

# Anglia Business Solutions

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## IMPLEMENTING ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementation projects are invariably more complicated than executives expect. The task may involve integrating up to 30 different software applications and expecting users to adopt them – it is easy to get bogged down in endless detail around the implementation process. But there are some guidelines worth considering.

Successful ERP deployments are sponsored by the business. These focus on business results, not just a one-off IT project. The relevant stakeholders should drive the requirements – not IT. The value drivers to the business and its requirements should be the most important guide to selecting a system.

Keep the big picture in mind when thinking about the overall solution. An enterprise perspective is needed to adequately address the data-sharing between departments. These are the real opportunities for end-to-end process improvement and achieving the intended return on investment. Have a shortlist of your must-have requirements and define your solution decision criteria. Start with a planning-focused exercise before jumping straight to selecting a particular application.

Complexity creates costs; consider what can be done to simplify your business and IT policies, processes and systems based on the value to the business. Business simplification creates ongoing savings – don't just try to replicate existing systems unless absolutely necessary. Ensure that the supplier fully understands the functionality needed and check where the supplier has dealt with this particular requirement before and how it worked for the customer.

Keeping the users on side is a must. If the software interface is already familiar, it's easier for users to adopt. The long-term value of your application is only as good as the data that is in it. If your users don't want to use it, you'll still end up with a fragmented view of your customer, product and revenue data.

You must consider your organisation's willingness and capacity to change. Effective change management engages stakeholders in a way that allows them to be heard (whether or not their ideas are adopted, they feel better about whatever decision gets made knowing their ideas have been considered).

Setting realistic expectations from the outset is a sound philosophy. Build in budget and timing contingencies to cope with things going wrong. Consider the risks to the project up front and define some agreed actions to mitigate them. Set up lines of communication to ensure that all parties involved are kept in the picture on progress.

Once live, carry out a review of what worked and what didn't. When successful, celebrate your success and congratulate the team involved. Getting an ERP project deployed within time scale and budget is a noteworthy achievement and should be recognised.

