A brief guide to helping your business select, implement and succeed with ERP or other business systems

1. Selecting

Recent years have seen many improvements and developments in the ERP market place but a new system still represents a substantial investment and deciding which system will be best for your business remains a complex and sometimes daunting task.

Choosing the correct software is critical for a successful project. A structured approach will help to protect your investment and promote a successful implementation. But before starting there are a few things to consider.

Preparation check list

- Do you have the right level of board commitment to the project?
- Is the project in line with your corporate growth strategy?
- Is there enough funding in place?
- What other initiatives are already underway?
- Do you have the right skills level available internally to support the project?
- Is the business resistant to, or supportive of, change?

Selecting the best system for your business

- Build a selection committee from the decision makers within your business.
- Interview stakeholders from all levels to gather their system requirements
- Document your requirements in particular anything which is specific to your business.
- Agree project objectives and deliverables.
- Research the marketplace and engage with vendors early in the process.

How we can help

It is more important than ever to seek out practical, impartial advice to ensure that you chose the system which matches your business needs. Gradient can provide you with all the help and support you require to be able to select the best software and vendor for your business.

About Gradient
Gradient Consulting are a highly regarded, independent ERP consultancy providing businesses with practical, impartial advice on how to improve their bottom line through better use of business information systems.

Established in 1997 Gradient have built up a formidable reputation for helping companies select, implement, and work better with their systems.

" Gradient believe that the selection of a new ERP or business information system should begin with your business needs and not with a pre-defined list of software "

What our clients say…
"Having Gradient involved in the selection process, made what could have been a very difficult task run much more smoothly. They were always efficient and quickly understood our business system requirements and their support was invaluable. "

Chris Taylor - Charente

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2. Implementing

While it is vital to select an ERP system which is right for your business it's equally important not to underestimate what it will take to implement your chosen system on time and on budget and the project should not be approached without fully understanding whether your business has what it needs to successfully deliver the project in terms of resources, skills and project methodologies.

Start by finding the right people in your organisation; give them the right training and the right facilities. Strong project management is essential to a projects success but it isn't just about monitoring progress against a plan; it's a facilitator role, enabling the team to deliver a solution that meets the business requirements.

Resource your Project

- Resourcing a project isn't just a numbers game; look for people who are organised and have great attention to detail with good communication, negotiation and diplomacy skills.
- Remember, skills are more important than experience, but these people still need to know your business well
- A well-stocked project room with PC's, projector & screen, meeting space and wall space is a must.

Manage your Project

- Empower your project manager to make decisions.
- A strong steering committee made up of senior members of staff must be closely involved with the project and must support the project manager.
- Communicate, not just to the project team, but also to the wider business. Continually reaffirm the business reasons for changing systems.

How we can help

Few organisations will have all the knowledge and skills needed to implement an ERP system successfully. Most will find that there are advantages in seeking some external assistance. Gradient can help you to determine how much support you need and work with you to ensure that your project stays on track and delivers the promised benefits.

What our clients say…

"The implementation was successful, and one of the smoothest I have been involved in. Andrew was Project Manager and his attention to detail and hard work proved invaluable "

Paul Bacon - Finlay Beverages

" Gradient have the experience and flexibility to work with you in a variety of ways to help plan, guide or manage your ERP project "

What our clients say…

"Gradient where involved from start to finish and being very hands on they managed to get under the skin of the business. Using Gradient made the best use of our internal resources and their involvement definitely improved our decision making "

Darren Murray - Promethean

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3. Improving and optimising

Research has shown that some ERP business information systems fail to deliver the promised benefits. Often companies will prefer to blame 'the system' and live with its perceived shortcomings rather than address the factors required to make it work effectively.

Going Live on your new system should not be the end of the project; it should be the point at which you start realising the benefits by getting your system and processes to work in harmony. Make sure that you maintain your relationship with the system vendor.

Optimise your Project

- Ask yourself if you have met all your project objectives and if not set up mini-projects with in-house teams to achieve them.
- Apply "Lean" techniques to realign your business processes with your new system.
- Make sure that the system and your processes are continuing to work in harmony by conducting regular audits of how people are using the system and whether the benefits are still being realised.
- Maintain the project team; use them for first line support and to implement any 'phase 2' modules.

Work with your system vendor

- After Go-Live make sure to maintain the relationship with your system vendor by working with them to maximise the benefits of ownership and resolve issues.
- Upgrade to the latest versions of the software and apply updates and patches.
- Join their user support networks and forums and work with other users to share knowledge.

How we can help

To get the best out of a system it must both meet the needs of its users and work in harmony with your business processes. Gradient can help by providing you with an independent review of your business system and then work with you to help realise its full potential.

What our clients say...

"Gradient provided an objective, professional and high quality service across the wide ranging services they provided. The projects where demanding with diverse internal requirements but Gradient developed excellent working relationships with staff which was vital for the projects to succeed. "

Malcolm Waddington - M&I

" We can help by providing you with an independent review of your business systems and then work with you to realise its full potential "

What the vendors say...

"Having worked with dozens of consultants over the years during evaluations, I can state that Gradient is the only one whose clients always invite them back for subsequent implementation work. That says everything about their professionalism, integrity and value-added approach"

Leading ERP system vendor