ERP NEWS MAGAZINE
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Industry-Specific Cloud Solutions

"Businesses have to be **more agile** than ever

Jason **SCHAPS**
Head of Cloud - RISE at SAP
for SAP North America

SAP®

Avalara

Perplexed by sales tax on software?
Avalara can help

Get the guide

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Each person's fingerprint is unique. And every business is as unique as a fingerprint as well. Even if the product that is produced or the service that is offered are the same, the processes might be completely different. The uniqueness of your processes can make you a leader in your industry but also vice versa... The most important step towards successful digitization is to take full control over your current processes with the right ERP system. This fact brings many alternatives along with it. Finding the right software in a market that grows and diversifies every year is perhaps one of the ways to prove your uniqueness!

An industry-specific ERP system provides capabilities that align with your industry's unique needs and improve your processes. And if you have questions on your mind regarding the industry-specific solutions, this issue of ERP News Magazine will definitely clear up your path.

Industry-specific ERP software can not only add speed and efficiency to your business with special modules and functions required by your industry but can also help fuel your unique processes and put you one step ahead. If you want to go beyond the one-size-fits-all perception created by generic ERP systems, you can start turning the pages for a complete roadmap.

Jason Schaps, Head of Cloud - RISE at SAP for SAP North America, answered our questions regarding industry-specific ERP solutions and helped us discover what's behind the scenes of SAP's success. Furthermore, we discussed the increasing importance of Tax Management in a digitalizing world with Liz Armbruester, SVP, Global Compliance at Avalara.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to ERP News Magazine March Issue...See you in our next issue...

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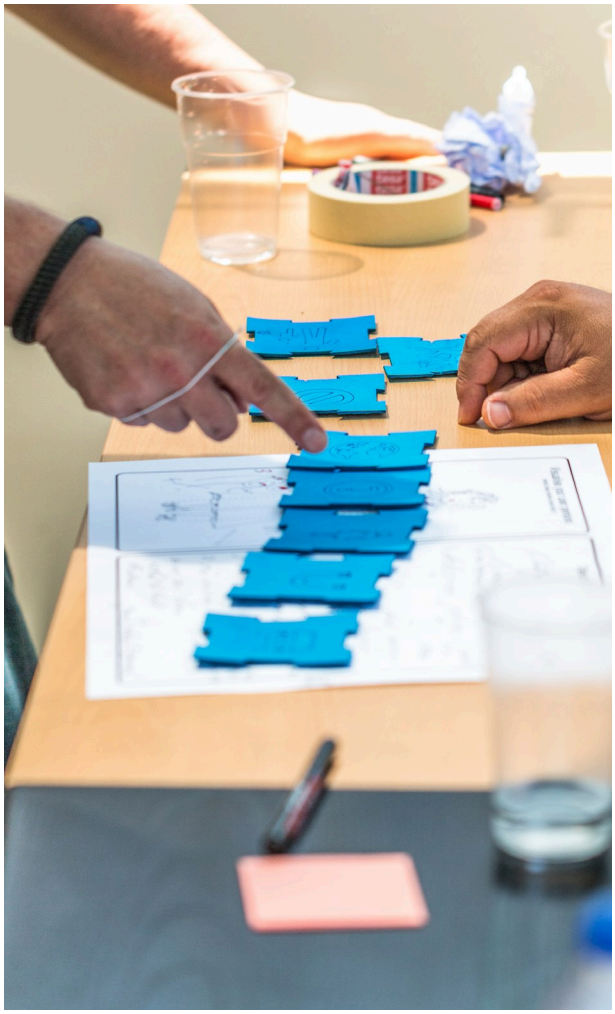

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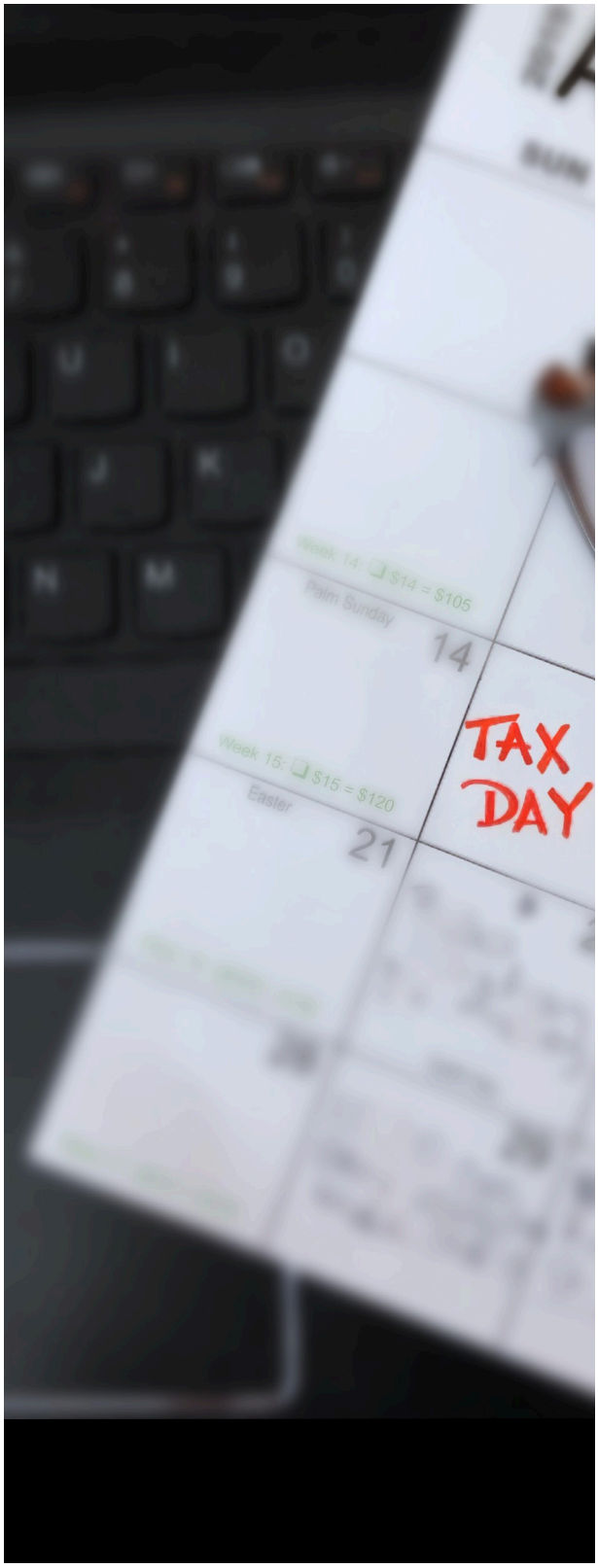


ORACLE

ORACLE HELPS FIELD SERVICE TEAMS DELIVER CONSISTENT AND EFFICIENT SERVICE WITH NEW WORKFLOW MANAGER

Companies in telecommunications, utilities, manufacturing, and other industries that provide services via mobile workers are facing two compounding challenges.

First, a generational shift is taking place across their workforces, which is resulting in the most tenured field service team members retiring or leaving the field. As they leave, they are taking with them vast experience, best practices, and decades of earned "know-how" for getting things done.

Second, services are getting increasingly complex. Not only is equipment becoming more technical and connected, but it is also being updated and serviced more frequently than in the past. As a result, service processes must adapt, and field service teams need on-going training and upskilling.

To help our customers address these challenges while continuing to deliver high quality service, we are introducing Workflow Manager within Oracle Field Service, a part of Oracle Advertising and Customer Experience (CX).

With Workflow Manager, our customers will:

Improve Productivity: Using a preconfigured set of steps for initiating service, diagnosing issues, performing repairs, as well as customer debriefing and upselling enables inexperienced field service workers to complete routine tasks consistently and without extensive training.

Ensure Quality: Workflows deliver visual guidance to field service teams to complete the steps in a specific order and ensure safety, compliance, and quality.

Enhance Visibility: Each completed step is recorded to provide real-time monitoring of the progress of a job. As a result, supervisors and dispatchers can view the progress and status of a service activity without disrupting the field service technician.

Oracle Field Service helps schedule, route, and equip mobile workers so they can complete service activities at a customer's home, office, or installed asset location. The addition of Workflow Manager improves the consistency of service delivery, no matter the level of experience of the field service technician.

Oracle Field Service customers have access to Workflow Manager today.

About Oracle

Oracle offers suites of integrated applications plus secure, autonomous infrastructure in the Oracle Cloud. For more information about Oracle (NYSE: ORCL), please visit us at www.oracle.com.

NIPPON GASES EUROPE: UNIFORM INTEGRATION WITH RISE WITH SAP

SAP SE (NYSE: SAP) announced that with the RISE with SAP solution, Nippon Gases Europe is taking its ERP landscape in Europe to the next level.

By integrating several ERP systems, the company is driving holistic digital transformation across multiple subsidiaries with SAP S/4HANA. Key objectives of the ERP consolidation are to accelerate business processes, strengthen collaboration and enable innovation.

As part of the Japanese Nippon Sanso Holdings Corporation, Nippon Gases Europe is one of the leading industrial and medical gases companies in Europe. More than 3,000 employees supply more than 150,000 customers with gas-based solutions in the metal production and metallurgy, chemical, electronics or food and beverage industries. Nippon Gases solutions are also essential in the medical and pharmaceutical sectors. Both its liquid nitrogen and dry ice make it possible to maintain the required cooling temperatures of COVID-19 vaccines in the logistics chain and during storage. They have been put to use in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, which has been critical for public and private entities in societies around the globe.

In Europe, Nippon Gases is represented in 13 countries with more than 100 production sites. Historically, the sites worked with a set of different ERP solutions, which involved considerable effort for maintenance, updates and servicing. There was a large number of interfaces to keep up-to-date in order to continue to be able to exchange data smoothly between individual group divisions. Therefore, in 2020, Nippon Gases began a journey to set up a unified ERP strategy in Northern Europe based on SAP S/4HANA. The first site went live in the United Kingdom in October 2021, with half a dozen more countries to follow starting from 2022.

The new, standardized ERP processes based on SAP S/4HANA ensure faster and more transparent processes at Nippon Gases. This enables a better overview when tracking gas deliveries so that compliance requirements can be met more easily. At the same time, costs are reduced because IT has to manage only one ERP system and requires less time for administrative tasks.

"We work much more efficiently with RISE with SAP and can tackle future issues. The standardization in the new SAP S/4HANA suite will allow us to optimize capacity, focusing on other innovation initiatives as part of our ongoing digital transformation strategy," said Cesar Callejo, Chief Information Officer, Nippon Gases Europe. From the start of the project, the RISE with SAP solution provided the company with numerous software components.

"This gives us great scope. Even away from the core ERP system, we can try out a lot of new things. For example, we can use SAP Ariba solutions to optimize procurement processes or robotic process automation to automate our business processes intelligently," said Jens Wiechmann, SAP IT Manager Europe, Nippon Gases Europe.

About SAP

SAP is the market leader in enterprise application software, helping companies of all sizes and in all industries run at their best: SAP customers generate 87% of total global commerce. Our machine learning, Internet of Things (IoT), and advanced analytics technologies help turn customers' businesses into intelligent enterprises. Our end-to-end suite of applications and services enables our customers to operate profitably, adapt continuously, and make a difference.

Avalara

AVALARA HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PIONEER IN THE WORLD OF SALES TAX AUTOMATION

*Interview with **Liz Armbruester**, SVP, Global Compliance at Avalara*

The pandemic has inevitably accelerated the digital transformation of companies. There has been increasing pressure on businesses to become digital and also a great increase in demand in the field of Tax Management. Regarding this context, we had an extensive conversation with Liz Armbruester SVP, Global Compliance at Avalara, a pioneer in sales tax automation, about the subject.

Could you tell ERP News readers about yourself and your role at Avalara?

I'm senior vice president of global compliance operations at Avalara. In this role, I oversee Avalara's global returns business, which is responsible for preparing, filing, and remitting tax for our customers around the world. My day-to-day job is focused on delivering automation and efficiency for our customers, which means I have the opportunity to work across our company with teams from product, engineering, and more.

Avalara was named a leader in two IDC MarketScape: Worldwide, Cloud-Enabled Sales and Use Tax Automation Software reports for small and midsize businesses and enterprise businesses. What is the secret behind this success?

Avalara has always been a pioneer in the world of sales tax automation. We were among the first to apply SaaS to tax and have spent the past 18 years creating an industry-leading partner ecosystem of more than 1,200 signed partner integrations so that we can easily integrate into the business systems of our customers – something that has been key to our success. Because of Avalara's integrations into nearly every invoice, billing, and other business system, businesses can easily automate compliance as part of their digital transformation initiatives or as their business grows and encounters tax management challenges, like expanded sales into new jurisdictions.

Another benefit of Avalara is our end-to-end compliance offerings, including everything from nexus assessments and business licensing to tax calculations and returns. Businesses can turn to Avalara to automate nearly every step of their compliance journey.

Avalara has historically been focused on mid-market businesses. However, as our IDC MarketScape recognition illustrates, the company has made significant strides in serving the small and large ends of the market.

Streamlined Sales Tax is critical for many businesses. What is Streamlined Sales Tax (SST) and in that regards what benefits does Avalara offer businesses?

Streamlined Sales Tax (SST) is a state-run program designed to make sales tax compliance easier and more affordable by offsetting the cost of using a tax technology provider, like Avalara. Across 24 states, businesses can have their tax management costs covered and automated using a Certified Service Provider.

TAX COMPLIANCE ISN'T LIMITED TO SALES TAX AND AVALARA UNDERSTANDS THAT. AS WE LOOK AHEAD, AVALARA IS BUILDING A GLOBAL COMPLIANCE PLATFORM TO HELP BUSINESSES OF ALL SIZES AUTOMATE AND STREAMLINE THEIR COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS.

Liz Armbruester,
SVP, Global Compliance at Avalara

STREAMLINED SALES TAX (SST) IS A STATE-RUN PROGRAM DESIGNED TO MAKE SALES TAX COMPLIANCE EASIER AND MORE AFFORDABLE BY OFFSETTING THE COST OF USING A TAX TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER, LIKE AVALARA.

The benefits offered by Avalara through the SST program are boundless. Businesses can benefit from:

•Unlimited real-time calculations delivered to your shopping cart in participating states

•Prep, filing, and remittance of sales and use tax returns

•Access to the latest boundary and rules data

•Registration in 25 states (Pennsylvania has a similar program to SST)

•Economic nexus tracking of where you have new sales tax obligations

•Audit support

As time passes by, technology continues to change rapidly and transform businesses. The kind of software small and medium size businesses use, plays a huge role in their future success. So why should small and medium size businesses use a Tax compliance software?

