability to support your company as it grows and changes. But has the company made effective use of these capabilities? Once the ERP system is live and people begin working with it, most companies experience productivity and process improvements. There's no need to stop there – you can continue to evolve. If your initial implementation is a few years in the past, there will be innovations and new technologies that can help you use the ERP system to greater advantage. As the ERP system demonstrates its value in some areas of the enterprise, you may also want to connect other business groups, subsidiaries, systems, and processes to the ERP infrastructure. As the company grows and changes, you may also find that some business processes could see adjustments to become more productive and that the ERP system needs to support them.

ACTIONS

Set regular intervals to measure and refine your solution

Keep up to date with technological innovations to enhance the ERP system

Create an annual budget and plan for continuous improvement



Find additional information here:

www.columbusglobal.com

Key questions to ask:

That means you need to strategize, plan, and budget to ensure your ERP solution maintains or increases its strategic value and helps the company achieve its goals. You can enhance the effectiveness of your ERP system at any stage of its lifecycle. Improvements could take the form of added capabilities, upgrades, infrastructure investments, process optimizations, or in-depth, targeted training. Technology disciplines such as social media or big data also present opportunities to add to your ERP system's reach and relevance.

Does the ERP system meet business goals and expectations? Where does it fall short?

Which functional or process improvements would make good business sense?

Are there possible efficiencies or cost reductions that the ERP system might help achieve?

Which user groups could benefit more from the ERP solution if they had certain capabilities or knew more about it?

Which integrations with other business systems would make a difference in operational efficiency?

How would you measure progress against goals and adjust your outcomes?

With proper care and feeding, your ERP system can be stronger year after year. In our experience, it best to take a programmatic approach to monitoring and driving the value you generate from the ERP solution.



ACTIONS

Identify effective solutions to connect mobility and ERP in your sector

Assess the productivity opportunities in your mobile operations

Take Full Advantage of Mobility

Mobile technologies today are ubiquitous and powerful. Almost everybody carries one or several mobile devices, with smartphones and tablets the most popular.

Technology to connect ERP systems to mobile applications is a recent development that is going to have a significant impact on the way people work. It offers vast potential to bring greater efficiency and productivity to individuals, teams, and processes.

If your company has employee teams who provide service and maintenance of equipment, plants, or fleets at remote locations, deliver and install equipment at customer facilities, or manage construction and assembly projects on-site, it may well pay off to extend your ERP system into the mobile arena. The same app that makes ERP data available on the mobile devices employees already use, could also allow them to enter data that promptly reflect in the ERP system.



Find additional information here:

www.columbusglobal.com

By making use of this integration, your mobile and roaming employees could, for example:

- | Look up customer and contract data.
- | Schedule services and maintenance.
- | Check on the availability and order status of parts and materials.
- | Report project performance and billing milestones.
- | Minimize travel and downtime between appointments.
- | Report time and expenses.

Company managers, in turn, could receive real-time financial and operational data from the field, so their planning and decision-making can become more meaningful and accurate. As you see, the potential benefits make ERP and mobile integration a worthwhile consideration. Solutions and apps to make this work are already available. Before you review and select any of these tools, you will need to find out which efficiency and productivity gaps your mobile employee's experience.



Align Solution and Training with User Needs

Modern ERP solutions help companies eliminate many manual steps and inefficient processes, thereby enabling people to work more productively.

The better your people know and understand your solution and the enhancements you implement, the better they will be able to take advantage of it. Unfortunately, many companies reduce their training budgets to cut costs. Sometimes, even key users only gain high-level familiarity with the solution and its evolving capabilities. If you want to get the most out of your ERP investment, you need to ensure that all technology users experience how the ERP solution can help them in their work lives – how it assists them to work more efficiently and accurately, exercise greater control, spend more productive time on business-critical tasks, or experience less stress.

With time, the company's use of the ERP system and ERP users' roles and responsibilities can change. At every juncture in the lifecycle of your ERP solution, you need to assess whether employees are still making effective use of the ERP system or whether follow-up or in-depth training in certain functionalities would be helpful.

Some solutions can produce audit reports to show how well the system is being used, which helps you identify the training and capability gaps that need attention.

ACTIONS

Audit ERP users and provide focused, practical training as necessary

Provide for remedial and targeted training in your annual ERP budgeting and planning



Find additional information here:
www.columbusglobal.com

SPECIAL REPORT SERIES
**ERP IN 2014
AND BEYOND**



Understand and Address Potential Risks

What would happen if your solution would suddenly stop working? How quickly could you get it back up and running? What effect would that have on your

business operations, revenue, and reputation?