Not only is technology transforming business – it's also transforming tax. Authorities have adapted tax policy to capture revenue from sales across digital platforms just as businesses have embraced technology to sell across more channels and into more jurisdictions.

Historically a manual task, compliance has been and continues to be in many cases, managed by individuals in finance teams, outsourced to accounting firms, or dealt with by business owners themselves – all of which costs businesses

countless hours of personnel time and operational cash burn that provide no value to customers. Keeping these costs and the complexity of tax in mind, it's absurd to think that businesses should manually manage compliance in a digital world.

There are numerous reasons why a small and medium size business should use tax compliance software, including:

•Create a foundation for growth – As a business grows, so does their tax compliance requirements. By using tax automation software, businesses can easily scale their tax compliance management as needed to ensure that they don't run into compliance barriers that could slow or halt growth.

•Establish a clear audit trail – Technology creates an archive of your business's tax reporting history to be prepared if and when an auditor comes knocking.

•Save time and money – My two previous points also fall into this category. Tax automation can help businesses save time and money spent on tax management, especially as their tax footprint grows. The data speaks for itself – a 2021 survey found that small businesses spend on average 131 hours and nearly $12,000 per month manually managing sales tax.

Were there any changes considering Tax Compliance requirements of companies in post-Covid era?

Tax compliance requirements are constantly changing. In the post-COVID era, one of the main changes impacting the tax requirements of companies has been the acceleration of ecommerce and shift to omnichannel commerce.

The pandemic pushed the world online. Since then, we've seen in-person shopping resume, but digital sales haven't pulled back to what they were pre-pandemic. The result is an omnichannel economy where companies sell through several channels to reach customers where they are. When it comes to tax, omnichannel sales expands a company's footprint for potential tax obligations.

Where a company may have been selling through a single storefront and an ecommerce store pre-pandemic, they're likely selling through marketplaces, social media, and other channels today as they work to stay competitive. As sales grow across channels and into new jurisdictions, so do tax obligations.

Needless to say, tax compliance in the post-COVID era has gotten more complex and will continue to do so.

Could you elaborate us about Avalara's plans and goals to carry on its success in the future?

Tax compliance isn't limited to sales tax and Avalara understands that. As we look ahead, Avalara is building a global compliance platform to help businesses of all sizes automate and streamline their compliance requirements. This includes other types of indirect tax, as well as support for direct taxes, business licensing, compliance content, and more. We're building this platform by investing heavily in our technology and APIs, as well as expanding the way in which we work with our partners to deliver compliance automation to businesses.

About Avalara

We're building cloud-based tax compliance solutions to handle every transaction in the world.

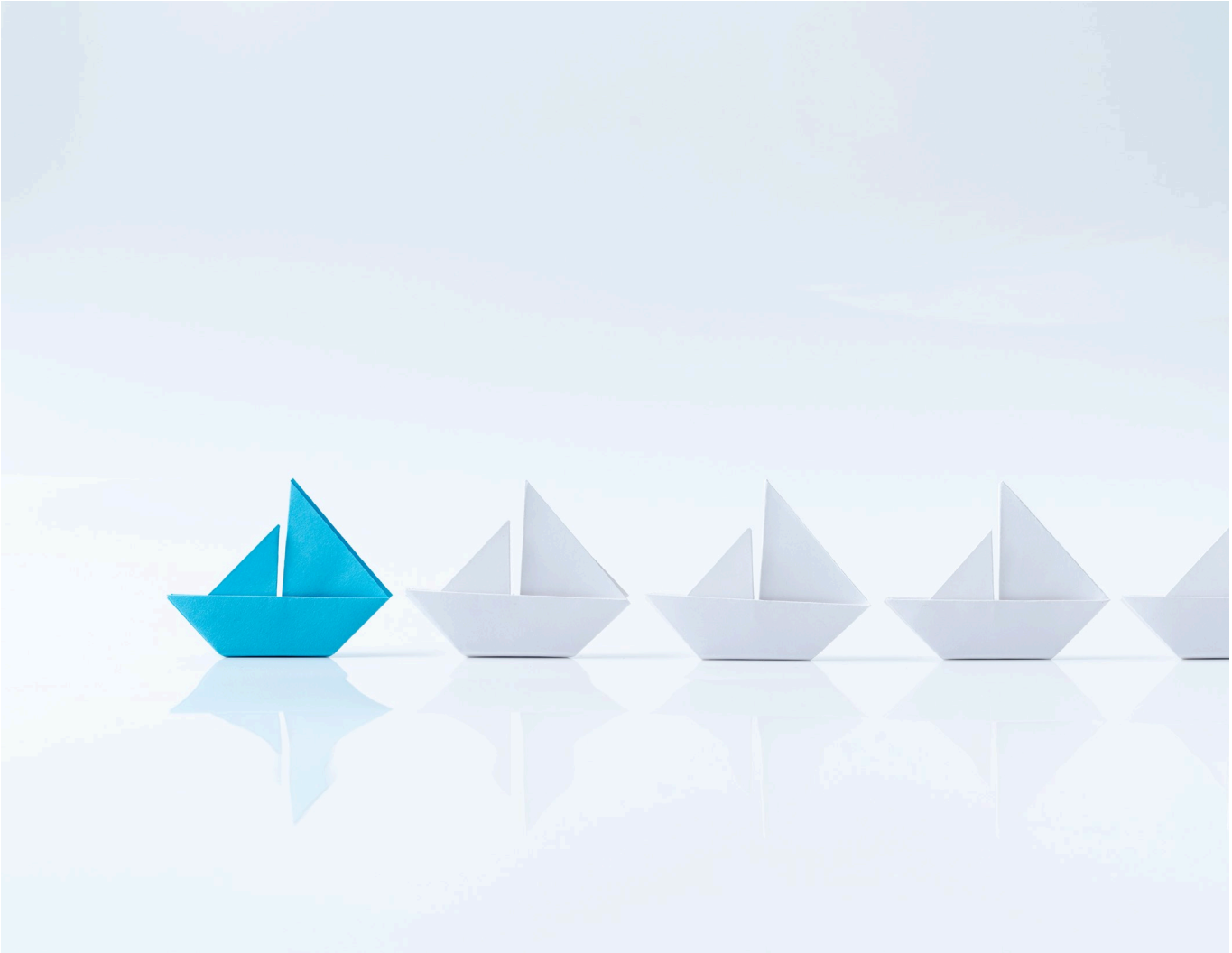
Imagine every transaction you make — every tank of gas, cup of coffee, or pair of sneakers, every movie ticket, meal kit, or streamed song, every sensor-to-sensor ping. Nearly every time you make a purchase, physical or digital, there's an accompanying unique and nuanced tax compliance calculation.

The logic behind calculating taxes — the rules, rates, and boundaries — is a global, layered, three-dimensional mess of complexity, with compliance dictated by governments and applied by every business, every day.

Avalara works with businesses of all sizes, all over the world — from corner stores to gigantic global retailers — to calculate tax accurately and automatically, at speeds measured in milliseconds.

That's a massive technical challenge, in terms of scale, reliability, and complexity, and we do it better than anyone. That's why we're growing fast.

Headquartered in Seattle, Avalara has offices across the U.S. and around the world, in Belgium, Brazil, Canada, India, and the U.K.



BUSINESSES HAVE TO BE MORE AGILE THAN EVER

*Interview with **Jason Schaps,***
Head of Cloud/RISE with SAP for SAP North America

Coping with the effects of changing market conditions is critical for businesses today. Businesses that need to be more agile than ever before are turning to industry-specific solutions, to achieve the agility required by an end-to-end industry value chain. But does an industry solution offer businesses protection against changing global conditions? Can it provide the flexibility and dynamism they need? If you are looking forward to knowing the answers to these questions, our interview with Jason Schaps, head of Cloud - RISE at SAP for SAP North America, is just for you!

Could you tell ERP News readers about yourself and your role in SAP?

Sure, I'm the head of cloud/RISE with SAP for SAP North America, which essentially means I am responsible for creating a comprehensive and cohesive go-to-market strategy for our company's cloud ERP solutions. In the last year or so, that's meant a special focus on helping customers shape their digital transformation journeys using our RISE with SAP offering, which has been a really fun and exciting thing to do. I've also served on SAP's Leadership Council, with a focus on developing young talent and addressing significant challenges in our ecosystem, which is something I'm really passionate about as well.

The pace of change in the business world has increased exponentially in the past two years and businesses had to take quick steps for digital transformation. Selecting the right ERP software for their businesses was their top agenda. What do you recommend businesses should consider when choosing ERP software?

Initially, it starts and stops with requirements, both business and technical. It's imperative that you interview all your key constituents and stakeholders and get feedback from them on what they need in ERP software — and what they need it to do. If you're in banking or finance, for instance, real-time visibility is critical to keeping up as markets evolve throughout the day, and you need something with the functional and technical capabilities to keep up. It's all about bridging the gap between what you need as a business and what the technology can deliver.

THROUGH A CONTINUED MANIACAL FOCUS ON OUR CUSTOMERS AND THEIR SUCCESS. THAT'S REALLY ALL THERE IS TO IT. TO BE THE LEADER AND TO REMAIN THE LEADER, WE ALWAYS HAVE TO KEEP OUR CUSTOMERS AT THE FOREFRONT OF EVERY DECISION WE MAKE.

Jason Schaps,
Head of cloud/RISE with SAP for SAP North America

The second thing you have to think about is your industry. Are you working with a partner that truly understands it? That truly understands your business? They need to have experience and a strong track record in what you do for you to trust that you're on the road to success. This is vital.

Last but not least, look around for customers like you when beginning the process. As they say, the proof is in the pudding, and any provider worth their weight should be able to offer references that have traversed a similar path to your company. Hear their stories, talk with them, and ask them if they would do it all over again. Learn from their experiences, so you can better shape and guide the process you're about to undergo.

The first dazzling question for a company that is in the software selection phase is whether to choose an industry-specific solution or not. Could you give us some tips about this? What are the benefits of choosing an industry-specific solution?

I would say this: Businesses have to be more agile than ever before to cope with the effects of today's rapidly changing market conditions, making the agility inherent in an end-to-end industry value chain more critical than ever. In other words, an industry solution will give the business the flexibility and dynamism it needs to insulate itself and protect against volatile global circumstances.

Let's be clear, too. This isn't about choosing between industry expertise and best-in-breed technology. You don't have to choose one or the other. It's about leading with a strong cloud core and then innovating around it with industry-specific applications. The right ERP partner can provide a company with the opportunity to have their cake and eat it, too.

What are the top industries to benefit from cloud applications' adoption?

To be honest, cloud is just table stakes now, across all industries. Perhaps there was a time when we could point to a specific industry that was leading the way in cloud adoption, but today all companies have to find ways to be more agile, to reduce risk and to innovate faster. The cloud operating model is the best equipped to help companies achieve these objectives.

In fact, even areas one might not expect, like regulated industries, are rapidly embracing the cloud operating model. In many respects, in the world we live and operate in today, cloud is really the only choice.

What are the key components of RISE with SAP? How can businesses decide whether RISE with SAP is suitable for their companies or not?

There are a number of key components to RISE with SAP, so let me lay it out for you.

First, there's the ERP itself, which enables full process transformation and continuous innovation within the core. Then, we have business process intelligence, or BPI, which offers better, faster insights for customers and enables easier identification of opportunities for improvement and outcome acceleration. Third, there's the business technology platform, or BTP, which is really where the magic happens. BTP serves as the foundation for both cloud and hybrid environments, acting as a single platform to provide plug-and-play capability for enterprise applications, analytics, integrations, extensions and more. It really brings together the power of intelligent apps and the depth and breadth of our partner ecosystem, making it easier for our customers to drive innovation and transformation around the core. The final pillar, of course, is the previously alluded-to industry-specific and cloud LoB applications that SAP offers.

> **IN THE 50 YEARS SAP HAS BEEN IN BUSINESS, WE'VE BEEN KNOWN FOR NOT ONLY ENHANCING END-TO-END INTEGRATED BUSINESS PROCESSES, BUT FOR OUR ACUTE FOCUS ON AND UNDERSTANDING OF INDUSTRY. THE REASON OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IS BECAUSE OF OUR TECHNOLOGY AND OUR KNOWLEDGE OF INDUSTRY.**

So, really, there are several ways to determine whether RISE is suitable for you. Are you looking for a partner relationship with greater accountability than ever, one where the success of your investment and their IP is inextricable? Are you aiming to offload the risk associated with running your core ERP systems? Are you interested in recasting internal resources so they can focus on more strategic, top-line initiatives? Are you hoping to establish a platform you can truly innovate in? And are you attracted to a more flexible and predictable commercial model?

If the answer to any — or all — of these questions is yes, then RISE with SAP is worth considering.

SAP has announced SAP RISE for Industries at the Sapphire Now event last year which extends the value of RISE with SAP with additional transformation packages for five industries. What is the reason behind adding industry-specific functionalities to RISE with SAP?

It's simple. In the 50 years SAP has been in business, we've been known for not only enhancing end-to-end integrated business processes, but for our acute focus on and understanding of industry. The reason our customers have been successful is because of our technology and our knowledge of industry. That's still the case today.

The introduction of industry-specific applications in RISE only strengthens that value proposition, by enabling us to further augment and address specific needs within a given industry — and to improve the overall success of a given transformation. We want to make it so that with SAP, you don't have to choose. You get it all.

What does the future hold for ERP? How do you think the industry is evolving?

Accountability is the word that comes to mind when I think about the cloud economy we live in today and where it's heading.

Customers continue to expect more from their systems and from their partners. They want intelligence, dynamism and duality. They want systems resilient enough to withstand ever-changing and volatile market conditions. They want greater automation, more holistic service delivery, and improved ROI. They want solution providers to be able to promise all of these things, and more. But most of all, they want them to be able to deliver them.

SAP continues to be the market leader in the enterprise applications market. Being an industry leader isn't easy, but it's more difficult to maintain success. How does SAP ensure the continuity of this success?

Through a continued maniacal focus on our customers and their success. That's really all there is to it. To be the leader and to remain the leader, we always have to keep our customers at the forefront of every decision we make.

Because cloud sales are one thing. But cloud sales without successful go-lives and consistent renewals? That defeats the point entirely. We maintain and increase our success only if our customers are equally, if not more, successful. And that's achieved by locking arms with our customers through every stage of their transformation journey, from delivering their SAP workloads in the cloud to transforming and improving their business outcomes over time.

We're really excited about all of the success stories we're going to be able to share this year with RISE, so stay tuned for that. This is definitely just the beginning.

About SAP

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MANUFACTURING AUTOMATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MANUFACTURERS?

Article By ***Caleb Finch,***
A Member of the QAD Marketing Communications Team

Manufacturers are seeing an increasing need for automation year over year. The manufacturing industry is one of the most prevalent and important areas for the use of automation technology. As more manufacturers look for ways to drive efficiency and lower costs, automation in factories, Industry 4.0, and other connected manufacturing solutions will continue to become more widespread. Let's look at what manufacturing automation is, its benefits and how it's changing industries.

What is Manufacturing Automation?

In the context of manufacturing, automation is the use of equipment to automate systems or processes. The end goal of manufacturing automation is to increase production capacity while reducing costs. Electromechanical systems can be programmed to perform a variety of tasks, and automation is particularly helpful for repetitive tasks or tasks that require extreme precision. Automation can also be used in manufacturing business management, such as with automated inventory scheduling, and sending and analyzing data for reporting, and can help improve workplace safety by performing tasks that could injure or endanger human workers.

Though the concept of automation can be traced back as far as prehistoric times, automation really took off during the Second Industrial Revolution with Henry Ford's moving assembly line and the introduction of large manufacturing plants. The term "automation" was then coined by D.S. Harder, the engineering manager at Ford in the 1940s.

Examples of Automated Manufacturing

Automation can come in many forms for the manufacturing industry, interacting with products in a variety of ways. Automation may not be right for every manufacturer, but most can find benefits in at least one of the three automation types:
Fixed Automation is designed to perform just one function. If you need one item made repeatedly one way, this is the automation type for you. And because it has a singular function, the system you use should be expertly skilled at performing it. This is associated with large volume production of single parts.

Programmable Automation can perform several functions, producing multiple item types in a shorter period of time. There is downtime, however, when automation systems have to be reprogrammed to perform a new function. This is associated with batch production, where multiple parts can be made but may require manual changeovers.

Flexible Automation falls between the other two. While you can reprogram it to perform different functions, it only works with a limited style of products. This is associated with real-time or on-demand production, which can combine programmable automation with fixed automation and bring together several processes to improve efficiency with less downtime.

Industries Utilizing Manufacturing Automation

Automated manufacturing efforts have become widespread across most industries, but we see it rapidly growing in the following industries:

Automotive – Robotic process automation (RPA) has increased both productivity and safety in the automotive industry, working alongside humans to get more done in less time with high quality control. This technology can reduce human error in processes that require precise manufacturing, automated reporting and documentation, as well as contain built-in safety features, which can be programmed to stop machinery whenever a person gets too close.
Medical Devices & Pharmaceuticals – Automated technology in the medical industry can perform tasks with more precision and with reduced rates of error than humans can alone, and because of this, it has become instrumental in the documentation, reporting and manufacturing of pharmaceutical products and medical devices.

Food & Beverage – Automation ensures that a consistent product is achieved for every customer and can limit human interaction for improved food safety and to reduce recall risks. Automated tracking and tracing of inventory, and automated reporting and analytics can help to improve decision making for adjusting scheduling and workflows to reduce food waste or product loss.

Consumer Products – The consumer products and the consumer goods industry depends on automated processes to help meet demand without bleeding costs, especially during times of labor shortage. Manufacturing automation in consumer packaged goods (CPG) can be seen throughout all parts of the process, including assembly, packaging, material handling, shipping, inspection, testing, scheduling and reporting.

Electronics & High Technology – As demand for electronics and tech products increases, automated manufacturing robotics can drastically enhance production speed, test and remove defective product, and aid with maintaining optimal manufacturing conditions to create higher quality products with less production cost.

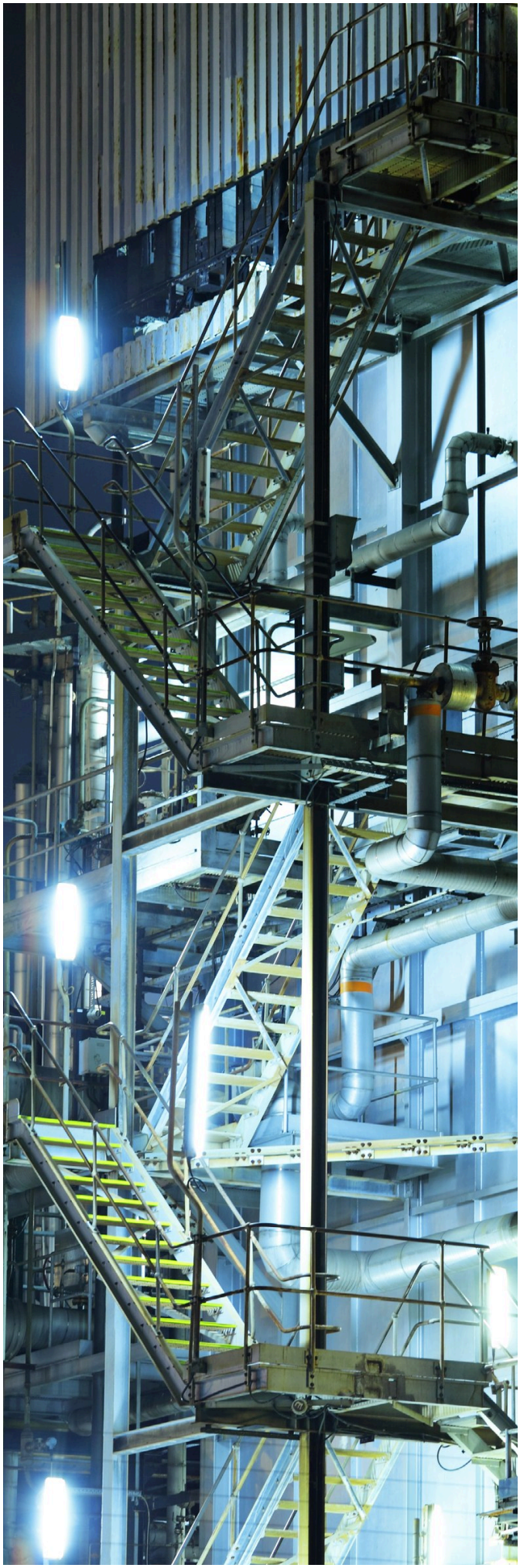
Packaging – Automation in the packaging industry helps manufacturers stay competitive and consistent in their products, keeps employees safer, and improves packaging flexibility to accommodate larger and more diverse product varieties.

Benefits of Automated Manufacturing

There are many benefits to implementing automation in manufacturing plants. Here are some of the primary areas where measurable improvement is high.

Reduced Production Time

Automation's ability to increase production speed gives manufacturers flexible responsiveness to market changes. It also helps manufacturers be more competitive. Machinery can produce more products in less time with fewer defects, and robotics paired with advanced sensors can work together to complete validation and inspection processes to ensure quality control and increase production rate.



Less Human Error and Danger

Reducing human error not only allows for a better product but also greater safety. This decreases recalls, repair expenses and serious injuries. It also allows for more efficient utilization of resources by introducing the ability to place human capital toward research and development instead of mundane tasks.

Labor Shortage Help and Skills Gap Closure

Machines are less likely to be in short supply than human employees. Automation technology addresses both the skills gap and labor shortage, which can drastically affect profit and even the livelihood of a manufacturing company.

Improved Analytics and Production Tracking

The use of sensors, robotics, and advanced equipment can track inventory, system maintenance, and finished products and easily disperse data throughout the supply chain. This allows for more optimized planning and scheduling, better decision making and improved ROI.

What is the Future of Automation in Manufacturing?

Robotics are getting smarter. Their ability to be agile and efficiently perform complex tasks with more consistency and less danger is monumental for the manufacturing industry. Based on the trajectory of current technological advances, the future of automation in manufacturing looks bright.

As for where manufacturing automation is going, we're likely to see a steep rise in the use and advancement of:

-AI
-Robotics
-Machine learning
-IoT
-Other digital manufacturing technologies that allow for more shop floor control

There is a misconception that automation technology will soon replace the human workforce, but most processes still require a human touch as people are more adaptable to change and innovation. This enables their ability to be retrained quicker than a robot can be reprogrammed and reassembled. It's important to understand that automation isn't designed necessarily for the replacement of roles but rather a change in roles. Instead of humans performing tasks that may present ergonomic and safety challenges, they can now be better utilized in roles that are safer, less physically laborious, and more about problem-solving, creativity, people management and innovation.

QAD Solutions for Companies Using Manufacturing Automation

Using manufacturing automation tools as a part of a digital transformation strategy can help manufacturers improve in many areas of their business. Automation can be as simple as starting data-collection and automated scheduling, and scale to include automating processes across the entire product cycle.

The adoption of automation technologies and related digital manufacturing systems, such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, enterprise quality management systems (QMS) and coordinated material management systems, can aid in streamlining manufacturing processes for more efficient production and help make smart, data-driven decisions.

QAD solutions help to optimize reporting, reduce error and time to market, improve training and provide a single source of truth for companies. QAD solutions help to automate business, planning, and management processes for a more efficient and streamlined operation. These automated business processes can support manufacturing automation efforts. Used in tandem, manufacturing ERP solutions and automation technology can lead to a night-to-day kind of change for a company.

Caleb is part of QAD's Marketing Communications team and brings a background in both Manufacturing and Enterprise Software. An avid follower of new and emerging technologies, he manages the QAD website, QAD Blog and Social Media program. When Caleb's not tied to a computer, he can be found exploring mountain biking trails, snowboarding or relaxing at the beach.

About QAD

In 1979, QAD was founded by Pamela Lopker, who was later joined by her husband Karl Lopker, as a small startup solution to address a large gap in complete, integrated business software for manufacturing companies.

We began with a few local customers, supporting them from our headquarters in Santa Barbara, California. But as our customers took their brands to the next level—international—we adapted quickly to keep up. Today we support customers in over 100 countries around the world. Our products have gone global, too, and we have spent years innovating and growing our offering as our customers expand their businesses overseas.

You'll often hear us say that at the heart of QAD is a strong and loyal customer community. We really believe that to create the best full-featured manufacturing ERP software for our customers we need to work together. We pride ourselves on our customer engagement and our commitment to continually evolve as the manufacturing industry changes.

It's been over four decades; we still focus solely on manufacturing—we live and breathe it every day alongside you. Together we are building an Adaptive Manufacturing Enterprise.

NTT DATA

NTT DATA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS RECEIVES SAP® NORTH AMERICA PARTNER EXCELLENCE AWARD 2022 FOR CLOUD RENEWAL EXCELLENCE

NTT DATA Business Solutions announced it is the recipient of an SAP® North America Award for Partner Excellence 2022 for Cloud Renewal Excellence. Awards were presented by SAP (NYSE: SAP) to the top-performing SAP partners in the North America region that have made outstanding contributions to driving digital transformation for businesses that use SAP solutions. Recipients of this year's awards have been – in partnership with SAP – helping customers adopt innovation easily, gain results rapidly, grow sustainably and run more simply with SAP solutions.

"It is a great honor to receive an SAP North American Partner Excellence Award for the last several years, and again this year. Our employees live the NTT DATA Business Solutions mission by transforming trust into value for our customers with the highest level of service and expertise, every day," said Steve Niesman, president and CEO at NTT DATA Business Solutions Americas Region. "We remain committed to delivering great customer experiences in 2022 with digital transformation as a service."

Selected from SAP's wide-ranging partner base, nominations for the SAP Partner Excellence Awards were based on internal SAP sales data. A steering committee composed of regional and global SAP representatives determined winning partners in each category according to numerous criteria such as sales achievement and performance. Awards were presented in a variety of categories, including overall sales, innovation, technology, services and solution-specific areas.

"SAP is partner-centric, and our partners are the best in the business", said Nanette Lazina, Vice President Midmarket Channels, SAP America, Inc. "Every year we proudly recognize our top partners with our SAP Partner Excellence Awards. These partners have demonstrated the innovation and execution needed to deliver the highest level of value to our joint customers."

NTT DATA Business Solutions, part of NTT DATA, has been an SAP partner for North America since 1993 and an SAP global partner since 1989, providing expertise on SAP solutions to help customers with implementation, application management and hosting through each stage of the process. A frequently awarded SAP platinum partner, the company is closely aligned with the key principles of quality from SAP that are integral to the success of every implementation, designed to deliver high-quality software and support while providing the right processes, tools and services to drive successful projects and delivery.

NTT DATA Business Solutions received its award during the Customer Success Summit 2021, a gathering of SAP executives, SAP field employees and partners. Formally called SAP Field Kick-Off Meeting, this is SAP's largest yearly sales meeting, intended to gain and exchange information on SAP's strategy, sales methodology, business growth opportunities, and product innovations as well as drive success during the upcoming year.

About NTT DATA

NTT DATA – a part of NTT Group – is a trusted global innovator of IT and business services headquartered in Tokyo. We help clients transform through consulting, industry solutions, business process services, IT modernization and managed services. NTT DATA enables clients, as well as society, to move confidently into the digital future. We are committed to our clients' long-term success and combine global reach with local client attention to serve them in over 50 countries. Visit us at nttdata.com.

THE BENEFITS OF INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC CLOUD SOLUTIONS

*Article By **Stephen Edginton**,*
VP, Product Development at ERP company
Epicor

Epicor's latest Industry report revealed that 99% of technology decision makers plan on migrating their business operations to cloud-based solutions within the next twelve months. As of today, businesses are 17 times more likely to increase their cloud spend in the next twelve months - are you ahead of the curve?

There are many reasons driving this adoption of cloud, as companies are looking to refocus on core business value and not IT activities. They are looking to better adapt to hybrid work and integrating within their supply chains to build stronger resilience, along with having the latest capabilities and evergreen systems. With so many similar options, the challenge is to choose the right operating platform for your business, with an ERP solution that addresses your needs today but has the adaptability for what they may be in the future.