As with every business-critical application, you need to have a backup and recovery plan for your ERP system. Depending on whether your ERP system is on-premise or in the cloud, different continuity strategies will be available and most effective.

ACTIONS

Assess whether the technology environment supports your ERP solution goals

Implement a support strategy to meet your company's long-term ERP requirements



Find additional information here:
www.columbusglobal.com

There are two major considerations for business continuity:

Your **technical environment** has an impact on how well your ERP solution runs. Do your hardware, IT infrastructure, and communication links truly ensure that your ERP system can run without interruption?

You need **technical support** that fits your business needs. Do you need coverage around the clock? Does it need to be global? What type of service-level agreement will meet your needs? The level of support may change through the lifecycle of the solution.

In some companies, the first year after deployment requires a higher level of service than in later years. The first three months after go-live are generally the most important. Mistakes and omissions during then can cause problems later. This is probably the time when you need more proactive support than later. Like other technologies, backup and application protection practices and technologies evolve and improve, and you should consider these developments in your annual ERP planning.

Establish a Data Management Plan

Accurate, centralized, real-time, reliable business data for decision-makers and contributors at all levels of the organization is one of the main advantages of owning an ERP solution. There are three key considerations in ensuring the value and quality of your business information.

ACTIONS

Define and execute a data archiving and data management strategy

Include data cleansing in your regular review of your ERP system

Monitor and tune your data management practice to fit your business needs



Find additional information here:
www.columbusglobal.com

Data cleansing

As your company uses its ERP system, errors and inconsistencies will affect the data, even with overall accuracy in business processes. It pays to review your data and resolve obvious errors, obsolete product codes, blank description fields, duplicate records, and other noise, especially if you plan to perform solution enhancements and version upgrades. The more accurate your data are, the more valuable and productive your use of the ERP system will be in across-the-board operations, decision support, and performance management.

Data archiving

The longer your ERP-solution is in place, the more data will have been created and stored in your database. Not all of the data will be needed frequently. As your operation amasses data, the performance of your solution may well slow and transactions will take longer to complete. We recommend that you devise an effective archiving strategy for your database to ensure that your ERP system runs at the best possible performance level.

Continual monitoring

You need to regularly assess that your data cleansing and data archiving practices are effective. As the business changes, you may find that you need to perform data cleansing more frequently or less often, or that your parameters for data archiving need to be adjusted. These corrections can make a noticeable difference in the effectiveness of your ERP users and the value of the business data in the system.

Harvest the Transformational Opportunities of ERP

An ERP deployment enables you to achieve immediate goals for the efficiency and productivity of your people and resources. It can also help you operate with greater agility in responding to competitive developments, changing customer requirements, and emerging industry trends. In the best case, these outstanding achievements are simply the beginning. The potential of an ERP solution is transformational. Even beyond making your people more productive, your processes more efficient, your decision-making more strategic, and connecting processes and workflows in one coordinated whole, an ERP system can help you create a cultural change that unites the entire organization behind one common goal.

ACTIONS

Develop a corporate plan to capitalize on your ERP-facilitated culture of success

Involve key contributors in communicating opportunities for business transformation and innovation

Rapidly advancing technologies like mobility, social media, and the cloud can promote this cultural change and make it a personal concern for every contributor. As your ERP system helps the company make business sense of big data, an entirely new perspective on its strengths and potential may emerge. Once your company becomes a connected enterprise by its smart use of an ERP solution, the business and technology stakeholders will discover new opportunities to produce outstanding business results. You need to find a way to harness those insights and put them to work strategically. Your company's success can grow with a flexible, extensible ERP system as its backbone if you make it a best practice to identify and document transformational opportunities, so you can take action on them.



Find additional information here:
www.columbusglobal.com

A close-up photograph of a person's hands using a handheld barcode scanner on a wooden crate. The person is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt. The scanner is blue and yellow. The background shows a factory or warehouse environment with metal tracks and machinery. The lighting is bright and industrial.