Generic ERP solutions offer basic functionality, covering areas such as accounting and finance, and perform basic levels of operations, however these fall short because business is not generic. That's where industry-specific cloud-based ERPs come into their own. Industry-specific cloud solutions

> **"BUSINESS IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PARTNER WHO KNOWS YOUR INDUSTRY, UNDERSTANDS YOU AND YOUR COMPETITOR'S PAIN POINTS, AND HAS THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE.**

are designed with specific industries in mind and include capabilities to drive best practice approaches though years of innovation and evolution. They also allow tailoring and configuration to specific needs with a focus on the industry - it is not 'one size fits all'.

With the multitude of cloud providers and services now available, it's important to carefully evaluate a solution that aligns with your unique objectives and is resilient enough to meet the demands of your industry, now and in the future. Ensure you evaluate ERP vendors with customers in your sectors, like manufacturing, distribution and building supply, and caution the applicability of solutions that are focused on Non-Profits, healthcare, or services.

Out-of-the-box or customisation - which is best?

An out-of-the box cloud solution works until it doesn't, however, customization and configuration carry a cost. The benefit of industry-specific solutions that are adaptable yet mature is that they minimize the need to customize for the industry and allow you to focus on your unique needs. Combining this with teams who already understand your industry results in time savings, as they only need to focus on understanding your business and your pain points. Modules supporting things like warehouse management, Configure, Price, Quote (CPQ,) Manufacturing Execution System (MES), engineering and resource scheduling already exist.

Choosing the right ERP partner

Business is about relationships and it's important to choose the right partner who knows your industry, understands you and your competitor's pain points, and has the right combination of technical and industry knowledge. A partner who will work with you to make sure the solution is the right solution for you now, and in the future. They will want to learn about your business and your current processes, then showcase how best practices and specific capabilities can allow you to do more with less.

Ultimately, a partner with a clear understanding of your industry can build a tailored 'made with you for you' solution that responds to both your business needs and industry demand so you can quickly respond to new challenges, build a competitive edge and focus on what you do best. Our vision is to enable a world of better business and we do that in the markets we serve.

VP of Engineering & Product Development at Epicor. At Epicor, he established the platform engineering team to reimagine on-premise flag ship products and transform them into true cloud-native SaaS solutions

About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation equips hard-working businesses with enterprise solutions that keep the world turning. For nearly 50 years, Epicor customers in the manufacturing, distribution, LBM, retail, and automotive industries have trusted Epicor to help them do business better. Epicor's innovative solution sets are carefully curated to fit customer needs and built to respond flexibly to their fast-changing reality. With deep industry knowledge and experience, Epicor accelerates every customer's ambitions, whether to grow and transform, or simply become more productive and effective. Visit www.epicor.com for more information.

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OPTIMIZING USER EXPERIENCE DURING TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Article By ***Brandon Lage,***
CEO of Fission Consulting

The importance of transformation and modernization is undeniable in today's fast-moving business landscape. Companies need to evolve, not just to keep up, but to prepare for what's next when it comes to digital tools and technologies.

However, it's not easy. As you've probably heard, a lot of digital transformation efforts fall completely flat. The numbers may vary across the years — 70 percent! 73 percent! 84 percent! — but the truth remains the same: many companies have put in the effort and failed to see the value.

As a business leader, it may be even more staggering to consider the natural outgrowth of that reality — that an even higher percentage of companies face significant challenges on the path to transformation.

The fear is simple. Transforming will cause massive disruption to the business and its everyday users. And that fear? It's all too often realized.

But I know firsthand that a successful technology implementation is possible, without users even feeling the disruption. So, in this blog, I want to highlight some key tactics for developing a strong transformation strategy — optimizing user experience and supporting continued business growth every step of the way.

> **WHEN SETTING OUT ON YOUR JOURNEY, MAKE SURE YOU CHOOSE A PARTNER WHO HAS BEEN THROUGH IT — ENOUGH TIMES TO KNOW WHAT CAN, SHOULD AND WILL HAPPEN ALONG THE WAY.**

IN ORDER TO KEEP TWO FEET PLANTED IN REALITY, COMPANIES SHOULD CONCENTRATE JUST ON TRANSFORMING TO THE CLOUD AT FIRST — AND IN DOING NO HARM TO THE TECHNOLOGY CORE ALONG THE WAY. LATER, THEY CAN INCREMENTALLY LAYER IN VALUE-ADDED CHANGE TO OPTIMIZE THEIR PROCESSES.

Brandon Lage,
CEO of Fission Consulting

The Technology Can't Do It All

Technology is not a panacea.

And just as change should not drive a total upending of everyday business, technology should not drive a complete overhaul in the way the business functions. In fact, the inverse is true. Targeted business process changes should be decided well before technology changes, and the technology should only be an enabler and optimizer for the business.

Put simply, the business case for digital transformation must come first (and be made by business leaders), and transformation must be pursued in a way that minimizes major disruptions to the business. Expecting the technology to magically fix the business' problems on its own is a loser's bet. Because you're not implementing digital, next-generation solutions just to get fancy new technology. You're doing it to make the business run better. Period.

Don't Make It a Package Deal

Another common mistake of digital transformation leaders is eating the elephant all at once.

What do I mean by that? All too often, the well-meaning but ultimately unproductive mindset of "While we're doing this, we should implement this, this and this, too!" can have damaging and lasting effects. It can threaten a smoothly run project, a timely and successful implementation, and, in the end, user adoption itself.

In order to keep two feet planted in reality, companies should concentrate just on transforming to the cloud at first — and in doing no harm to the technology core along the way. Later, they can incrementally layer in value-added change to optimize their processes. We see this in especially sharp relief in the work we do at Fission with private equity technology carve-outs. In times of extreme change, you have to put the end user's experience first and prioritize the minimization of disruption to the business. You have to "eat the elephant" the only way you truly can: one bite at a time.

What You've Heard Is True

Clichés don't become clichés on accident. To become an overused and unoriginal thought, it helps to be based in an overused and unoriginal truth. That's why — when it comes to digital transformation — you've probably heard advice like this quite often:

•You must ensure the company's project goals are widely understood and accepted

•You must build a comprehensive project roadmap and communicate it effectively

•You must prioritize efforts in a proper and well-structured way during implementation

And so on, and so on.

Advice like this is not new, and, crucially, it's not wrong. But it's worth putting deeper thought into these common bits of guidance when setting out on a transformation project, because (as another cliché truth might say) people don't like change. And the anxiety that will arise from workers and end-users during transformation processes is unavoidable. You must build a targeted and supportive approach that adapts these tenets to your business to ensure the negative impact will be minimized — and that the positive impact on your success will be immeasurable.

Don't force org assimilation upon your people. Take the time to educate them on why the project is good and necessary.

Outline the benefits and goals. Be empathetic, open and honest throughout. Because you need the business to come together and buy in on the journey. To leave it all out on the field. To give it a 110 percent. Etc., etc., etc.

The Struggle Is Inevitable

Maybe the business side will get too involved with the tech side of things. Maybe the change management team will be integrated into the project far too late. Maybe the internal messaging of your implementation project will be poor and ineffective. It's hard to say which "maybe" might be for certain, but one thing is for sure: There will be challenges. Partners and consultants that tell you otherwise are doing nothing more than selling you a false bill of goods. Because transforming a company is a monumental task.

Still, it is a task that is no less necessary, even if challenges are to be expected. We see this every day working in the private equity carve-out space, where the complexity and change is even more extreme but the urgency and necessity is just as great as companies look to accomplish quick TSA exits and create greater ROI potential on their investments.

The bottom line is this: When setting out on your journey, make sure you choose a partner who has been through it — enough times to know what can, should and will happen along the way. Stay pragmatic, not hypothetical. Aim for clear and tangible benefits. And make sure you're approaching the project with a technology-centric mindset and methodology, one that will keep your team focused, productive and strategic.

It takes a ton of work to facilitate a non-event go-live. But it's worth it, especially if it means helping your company avoid the fate of becoming just another statistic in stories about failed digital transformations.

Brandon Lage is the founder of Fission Consulting. He focuses exclusively on ERP system transformation projects to support mergers, acquisitions and divestitures. Brandon's project experience includes over 15 years of ERP implementation and carve-out experience covering various industries. To date, Brandon has executed projects representing more than $10B in transaction value.

About Fission Consulting

Fission Consulting, headquartered in Chicago, helps private equity clients use IT to maximize the return from their portfolio companies.

Maximization of returns starts with a proper due diligence. Significant technology debt can be hiding in any deal. IT organizations are rarely sized to support the future NewCo. Our team has completed hundreds of technology due diligences for $50M to $50B+ companies.

After the deal closes, the work of separation begins. This is one of the largest, riskiest components of any transaction. Second only to a new implementation, carving out the ERP system has potential to cause significant business disruption. Our team ensures go-live becomes a "non-event."

Finally, IT investments can be made throughout the hold period in order to further improve operations and prepare for exit. We invest in long term relationships with our clients because there is value to be found throughout the investment. The right carve out strategy and continuous improvement allow for a clean exit and maximum investor return.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INDUSTRY SPECIFIC CLOUD SOLUTIONS?

*Article by **Lucy Thorpe**,*
Head of Content, InCloud Solutions

At the beginning of 2022 industry commentators seemed pretty united on one thing. That this would be the year of the vertical industry solution.

John Reed of Diginomica has been arguing for some time that the future of ERP is vertical and has quoted many in his support. For example Acumatica whose industry editions he reckons make up 78% of their SKU mix - that's up from 20% four years ago. He also quotes Unit 4s Mike Etting who said, "The industry requirements of mid-market companies force cloud ERP companies to push into industry functionality as a must-have (Larger enterprises are more likely to build their own industry tools)."

Interestingly, here at Sapphire Systems we prefer to start by looking at the specific customer standing in front of us. As Sapphire Chief Strategist Chris Gabriel says;

"I think the big question for us is - what does the customer need to do? How can the partner help and what does the vendor have to offer? SAP is doing a lot more industry specific solutions straight from the cloud – so customers can adopt best practice in horizontal functions like finance – but then grab industry specific stuff also."

Indeed SAP say,

"Business innovation starts with ideas: how to fix a problem or how to discover and unlock new value. Translating an idea into a business process, and then into a solution to support this process, requires an innovation space that comes with all the tools and content necessary to build and deliver fast and predictably – and that is SAP's industry cloud.."

Industry cloud is their strategy to extend the intelligent suite with innovative solutions built by SAP and partners on the SAP® Cloud Platform. The result is an open business and technology platform for customers' core business in their respective industries.

Over at Infor they are, in their own words, taking 'industry specificity for ERP to a whole new level'. Infor's unique selling point in the ERP market has always been its commitment to industry verticals.

Now they want to deliver quicker time to value by using out of the box functionality for specific micro verticals while simultaneously driving customers to the cloud and implementing a user-focused approach to design.

Soma Somasundaram, Chief Technology Officer and President of Products at Infor, told Diginomica that ERP vendors typically announce an 'industry edition' of a horizontal ERP – a kind of standardized ERP with some configuration for industry which is very different to an industry specific ERP.

He says,

"The problem with that is that you really cannot go and deliver the last mile functionality. So our approach is that we have a solution that addresses service industries, particularly healthcare and public sector. That is a different solution to what we go to market with for aerospace and defence and discrete manufacturing in general; which is different from process manufacturing, like food and beverage, chemicals and distribution."

You can get as granular as you want, for example by designing a solution for USA dairy farmers focussing on a very specific procure to pay process or a flavour of SAP Business ByDesign aimed at the hotel industry which integrates the USALI accounting standard. The alternative is using a horizontal platform and then spending a lot of time on consultants making it work. You can save a lot of time of you come out of the gates with your industry needs predefined.

Infor have just launched their Marketplace, a "curated showcase of solutions that can augment and enhance customers' existing Infor investments". The marketplace is aiming to make it easier for customers to "discover, source and licence industry and micro-vertical solutions" that easily integrate with Infor.

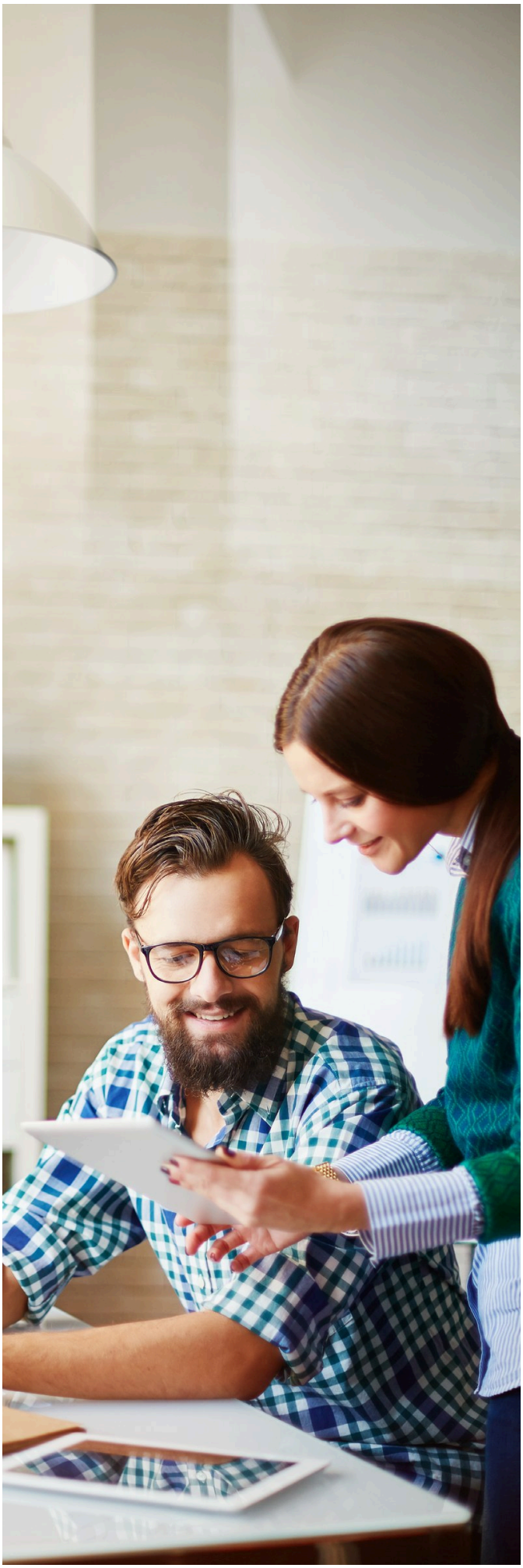
The primary purpose of the marketplace is to make it easier for Infor's partner ecosystem to build out those micro-vertical solutions and make it easier for customers to purchase add-ons.

Same at SAP where there is a huge range of intelligent options on offer via the SAP store – many of them developed using the expertise of partners. These aren't only available to S/4 users – ByDesign and Business 1 customers can use them as well.

Sapphire's head of Business 1 Simon Merrick says;

"One thing is true and constant; and it's change. What is standard for an industry today is obsolete tomorrow. What is custom today becomes the standard of tomorrow. It is this constant cycle of invention, standardisation of and re-invention that keeps the platform at the forefront of industry needs.

Look at the simple screw invented and standardised in 1841 by Joseph Whitworth which played a central part in building railways across the world. Without it, the railway and arguably industry growth itself would have been curtailed. Now look at the array of screws available – Joseph would be dizzy!



Every organisation strives to be different. To do things better, more efficiently than their competitor, to challenge the standard.

Take the humble invoice for example, standard in nearly all companies and countries. It used to be paper, with a carbon copy behind to create duplicate and triplicate. Today, all the ERP vendors have standard electronic and digital invoice solutions, with add-ons available like OCR, artificial intelligence, automation, credit monitoring, forecasting, regional tax processing, partial payment management, banking integration and powerful analytics. That single and simple process now has an array of options, complexity and benefits to consider. All of which can be the source of distinct competitive advantage, better financial performance and happier customers. "

SAP offers business leaders an extensive selection of industry cloud solutions to extend support for end-to-end processes with the intelligent suite and business networks. Open API's make it even easier as many CIOs struggle with the effort to integrate vertical solutions from many different vendors. Lee Sands Asset Management Solutions Advisor at Sapphire is keen to point out that a best of breed approach can offer serious advantage;

"As we've seen with many customers, users don't need to settle for average solutions that are add-ons to other backend systems. With the modern architecture of cloud solutions, integration between best-of-breed systems is no longer a time-consuming blocker that adds significant risk. Instead a company can embrace an SAP platform for ERP, a HxGN EAM solution for Asset Management and a different CRM, ITSM and HR system too; each one delivering the value to the area it is designed to do so."

Sapphire's Chris Gabriel says, "this is the new world we are embracing. Of course in the perpetual world customisation still remains but we are excited that cloud brings the advantage of vertical industry and horizontal transformation at speed."

All that's required now is a fantastic team to bring it all together. As Simon Merrick says, "A great partner is going to guide you with expertise and the ability to deliver at speed. Sapphire is well placed do this with its global reach, ERP and industry expertise that's been built over more than 25 years."

"BUSINESS INNOVATION STARTS WITH IDEAS: HOW TO FIX A PROBLEM OR HOW TO DISCOVER AND UNLOCK NEW VALUE. TRANSLATING AN IDEA INTO A BUSINESS PROCESS, AND THEN INTO A SOLUTION TO SUPPORT THIS PROCESS, REQUIRES AN INNOVATION SPACE THAT COMES WITH ALL THE TOOLS AND CONTENT NECESSARY TO BUILD AND DELIVER FAST AND PREDICTABLY – AND THAT IS SAP'S INDUSTRY CLOUD.

Lucy Thorpe is an in-house writer and content creator for cloud solutions consultancy Saphhire Systems based in Reading & London in the UK - they are members of the worldwide United Vars network of SAP consultancies.

About Sapphire Systems

Sapphire Systems is a dynamic business transformation provider. Made up of 5 specialist companies with deep industry expertise, we have come together with a unique offering – a complete portfolio of digital services for the mid-market to mid-enterprise, enabling companies to leverage the competitive advantage of digital transformation. We offer you the chance to deliver exciting digital experiences to your customers stitching together your organization from end to end, creating new opportunities and new business models. The era of frictionless business has arrived.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC CLOUD SOLUTIONS?

aptean

Cloud-based, industry-specific ERP is vital in today's digital world, because a one-size-fits-all solution needing on-site hardware is no longer good enough.

Every industry faces a unique set of challenges, from evolving customer expectations and changing regulations to rising operational costs and skilled labor shortages. That's why the best ERP systems allow companies to address these challenges head-on with features created just for their businesses.

If you're still relying on paper documentation to record critical information, it's time to move to the cloud and take processes digital. ERP software deployed in the cloud automates manual recording processes to save time and effort while eliminating the need for costly hardware upgrades. Not only will you save money initially by eradicating on-site server requirements and the need for their ongoing support, but your team will be freed up to focus on software implementation, its effective use and applying the resulting data toward improved business results.

Specialized, cloud ERP solutions provide numerous benefits right out of the gate...

For the food and beverage industry: Achieve advanced traceability and recall capabilities, help ensure food safety compliance, support complex inventory management and shelf-life requirements with allergen control, easily manage customer pricing and promotions and manage product costing with actionable information on customer and product profitability.

For the discrete manufacturing industry: Gain real-time visibility and control over operations, including integration of scheduling capabilities and business intelligence tools to increase efficiency, reduce response times and improve on-time delivery rates.

For the process manufacturing industry: Easily track different product lines in a formula-based production environment, establish full digital traceability throughout your supply chain and manage inventory and production with ease using automated supply replenishment based on real-time customer demand forecasts. Plus, ensure government and industry regulations are met by establishing relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) in one integrated platform.

For the distribution and retail industries: Standardize tracking and delivery processes across facilities by creating a single source of truth in the cloud, optimize and automate purchasing decisions with distribution resource planning (DRP) and forecasting tools, and streamline retailer compliance with integrated electronic data interchange (EDI) between companies.

For other industries: Whether your business is in biotech, pharmaceuticals, financial services, logistics or another industry, specialized ERPs exist to facilitate your digital transformation by refining key processes, automating tasks and increasing data visibility throughout your business.

Industry-specific functionality should be built into your ERP solutions from the beginning, which is what we do here at Aptean. The combination of industry expertise and cloud deployment adds up to a software solution that future-proofs your business and fits your exact needs. Without this combination, your team will continue to spend time manually inputting information, gathering data and creating reports instead of applying the information towards actions that will power your business forward.

***Jack Payne** is the Vice President of Product Management & Solutions Consulting at Aptean, focusing on ERP solutions. Payne originally joined the organization nearly 30 years ago with Ross ERP and has served as a thought leader ever since. Payne has over 40 years of experience in the industry and has collaborated with customers, industry analysts and developers to become a well-respected resource for best practices and future technology advancements.*

UNIT4

HR AND FINANCE COLLABORATION – THE KEY TO WORKFORCE AGILITY?

With operating environments becoming more fluid and less predictable, organizations need to be resilient. And to provide organizations – and their leadership teams – with the resilience they need to succeed, HR and Finance must come together to address two key challenges:

Enhancing workforce agility

Eliminating unnecessary friction in your peoples' working patterns

This is the argument of Ventana Research's CEO and Chief Research Officer Mark Smith in his latest Viewpoint briefing. Here's our 3 top takeaways from this piece on Improving the employee experience and internal mobility for workforce agility.

1: A clear workforce strategy is a prerequisite to workforce agility

If your people are going to have the flexibility they need to deliver competitive advantage for your organization, you'll need a strategy that clearly defines both deployment requirements and your short and long term staffing needs.

Your workforce strategy should also give your leadership team the means to assess the options available for meeting these needs. And give your teams the ability to respond quickly to various business and data triggers as they become available.

Collaboration between HR and Finance will be essential in formulating a workforce strategy that actually works – after all, it'll have to fit any existing fiscal and structural constraints, along with any legal and regulatory frameworks.

2: Implementing a strategy that makes a great experience possible requires the right data

Cultivating your organization's ability to make robust staffing and personnel decisions requires your management to have access to relevant data in real time. Without a reliable assessment of your talent pipeline or an overview of the external talent market – including how your organization's ability to compensate people measures up to going rates and competitor strategies – it'll be impossible to make good decisions that support your success.

3: Cultivating a good employee experience requires using technology to minimize administrative burdens

Making your workforce as agile as possible also depends

on giving them the freedom to pivot to different areas of interest as needed. And one of the simplest ways of doing this lies in eliminating or minimizing the effect of peripheral tasks like administration, data entry, and other redundant tasks. Doing so can boost productivity and job satisfaction in a way that has a measurable effect on retention levels.

Although you will be able to reduce friction by simplifying routine workflows, the real difference requires a careful application of modern enterprise technology. Rationalizing and consolidating the systems and tools employees use to complete tasks streamlines their working environment and improves their experience of work.

Looking beyond the use of HCM systems for workforce management and ensuring full data visibility between HCM, Finance, and ERP systems allows leaders to balance the needs of teams with the practical constraints of resource limitations and compliance.

Want to know more?

To learn how your HR and Finance teams can work together to create employee experiences and facilitate internal mobility in a way that boosts productivity and allows the whole organization to respond more quickly to business risks and opportunities, check out Ventana Research's full Viewpoint here.

"CULTIVATING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ABILITY TO MAKE ROBUST STAFFING AND PERSONNEL DECISIONS REQUIRES YOUR MANAGEMENT TO HAVE ACCESS TO RELEVANT DATA IN REAL TIME.

About Unit4

Unit4's next-generation enterprise solutions power many of the world's most people-centric mid-market organizations. Our state-of-the-art cloud platform, ERPx, brings together the capabilities of Financials, Procurement, Project Management, HR, and FP&A onto a unified cloud platform that shares real-time information and is designed with a powerful, people-centric approach, so employees can benefit from better insight and become more effective and increasingly engaged. It supports rapid and continuous change while delivering individualized fit for customers at scale, delivering the right tools to unify the processes across their organization, and connect their people. Unit4 serves more than 6,000 customers globally including, Bravida, Havas, Migros Aare, Americares, Save the Children International, Action against Hunger, Metro Vancouver, Forest Research, Southampton City Council, Habitat for Humanity, Selkirk College, FTI Consulting, and Surrey County Council.

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priority™

AGILE MANUFACTURING POWERED BY AGILE ERP: HOW TO OPTIMIZE DIGITAL PRODUCTION PROCESSES?

*Article by **Efrat Nakibly**,*
VP Marketing & Strategy

As digitization continues to make its way into every conceivable corner of the business world, manufacturers aren't immune to the fast-growing trend. Driven by changing customer expectations and the surge in customer demands, and the accelerated pace of innovation, today's manufacturers need to adapt – and fast, or risk being left behind. To maintain business continuity, boost efficiency and productivity, and run smarter, more efficient production processes, manufacturers large and small, are turning their attention to business management systems, such as ERP, to automate their workflows, meet delivery schedules on time, and on budget.

While that's all well and good, for now, what about future ERP systems? Will they be able to effectively support production planning, documentation and reporting, logistics, and more, to drive the supply chain (and the end product), to the customer's door. In other words, how can today's ERP systems be primed, ready, and flexible enough to support agile manufacturing?

Let's take a look at what powers agile production processes, and just how agile and 'flexible' manufacturing ERP software needs to be to survive the next big digital wave.

What are the Manufactures "aches and pains"?

If you're a manufacturer or perhaps a key stakeholder in the supply chain, you're well aware of the long list of proverbial 'pain points' that keep production plant owners awake at night. Fueled by the unprecedented changes resulting from the pandemic, today's manufacturers are faced with constant supply chain disruptions. From materials and labor shortages, automation challenges, order backlogs, and competitive pricing, to new mandates in shipping and logistics and ever-changing regulations and compliance, the list is downright exhausting.

The average manufacturing plant, whether it churns out running shoes or horizontal stabilizers, often relies on a portfolio of hundreds of legacy standalone software applications. Some are proprietary, developed in-house to perform a specific function, while others may lack the required documentation. Other apps may be back-office only or running on unsupported operating systems. This eclectic mix of siloed apps is costly to maintain and update, putting production continuity, quality, and safety at risk.

The advent of even greater cutting-edge applications, namely 5G, will increase the challenge of running disparate solutions even further, and will grow exponentially for large manufacturers operating dozens or hundreds of individual plants. Case in point – If your business is agile, your ERP should be, too. Read on.

Agile Manufacturing & Industry 4.0 : is your ERP up for the challenge?

Agile manufacturing is more than just a catchphrase, it's a mindset. It's an approach a manufacturing company takes to produce products based on an agile manufacturing strategy companywide. This is achieved by integrating production processes, tools and training to enable manufacturers to respond quickly to customer needs and market changes, without jeopardizing product cost and quality.

> **AGILE MANUFACTURING IS MORE THAN JUST A CATCHPHRASE, IT'S A MINDSET. IT'S AN APPROACH A MANUFACTURING COMPANY TAKES TO PRODUCE PRODUCTS BASED ON AN AGILE MANUFACTURING STRATEGY COMPANYWIDE.**

Enter Industry 4.0. Over a decade ago, it called for a future of agile and affordable manufacturing processes connecting IoT, 3D printing, cloud computing, mobile devices, and big data. While it's still a tall order for many organizations, it did shine a light on the inflexibility of many manufacturers' operations, leaving them little choice but to change. With the help of Industry 4.0 and smart manufacturing initiatives, manufacturers, albeit, many at a snail's pace, learned to embrace digital transformation. New technologies, such as cloud, AI and edge computing, which have completely changed the IT landscape, have accelerated production workflows. Still, Industry 4.0's full potential has yet to be realized, as manufacturers continue to struggle to scale these advances throughout their operations.

For the multitude of manufacturers out there already (happily) using an ERP system to manage and control their operational and business processes, and for those who are looking to replace their legacy applications, know this: Agile manufacturing processes cannot stand alone. They must be supported by an agile ERP.

By leveraging an agile, open and flexible ERP's intelligent, automated workflows, BI tools, smarter asset management, and real-time business insights powered by data and AI, manufacturers can and will save valuable time, resources, and costs. An agile ERP enables manufacturers to quickly identify defects and take corrective actions, reduce material waste, maintain healthier assets, run leaner, more streamlined processes, satisfy shareholder and employee expectations, and meet the latest regulatory and industry requirements – all on a single platform.

Today, competitive dynamics and the pace of change are so quick, that most companies don't know what their business model will be in the next 2-3 years. Manufacturers need an ERP system that is designed to incorporate business agility and scalability, so they can change their business as they see fit, without changing their platform.

Trade in or trade up: When should you bid farewell to your legacy systems?