SPECIAL REPORT SERIES
**ERP IN 2014
AND BEYOND**

Your Best-Practice Check List:

- Ensure that you have an executive sponsor for the full lifecycle of your ERP system
- Evangelize the strategic role of ERP among company executives
- Set regular intervals to measure and refine your solution
- Keep up to date with technological innovations to enhance the ERP system
- Create an annual budget and plan for continuous improvement
- Identify effective solutions to connect mobility and ERP in your sector
- Assess the productivity opportunities in your mobile operations
- Audit ERP users and provide focused, practical training as necessary
- Provide for remedial and targeted training in your annual ERP budgeting and planning
- Assess whether the technology environment supports your ERP solution goals
- Implement a support strategy to meet your company's long-term ERP requirements
- Define and execute a data archiving and data management strategy
- Include data cleansing in your regular review of your ERP system
- Monitor and tune your data management practice to fit your business needs
- Develop a corporate plan to capitalize on your ERP-facilitated culture of success
- Involve key contributors in communicating opportunities for business transformation and innovation



Find additional information here:

www.columbusglobal.com



SPECIAL REPORT SERIES
**ERP IN 2014
AND BEYOND**

Conclusion

Your company made a major investment and committed to a complex, challenging implementation when it decided to acquire an ERP system. In part, the returns on this investment depend on the effectiveness of the initial process and requirements definitions and the deployment itself. But even more so, they depend on how you evolve and grow the ERP infrastructure in sync with the company's growth and goals. Our experience shows that the steps we list here can have a significant impact on ERP success in companies across industries. Contact us to find out more or receive assistance with your ERP lifecycle planning in 2014 and the following years.

Contact us to find out more or receive assistance with your ERP project.

You may also find the other papers in our ERP in 2014 and Beyond series helpful:

- | Seven Ways To Avoid ERP Implementation Failure
- | Seven Ways That Business Process Management Can Improve Your ERP Implementation
- | Seven Reasons To Consider ERP In The Cloud
- | Seven Ways To Help Data Migration During Implementation



Find additional information here:

www.columbusglobal.com

SPECIAL REPORT SERIES
**ERP IN 2014
AND BEYOND**



About Columbus

Columbus is an industry-based consultancy and award-winning technology developer focused on the manufacturing, food processing, and retail industries. We are the preferred consultancy for ambitious companies wanting to streamline business processes, improve operational efficiencies, reduce costs, and improve visibility into their businesses.

Our approach to solving our clients' issues can best be described as proactive. We challenge our clients' traditional ways of thinking, help them see new opportunities for improvements, and take responsibility to drive change in their organizations. We've delivered these business benefits for over 25 years to many of the leading companies worldwide.

Columbus RapidValue

Columbus is a long-time developer of award-winning industry software and has recently become well known for developing Columbus RapidValue. RapidValue is a business process management tool that drives increased client value for ERP solutions. It delivers a shorter implementation with more predictable results by incorporating hundreds of best industry practices accumulated through in over 6,000 Columbus implementations. This allows Columbus to focus on streamlining the processes that make our clients unique. Companies all over the world are investing in RapidValue and enjoy the benefits of shorter times to value, quicker and less risky implementations, and the industry leadership and knowledge acquired from the thousands of Columbus deployments that preceded theirs.



Find additional information here:

www.columbusglobal.com

ColumbusCare

ColumbusCare is unique to Columbus – it is how we take care of our clients, 24/7 worldwide. With ColumbusCare, you get a well-trained team dedicated to improve your system's efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and risk resistance. Whether you're looking for enterprise-level support, upgrade options, or system enhancements, ColumbusCare provides flexible service levels to meet the needs of your business.

Columbus SureStep+

SureStep+ is the methodology that Columbus developed and uses globally to ensure consistent delivery of projects on time and on budget. Based on over 6,000 implementations, it mitigates risks commonly associated with ERP implementations while delivering solutions with a shorter time-to-value and higher ROI.



Columbus®

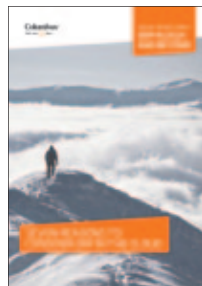
Once you *know* how...



SPECIAL REPORT SERIES: ERP IN 2014 AND BEYOND



Seven Ways
To Avoid ERP
Implementation
Failure



Seven Reasons
To Consider ERP
In The Cloud



Seven Ways
To Help Data
Migration During
Implementation



Seven Ways
To Optimize
Your Existing ERP
Solution



Seven Ways That
Business Process
Management Can
Improve Your ERP
Implementation