The 4th Industrial Revolution is all about digital, and all about the here and now – smart factories equipped with AI robotics, data analytics, smart sensors, advanced automation, and advanced human-to-machine interfaces. It's about powering the end-to-end manufacturing process that transforms factories into smart environments, increasing interoperability between machines, logistics systems, and where work-in-process components on the shop floor can deliver real-time data to both back-end and monitoring systems.

Smart environments also drive real-time communication between multiple stakeholders, from suppliers, to customers, and employees. The result? Increased productivity, efficiency and quality in processes, greater workforce safety by reducing jobs in dangerous environments, enhanced decision-making with data-based tools, and improved competitiveness by developing customized products.

To onboard and support a multitude of digital processes, vast amount of data from various sources, and easily integrate third-party products and applications, an ERP system will have to become the backbone that, in a word, holds it all together – connecting smart machines on the shop floor, powering AI-driven sensors, where billions of sensors are embedded into the environment to collect critical production data, and being able to aggregate, store, analyze, and share reams of new types of data.

There will be a sizable expectation of future ERP systems to go far beyond agile manufacturing and the smart factory, to be fully integrated with manufacturing execution systems (MES), essentially tracking and tracing each and every component, from cradle to grave. Next-generation ERPs must also offer robust planning functionality, and integrate analytics and machine learning into the mix, to support the next step, the move towards intelligent manufacturing.

Does your current manufacturing ERP have the necessary IT infrastructure, and the breadth and functionality of automated digital tools to power your production processes and keep up with this new paradigm? If the answer is no, there are viable solutions out there that address the real needs of growing manufacturing organizations – a hyper-connected ERP with a new level of interoperability between core business processes, external data, and IoT devices.

An agile ERP for an agile business world

Priority ERP helps manufacturing organizations to embed data insights into their business processes, identify and analyze manufacturing performance, automate procurement transactions, increase financial margins, and manage suppliers, capital, and risks, and use data to optimize processes, enhance supply chain agility, and better serve the modern customer. Built for today's manufacturers, Priority ERP is a highly scalable system, designed to keep pace with an organization's trajectory, with the ability to take on new markets and handle exponential increases in transactional volume, workloads, and amounts of data.

Priority serves an extensive range of manufacturing customers around the globe, including medical devices, electronics, software & technology, pharmaceuticals, retail, and many others. One such customer, Trutex, the UK's oldest and largest independent schoolwear manufacturers, first implemented Priority ERP in 2006, replacing their legacy standalone solutions with Priority, and consolidate their operational processes on a single platform. Trutex integrated Priority ERP company-wide, to automate and streamline stock control, stock forecasting, order fulfillment, procurement planning, warehouse management (WMS), and manufacturing processes, including managing their distribution center, shipping directly to customers' shelves.

"We support three diverse sales channels, with different systems for wholesale, online, and retail, but only one pool of stock, making it nearly impossible to forecast demand and manage stock levels, resulting in overstocking in some areas, and shortfall in others," said John Hogan, Group Supply Chain Director at Trutex. "Priority helped us simplify our complex processes, with better visibility of demand, and minimizing stock movements from our global factories, by moving stock only when needed. Tighter inventory control and demand forecasting helped us efficiently price our products, resulting in significant cost savings."

When it comes times to implementing a new ERP in your manufacturing organization, or replace your current ERP system, Priority supports the next revolution in manufacturing and manufacturing management, setting the stage for true agile manufacturing processes, all powered by IoT, AI and advanced robotics, with a dedicated REST API, and a wide variety of innovative tools. The future of ERP? With Priority ERP, the future is already here.

Efrat is a seasoned marketer with 20+ years in global technology marketing roles. A true marketing wizard, Efrat baffles us with her expertise in marketing strategy, product management and sales. Before joining Priority, she plied her skills in corporate marketing management roles at industry leaders, Pontis, Comverse and Schema. She defines herself as "curious" and channels her energies into leading global marketing campaigns, strategy, content and Priority's move into new vertical markets. Efrat holds an M.Sc. in Operations Research & Information Systems and a B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering, both from the Technion Israel Institute of Technology. Proud mom of two charming young ladies, when time permits, Efrat escapes to her kitchen, where she thoroughly enjoys cooking and baking.

About Priority

Priority is a leading provider of scalable, agile, and open cloud-based business management solutions for a wide range of industries and organizations of all sizes; from global enterprises to small and growing businesses. Recognized by top industry experts and analysts for its product innovation, Priority provides real-time access to business data and insights from any desktop or mobile device, enabling organizations to increase operational efficiency, improve the customer experience, identify new opportunities, and outpace the competition. With offices in the US, UK, Belgium, and Israel and a global network of business partners, Priority, owned by Fortissimo Capital and TA Associates, empowers 75,000 customers in 40 countries with smart and intuitive business management platforms that drive accelerated organizational growth

What does this mean for you and your business? Simply put, Priority improves business efficiency and the customer experience. We provide real time access to business data and insights in the cloud, on-premise, and on-the-go, easy, real time system access from any mobile device or tablet – anywhere, any time.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INDUSTRY SPECIFIC CLOUD SOLUTIONS?

Business innovation starts with ideas. What does the customer need to do? How can the partner help and what does the vendor have to offer? This is the starting point for anyone looking to hit the ground running. Then you can get to work and shop around for the best the industry has to offer.

Lucy Thorpe,
Head of Content, Sapphire Systems

sapphire
frictionless digital

SYNTAX

ENHANCING ORACLE EBS FUNCTIONALITY BEYOND OIE OUT-OF-THE-BOX LIMITATIONS

Global enterprises often require complex capabilities to manage expense tracking and reporting, including the ability to customize business rules for different business segments. To achieve this state often requires a hybrid model featuring out-of-the box ERP functionality combined with manual customizations.

Oracle E-Business Suite Internet Expenses (OIE) provides excellent functionality to manage business expenses within standard scenarios. But what about non-standard activities like payables or tracking how expense data flows to projects? In some cases, industries are required to comply with government regulations regarding expense tracking and reporting. Unfortunately, Oracle EBS out-of-the-box functionality does not cover these needs.

How can you enhance your Oracle EBS solution to meet non-standard expense tracking and reporting needs?

The Pain Points of OIE Out-of-the-Box Functionality for Special Requirements

OIE offers robust out-of-the-box functionality. It gives users the ability to enter expense reports based on templates including meals, transportation, miles etc.

But what about when they have a special set of rules, like US government requirements to show specific rates, different calculations for excess per diem, and validations that must flow between EBS modules – from OIE to Accounts Payable then Projects and finally GL. This type of scenarios is where the out-of-the-box functionality of OIE faces limitations. Fortunately, there is an alternative.

The Syntax AMS Team Helps Its Customers Achieve Their Goals

Application Managed Services (AMS) from Syntax are specifically designed to meet needs like the ones outlined above. In fact, we are already helping clients tailor their Oracle E-Business Suite solutions to meet OIE requirements and other functionality like processing automatic adjustments, creating backend lines with specific logic to comply with government requirements, and validating expense flows holistically.

Some benefits from these enhancements include keeping a highly accurate receipts record, improved expense process efficiencies, quicker expense approvals, government compliance, flexibility for worldwide locations, and better audit management.

For Syntax clients, our Apps DBAs and OIE, Projects and SR Developers, and Subject Matter Experts are already familiar with both their systems and their business requirements. This allows Syntax to provide these Oracle E-Business Suite users the agility they need to re-configure systems quickly.

About Syntax

Syntax provides comprehensive technology solutions to businesses of all sizes with over 800 customers trusting Syntax with their IT services and ERP needs. Syntax is a leading Managed Cloud Provider for Mission Critical Enterprise Applications. Syntax has undisputed strength to implement and manage ERP deployments (SAP, Oracle) in a secure, resilient, private, public or hybrid cloud. With strong technical and functional consulting services, and world-class monitoring and automation, Syntax serves corporations across a diverse range of industries and markets. Syntax has offices worldwide, and partners with SAP, Oracle, AWS, Microsoft, IBM, HPE, and other global technology leaders. Learn more about Syntax at www.syntax.com.

ORACLE NETSUITE

HOUSTON FOOD BANK SELECTS NETSUITE TO HELP FIGHT HUNGER

The Houston Food Bank, the nation's largest food bank in distribution, has selected Oracle NetSuite to help support its rapid expansion as it works to meet increases in demand for food and other essentials. With NetSuite, the Houston Food Bank will unify financial planning, order management, and warehouse logistics into a singular system to help give greater visibility and control into its operations and scale its programs that currently help more than one million people fight food insecurity.

Founded in 1982, the Houston Food Bank is a member of Feeding America and serves 18 counties in Houston and southeast Texas, distributing more than 150 million pounds of food annually through a network of 1,600 partners. To meet growing demand since the beginning of the global pandemic, the Houston Food Bank has increased distributions by 20 percent and as it scaled its operations, its current ERP system struggled to keep up. This led to inventory tracking issues, increased time spent on cycle counts, and slower fulfillment. To address these challenges and create more efficient operations so that it can help more people, the Houston Food Bank replaced its legacy ERP system with NetSuite.

"When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we had to rethink how we operated for the safety of all involved. We mobilized and set up neighborhood drive-through super sites to distribute food in larger quantities more efficiently, while maintaining safe distances," said Casey Ferrell, senior director of information technology, Houston Food Bank. "As we scaled operations and revamped our processes, the inefficiencies of our ERP system became more pronounced. We made the switch to NetSuite because we knew we needed one unified system that could integrate data from across our business and automate our critical processes. NetSuite will give us the real-time visibility and insights needed in one central location to help support our growth trajectory and allow us to continue helping more Texans."

With NetSuite, Houston Food Bank will be able to take advantage of an integrated business system to adapt and scale its core operations. NetSuite will enable Houston Food Bank to process orders faster through a new online ordering portal, while granting partners greater visibility and flexibility into their orders. Additionally, NetSuite inventory management will enable warehouse staff to cut down on cycle counts and more easily move and track product around the warehouse. Finally, by helping to eliminate manual processes across finance and operations, NetSuite will enable volunteers to spend more time identifying people in need and scaling home delivery operations in a way that caters to the dietary and cultural needs of those it serves.

"We are incredibly proud to work with organizations like the Houston Food Bank that make a positive difference in the world every day," said Sam Levy, SVP of sales, Oracle NetSuite. "With NetSuite, the Houston Food Bank has one system of record to manage data from across critical business functions, putting it in a stronger position as it works toward its ultimate vision of a world without food insecurity."

About Oracle NetSuite

For more than 20 years, Oracle NetSuite has helped organizations grow, scale and adapt to change. NetSuite provides an integrated system that includes financials / Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), inventory management, HR, professional services automation and omnichannel commerce, used by more than 29,000 customers in 215 countries and dependent territories.

Learn more at https://www.netsuite.com. Like us on Facebook, and follow us on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter.

CLOUD FP&A: THE NEW DRIVER OF DYNAMIC AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Article By ***Geoff Ng,***

Chief Technology Officer for Prophix ,

The adoption of cloud computing has accelerated across industries over the past 20 years as more businesses rely on the technology to better automate processes and drive efficiencies. The cloud has become the default for on-demand consumer services like video streaming and mobile apps, while large enterprises host their data in the cloud to allow for easy access and collaboration. However, use of the cloud for finance and accounting processes has lagged – that is, until recently.

The pandemic accelerated the critical need for more nimble planning, budgeting and forecasting based on real-time information. Finance executives realized they could no longer be locked into manual spreadsheet-centric budgeting and planning to keep up with and compete in a particularly volatile business landscape. Cloud-based financial planning and analysis solutions offer organizations the 'if/then' agility they need to adapt and thrive in turbulent markets.
Data underscores this point. Prophix's 2021 Agility in Planning, Budgeting and Forecasting Global Survey, conducted in collaboration with FSN Research, revealed sizable gaps in organizations' ability to quickly and accurately adjust forecasts and keep their business on track during the pandemic. According to the survey, 80% of finance teams reported being unable to forecast beyond a year, more than 50% said they could not project further than six months out, and only 43% were able to forecast their revenue within +/- 5% accuracy. However, the data also showed that when organizations leverage the cloud to consider alternative scenarios in their planning, 77% of them said they could reforecast earnings within just a week. Scenario planning improves accuracy; 54% of respondents said they were able to forecast within +/- 5% earnings and revenue thanks to the power of the cloud.

As we move into a post pandemic business world, where both hybrid work models are a mainstay alongside continued market fluctuations (e.g., inflation, supply chains,

> **ORGANIZATIONS MUST ENSURE THE HIGHLY SENSITIVE DATA THEY HAVE STORED IN THE CLOUD REMAINS SAFE AND SECURE AS THEY USE IT THROUGHOUT THE FP&A PROCESS.**

international events, talent shortages), cloud-based FP&A tools are more essential than ever to help organizations remain nimble and strategic. Through advanced, cloud-based corporate performance management (CPM) software, finance teams have easy and constant access to real-time data across departments, even when groups are remote. Cloud-based CPM enables finance teams to run multiple scenarios about their business financial planning and make quick and insightful decisions that leverage the organization's entire ecosystem of information. Moving FP&A to the cloud is no longer a "nice to have," but a clear necessity for organizations to remain competitive now and in the future.

Key Benefits of Cloud-based FP&A

Data Access

Traditional methods for financial planning and analysis, whether using Excel spreadsheets or automated, on-premise FP&A tools, hinder organizations from generating timely insights and reports on the company's financial performance, which in turn negatively impacts forecasts and closing. As business grows, budgeting becomes more complex and harder to manage. Budgeting with spreadsheets alone means wasted time and greater potential for human error, as finance teams pull information from multiple sources and oftentimes siloed business units. The cloud breaks down these barriers and enables finance teams to draw strategic data insights faster than ever imagined. By utilizing cloud services, finance teams can save time and money throughout the entire FP&A process.

Collaboration

With all of the necessary information for each business unit living in the cloud, company departments can seamlessly collaborate during the entire FP&A process and confidently make decisions impacting the holistic business based on accurate and timely information.

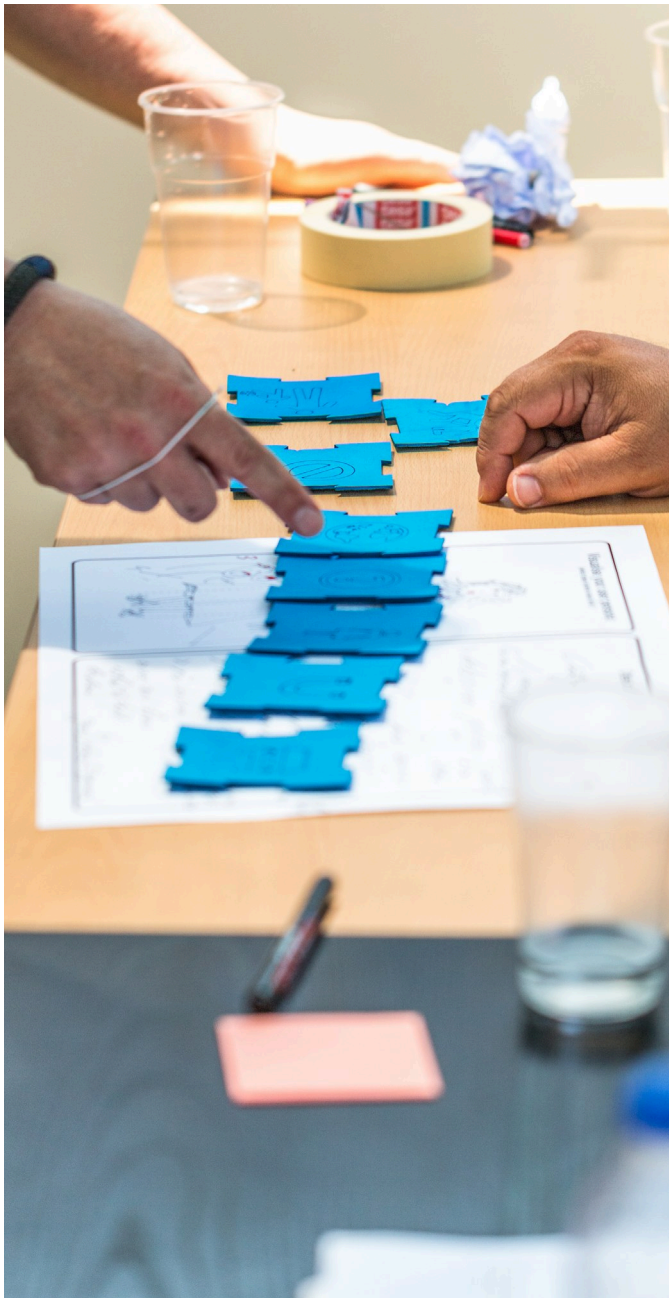
Advanced Technologies

One of the greatest benefits of the cloud is its ability to scale elastically, which involves delivering the right amount of IT resources – computing power, data storage, bandwidth, etc. – when and where they're needed. This has massive implications for how cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can enhance forecasting and run different scenarios. As the saying goes, "garbage in, garbage out" - making AI and ML modeling are only as good as the data being applied. The cloud offers a platform for easy data access from multiple different sources simultaneously, allowing finance teams to be as responsive and competitive as possible.

Security

Organizations must ensure the highly sensitive data they have stored in the cloud remains safe and secure as they use it throughout the FP&A process. Cyber threats continue to increase in volume and sophistication, so it is vital to create a comprehensive cloud security system, complete with robust third-party verification and certification. Doing so ensures all security risks are reviewed and mitigated within the cloud's cyber universe. The level of security and compliance in the cloud often exceeds what organizations are able to achieve on their own on-premises, leading to a much higher security posture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the business world in several ways that professionals could not have possibly imagined just two years ago. And while the pandemic has created significant uncertainty for senior finance leaders across the globe, it has also highlighted the importance of conducting FP&A in the cloud and forever changed how organizations plan, budget and scenario plan – no matter how volatile business conditions become.



Geoff Ng is Chief Technology Officer (CTO) for Prophix, a global leader in Corporate Performance Management (CPM) software based in Mississauga, Ontario. Geoff has been with Prophix for over 20 years, guiding the company's continued product innovation. As CTO, Geoff focuses on product planning strategy, engineering, information security and corporate IT.

About Prophix Software

Your business is evolving. And the way you plan and report on your business should evolve too. Prophix helps mid-market companies achieve their goals more successfully with innovative, cloud-based Corporate Performance Management (CPM) software. With Prophix, finance leaders improve profitability and minimize risk by automating budgeting, forecasting, and reporting and puts the focus back on what matters most – uncovering business opportunities. Prophix supports your future with AI innovation that flexes to meet your strategic realities, today and tomorrow. Over 1,700 global companies rely on Prophix to transform the way they work. For more information, visit http://www.prophix.com.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INDUSTRY SPECIFIC CLOUD SOLUTIONS?

I think the era of generic software or indeed on-premises software is rapidly disappearing. We're now in an era where businesses expect their platforms to be tailored to their exact needs and requirements. Not only in terms of core business, but in terms of that of their suppliers, partners and end-customers.

I see three main benefits of cloud solutions: no more infrastructure, no more upgrades, and - quite simply - no more hassle.

And I see three key benefits of industry-specific cloud- and SaaS-based ERP solutions. Firstly, simplicity: the ability to get started quickly straight out of the box with accessibility anytime, anywhere, on any device. Secondly, cost-savings: not only in terms of total cost of ownership but also refocussing staff on more profitable activities, rather than 'keeping the lights on'.

And finally, lower risk. Cloud-based industry-specific solutions – when deployed with the right ecosystem partners and pedigree – will always be up to date, always available, always secure.

Keith Hale,
Executive Chairman at TrustQuay

TrustQuay

HOW ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE IS CHANGING THE ROLE OF FINANCE

*Article By **Joshua Dalton** ,*

As accounting software continues to advance, so too will the role of finance.

But how will it happen? And how much and how far will it change?

Our industry is in a state of flux and while this can be a tumultuous time, it presents opportunities for those that wish to take them.

As a financial technology organisation that has been active in the accounting software space for the past 23 years, FinanSys has a unique viewpoint on the advancement of our industry.

In our role as a software reseller of Infor SunSystems, we see first-hand how the industry is evolving and there are some recurring themes developing.

Moving away from data processing to Finance Business Partnering

Finance business partnering is when the finance team impact other departments to make better decisions by providing insights, thus creating value and driving business performance.

Accounting software has evolved to the point where it is now providing the platform for finance teams to become an insightful partner in the business and not just a supplier of data.
Cloud and mobile capabilities mean actionable insights are at the users' fingertips.

Finance teams can now support decisions and take action in a way that was not possible with traditional accounting software.

And what they do will have a real impact on the future of the company.

Finance teams positioning themselves as a business partner need to possess skills that were once reserved for those in other departments. They must now be comfortable with analysing data, interpreting the results, and formulating conclusions.

They must understand how the department contributes to the profitability of the company and be willing to communicate that information in a way that is understood by management and the different areas of the business. This isn't just presenting the raw numbers. This is presenting the story behind the numbers.

And they will need to be able to do all of this in a style that is concise, easy to understand and appropriate.

Driving Insights and Business Performance

We believe finance will be at their best when they take the role of trusted advisor to their company. This repositioning of the finance department might not be an easy conversation for many in finance to have, but one that must take place anyway.

The finance department must play the role of 'finance business partners' who work closely with other relevant business units in creating a real and active partnership with both operations and management.

The goal of this position is to deliver "real-time" support and analysis, as well as to add value that will assist in decision-making.

In order to begin this transformation, finance departments will need three key pieces of technology:

1. An industry-leading accounting system that has a range of easy-to-use modules and cloud deployment options

2. Analysis, reporting and visualisation tools to simplify the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data

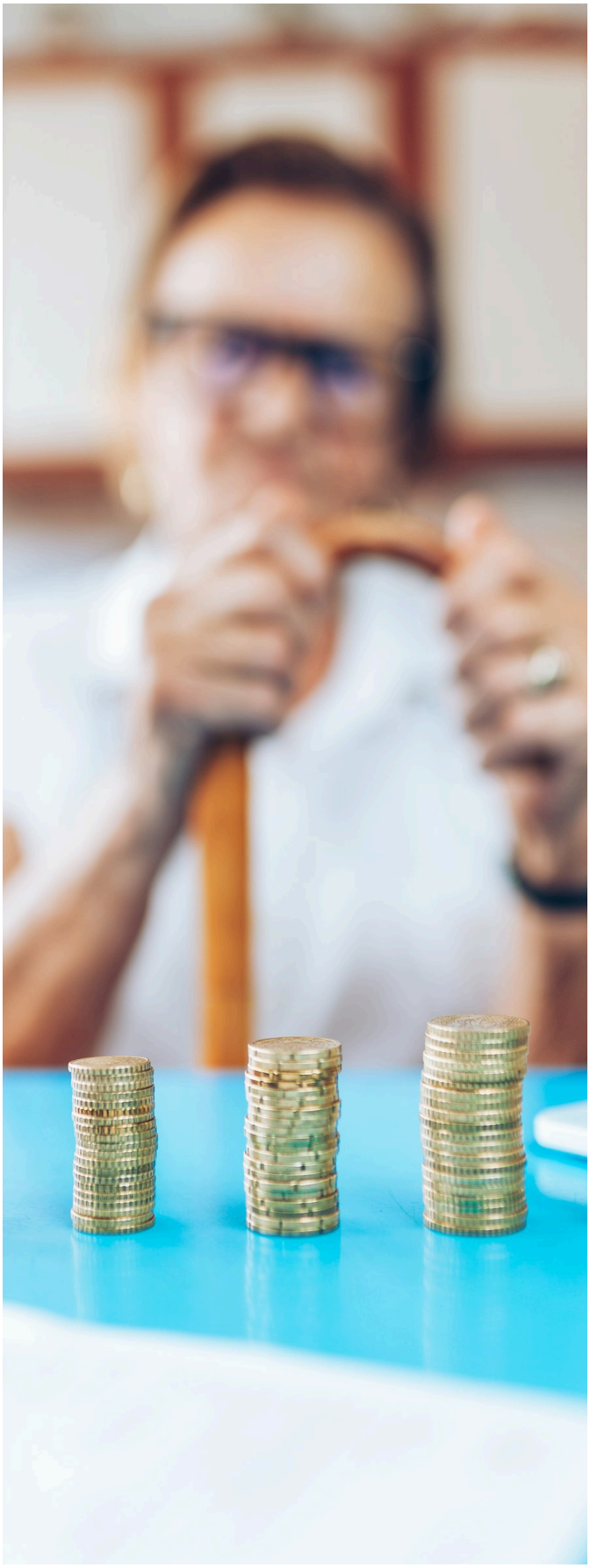
3. Dashboards to deliver insights in a clear and concise manner

But this is not just about technology. It also needs a finance team with the appropriate soft skills to communicate and influence business decisions.

Soft skills (e.g. effective communication, leadership skills, presentation and storytelling) are vital in the role of a finance business partner as this role targets sharing insights and creating value with management and other stakeholders to drive better decisions for the company.

The role of finance will be about building strong relationships, increasing transparency and creating an open dialogue.

And importantly, they will need to have the ability to translate financial data for each business unit.



Conclusion

While the finance team at the base level is saddled with the responsibility of keeping the company's books clean and managing cashflows, the finance team of the future will become much more proactive in how they add value to the organisation.

Finance should embrace the role of being a trusted advisor and use accounting software to its full advantage to produce insights that will help their organization perform better.

In the coming years, we believe the role of finance will continue to evolve and that this new dynamic will change how we do business.

Driving insights and business performance will become a new norm, and it is essential that finance teams begin taking action towards partnering with the business to help drive this value.

About Infor

Infor is a global leader in business cloud software products for companies in industry specific markets. Infor builds complete industry suites in the cloud and efficiently deploys technology that puts the user experience first, leverages data science, and integrates easily into existing systems.
Over 65,000 organizations worldwide rely on Infor to help overcome market disruptions and achieve business-wide digital transformation.

GLOBAL SHOP SOLUTIONS GOES GREEN WITH NEW SOLAR PANELS

Global Shop Solutions, a leading producer of ERP software for manufacturers around the globe, has a reputation of doing the right thing for their employees and clients. Now they're doing the right thing for the planet by switching to solar power for the company's electricity needs.

Meeting Global Shop Solutions' energy needs required enough solar panels to cover the rooftops on all three buildings at their headquarters in The Woodlands, Texas. The project took six months to complete, and will generate more than enough electricity to power the entire campus for 30 years while providing significant cost savings.

"Based on the energy we use at headquarters, it will take about seven years for the solar panels to pay for themselves," says Erika Klein, VP of R&D for Global Shop Solutions. "After that they will generate 'free' electricity for the next 23 years, so it ends up being a good investment for us and the planet. The system will produce more electricity than we need, so we're considering installing charging stations for employees to charge their electric vehicles at work."

Up Next: Reducing the Carbon Footprint
The transformation to solar energy is the first project implemented by the company's "Green Team." Led by Klein, the team consists of a dozen employee volunteers working together to make the company more environmentally friendly. Their biggest goal for 2022 consists of finding ways to reduce Global Shop Solutions' carbon footprint.

The company's sales force, consultants and implementation teams incur significant travel time in the air and on the road. So the first step consists of calculating the total amount of travel and devising a plan to offset the firm's carbon footprint resulting from travel. The Green Team also meets regularly to discuss ideas for improving recycling, lowering water usage, and other ways to positively impact the environment.

"At this point, our biggest challenge is figuring out carbon accounting," says Klein. "It's a complex issue and we want to make sure we get it right before putting together a plan to reduce our footprint."

Helping Customers Go Green
Global Shop Solutions builds features into their ERP software that actively encourage green processes in customers' manufacturing plants.

The software enables manufacturers to operate in a paperless or near-paperless environment by putting information at everyone's fingertips via digital dashboards rather than printed reports. The cloud offering gives customers' employees the flexibility of working from home, reducing the impact of traveling to and from work five days a week. Global Shop Solutions also helps customers cut down on travel by offering training and consulting online.

"We care about our employees, our customers, and the world around us," adds Klein. "Lowering our carbon footprint is definitely the right thing to do."

About Global Shop Solutions

We simplify your manufacturing.™ Global Shop Solutions ERP software provides the applications needed to deliver a quality part on time, every time from quote to cash and everything in between including shop management, scheduling, inventory, accounting, quality control, CRM and 25 more. Available in the cloud or on premise, our manufacturing customers benefit from real-time inventory accuracy, improved on-time delivery, lower administrative costs, increased sales and improved customer service. Headquarters in The Woodlands, Texas includes a state-of-the-art R&D facility and Global Shop Solutions training center. Through its offices in the U.S., Mexico, Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the company supports thousands of manufacturing facilities in over 25 countries and nearly 30 industries.

FINANCIALFORCE BROADENS C-SUITE, APPOINTS TODD KISABERTH AS CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER

FinancialForce, the leading provider of customer-centric business applications across finance, services, and customer success teams, announced the appointment of Todd Kisaberth as Chief Customer Officer reporting to CEO Scott Brown. Kisaberth has over 20 years of experience serving in executive leadership roles in global B2B technology companies. He will lead all customer-facing operations including customer success, post-sales support, professional services, renewals, and community.

"At FinancialForce, we are committed to putting the customer at the center of everything we do," said Scott Brown, CEO of FinancialForce. "With the addition of Todd to our team, we can further improve the customer experience in powerful new ways and deliver the highest level of customer success. I look forward to working closely with Todd to meet the expanding needs of our customers and ensure that every customer realizes maximum value from their investment in FinancialForce."

Most recently, Kisaberth served as Chief Customer Officer at Plex Systems, where he was responsible for the entire Plex customer experience, including professional education and services, customer care, and global services and support. Prior to that, he was Vice President Customer Advocacy at Tenable, where he oversaw the customer experience program, customer support, community, professional services, and training. Earlier in his career, Kisaberth was Senior Vice President, Global Services—Americas at PTC, where he led a team of 350 services professionals and helped grow the business to $130 million.

"I'm deeply impressed with the commitment that FinancialForce has to its customers. FinancialForce doesn't just talk about customer centricity, it lives and breathes it," said Kisaberth. "I look forward to working with some of the most talented people in the industry to serve our customers to the fullest potential and accelerate our next phase of growth."

Kisaberth holds a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from The University of Toledo.

About FinancialForce

FinancialForce offers customer-centric business applications on the leading cloud platform from Salesforce. We accelerate business growth with the only modern ERP suite and the #1 professional services automation (PSA), enabling real-time insights and intelligent decision-making. Learn more about how to see your customers in full color with Salesforce and FinancialForce.

AGILOFT ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH HBR CONSULTING FOR EXPANDED ACCESS TO LEGAL CONSULTING SERVICES

Agiloft, the global standard in no-code contract lifecycle management (CLM), announced an alliance with HBR, a consulting firm focused on the legal industry, aimed at helping legal teams improve contract management operations, increase revenue, and gain insights into contract data.

HBR Consulting provides law firms and corporate law departments with strategic guidance, operational improvement, and technology solutions that drive innovation while managing cost and mitigating risk. This mutually beneficial partnership enables clients to tap into HBR's extensive expertise to achieve the best outcomes as they digitally transform their contract processes through the implementation of Agiloft.

With contracts governing relationships, expenditure, and revenue across the enterprise, companies are realizing the importance of a CLM system to streamline the complex workflows surrounding the contract processes to save time, reduce cost, mitigate risk, and gain visibility into data essential to the business.

HBR's experience working with legal and business teams helps clients clearly define their CLM strategy, processes, and design systems, while Agiloft's flexible no-code CLM platform provides the most robust and configurable capabilities for creating solutions that adapt to business needs over time. Additionally, Agiloft's new Connected Experiences enable an extensible solution that can integrate with existing applications and into large enterprise ecosystems.

"Our expanding partner program includes the best and brightest in the legal industry, and we are delighted to bring HBR into our network," said Elisabeth Bykoff, VP of Global Alliances at Agiloft. "We continually seek new opportunities to strengthen our client relationships, and HBR can help our users transform their contract operations to best drive efficiency, improve collaboration, and create a connected system of record that unlocks the strategic value of CLM across the enterprise."

"Providing top solutions for our legal clients is our priority, and we are very pleased to partner with Agiloft, a leader in the contract lifecycle management software market," said Rohit Gulati, Senior Director of CLM at HBR. "Our mission is to help our clients make faster, better, and more cost-effective decisions while operating more efficiently. Legal and business stakeholders are increasingly recognizing the value of transitioning to a CLM system, and Agiloft's user-friendly platform provides flexible capabilities for tailored implementation and integration to accelerate digital transformation."

About Agiloft

As the global leader in contract lifecycle management (CLM) software, Agiloft is trusted to provide significant savings in purchasing, enable more efficient legal operations, and accelerate sales cycles, all while drastically lowering compliance risk. Agiloft's adaptable no-code platform ensures rapid deployment and a fully extensible system. Using contracts as the core system of commercial record, Agiloft's CCLM software leverages AI to improve contract management for legal departments, procurement, and sales operations.
Visit www.agiloft.com for more.

SAGE LAUNCHES CLOUD-NATIVE SAGE INTACCT MANUFACTURING IN FRANCE

Sage (FTSE: SGE), the leader in accounting, financial, HR, and payroll technology for small and mid-sized businesses, announced the launch of Sage Intacct Manufacturing in France. This offers new industry capabilities for French customers specializing in the discrete manufacturing vertical and looking to drive business transformation with modernised processes, and anytime access to data, on any device

Production and operations management for discrete manufacturers

Sage Intacct Manufacturing is a purpose-built cloud-native production and operations management solution. Powered by deep functional capabilities it simplifies complex business processes through industry best practices and guided workflows that make it easy to manage key processes across:
·Procurement - buy and put-away
·Manufacturing - make and assemble
·Distribution - sell and distribute
·Inventory and warehousing
·Resourcing and skills management

"We continue to expand the Sage Intacct family of products, outside of core financials, with industry-specific features and customer-focused solutions" said Dan Miller, EVP Sage Intacct. "As our customers lead the acceleration of digital transformation, Sage is working to create digital tools that make a real difference to their businesses. This new solution represents a further step in our strategy to make the Sage Intacct family of products available across our geographies and industries, as we help make small and mid-sized businesses more adaptable and profitable in the face of a changing business landscape."

Best of breed capability

Providing best of breed capability to manage manufacturing and operations, Sage Intacct manufacturing offers:

·Simplified and automated management of operations and processes across a single platform, providing access to data anywhere, anytime, on any device.

·Contextual data insights, providing manufacturers with data-driven decision-making capability.

·Automated system updates, keeping customers compliant with local regulations.

·Best practice workflows built using experiences gathered from partnering with global manufacturing businesses.

·Scalable solution in line with customers' needs, including management of the number of users, customers, transactions, and entities.

·Optional integration with the locally proven finance solution, Sage FRP 1000, to ensure compliance across key finance and accounting processes.

"Serving as a complementary solution within our portfolio to the more complex capabilities offered by Sage X3, Sage Intacct Manufacturing provides smaller manufacturing businesses with the opportunity to use best in class technology at a scale that suits them," said Rob Sinfield, VP of Product, Sage. "Business models are changing, and the global pandemic has impacted the way manufacturers operate, driving a focus on resilience as well as efficiency. This solution supports them as they transform their businesses."

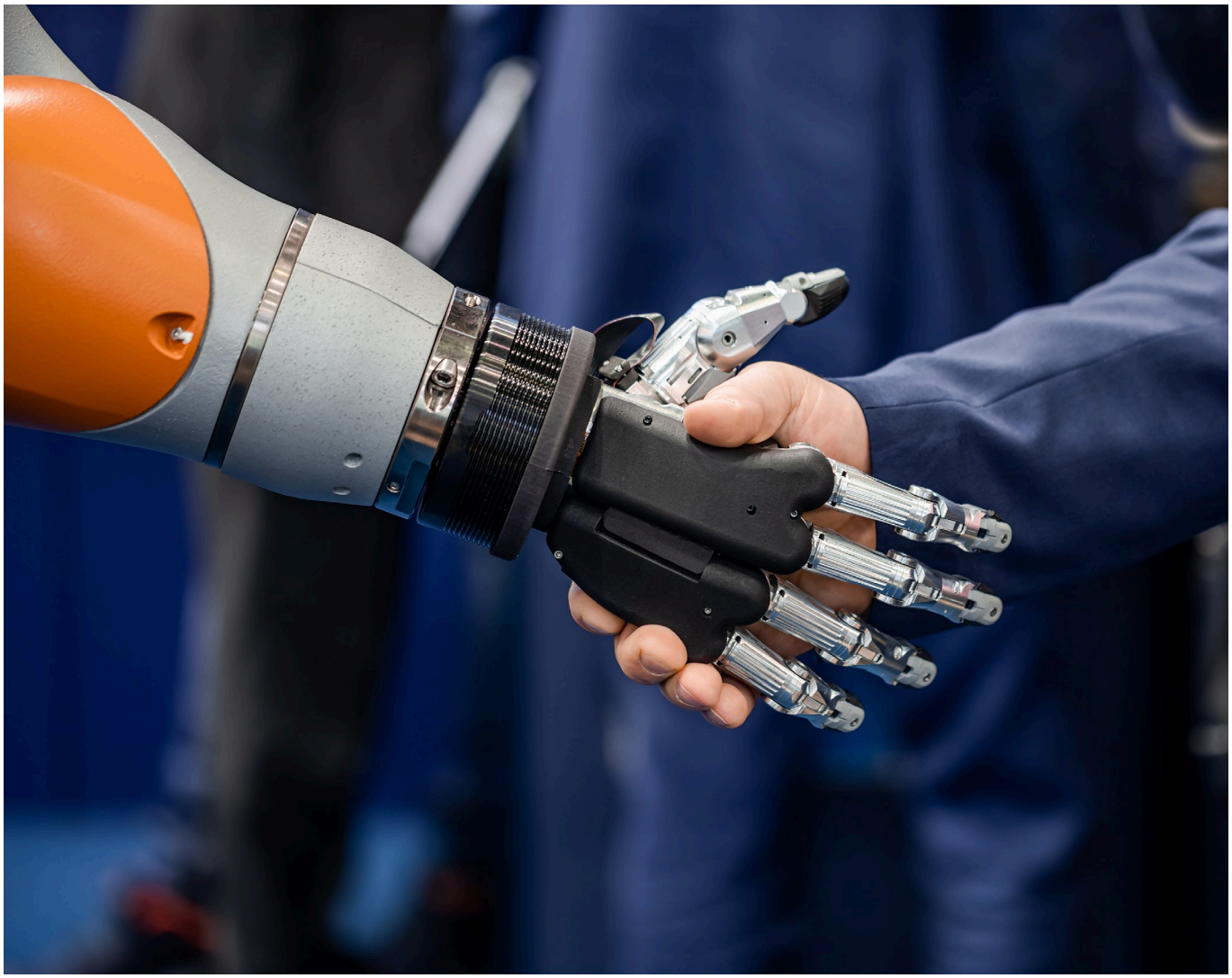
Go-to-market

Sage Intacct Manufacturing is available to customers in France, either on a stand-alone basis or integrated with the financial management capabilities of Sage FRP 1000 and is offered by Sage's experienced Value-Added Reseller (VAR) network of partners, who ensure the industry and product expertise needed to bring this solution to customers.

France is the first country in a planned international rollout of Sage Intacct Manufacturing across 2022 and beyond, including integration with Sage Intacct core financials, and other Sage finance solutions.

About Sage

Sage exists to knock down barriers so everyone can thrive, starting with the millions of small- and mid-sized businesses served by us, our partners, and accountants. Customers trust our finance, HR, and payroll software to make work and money flow. By digitizing business processes and relationships with customers, suppliers, employees, banks, and governments, our digital network connects SMBs, removing friction and delivering insights. Knocking down barriers also means we use our time, technology, and experience to tackle digital inequality, economic inequality, and the climate crisis.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IS ABOUT PEOPLE, NOT TECHNOLOGY

*Article By **Marne Martin,***
President of IFS Service Management

Digital transformation isn't just a buzzword, it has become a way of being given the ever-increasing rate of technology adoption and change. Therefore, a business really needs to understand what it is, why it's so important and how they can get it right. In the simplest of terms, digital transformation is the strategic adoption of digital technologies to improve processes and productivity, deliver better customer and employee experiences, manage business risk, and control costs. But to be effective from a vendor perspective, we need to understand our customers, what their problems are, how well they understand what their customers want and how they need to change to deliver it.

Digital Transformation

When implemented correctly, digital transformation provides an opportunity for organizations to fundamentally change the way they operate in ways to better serve their customers, grow faster, have improved employee retention, grow profits, etc... It is this "transformation" aspect that distinguishes it from other general technology implementations. However, many digital transformation projects fail. Why? Because digital transformation isn't just about technology, it's about people, strategy, and understanding the outcomes the customers will pay for. Successful digital transformation initiatives require knowledge therefore about all the stakeholders involved.

Marne Martin, President of the Service Management Business Unit at IFS explains "The customer experience plays a crucial role in digital transformation. Or you could say that many digital transformation initiatives arise from pain points, business needs, and transformation requirements to improve the customer experience. But to truly understand and improve the customer experience, you need to not only listen to the voice of your customers but also need to use that valuable feedback to map your digital transformation outcomes to what your customers value most. Without that insight, you are investing in significant amounts of money, resource, and time that will have little to no impact on your business, let alone the customer experience."

Marne continues "It's also important for businesses not to think about digital transformation as a onetime project, it's a motion that a business will go through not as a one-time

activity, but part of a business' lifespan as they continue to innovate and adapt to the growing expectations of their customers. The global pandemic caused the biggest shift in the experience economy than any other time in history, causing businesses to accelerate their digital adoption to meet the needs to of the shifting mindsets of their customers. But now it's time to stop and listen to your customers and internal stakeholders to begin strategically transitioning those temporary fixes into long-term investments to drive efficiency and growth."

Buy-in

"Getting the buy-in of your internal stakeholders is crucial to the success of your digital transformation efforts and one that many businesses overlook. Traditionally, when a new technology enters the workplace, it doesn't fundamentally change how the workforce operates, it merely digitizes an existing working practice which for businesses perhaps moving off paper, that is a good first step, but for buying cycles that are part replacement technology as well as new technology, it is the process and business model change that needs to be embraced alongside. As we mentioned earlier, digital transformation isn't just the adoption of new technology, it's the opportunity for organizations to fundamentally change the way they operate, and that impacts your people."

"Whilst the leaders of the business steer the boat, the employees fuel the engine and understand, in some cases better than anyone, the inner workings of your business, what works, what doesn't, and what needs to change. Engaging with not only customer service, service delivery, and field service teams, but also marketing, sales, and innovation; essentially everyone who is expected to deliver on these experiences must see and understand these new motivations. Essentially your employees are the key drivers in making digital transformation investments a success, so you need to ensure they are taken on the journey with you and they have both the motivation, skills, and incentives to drive change and evolve."

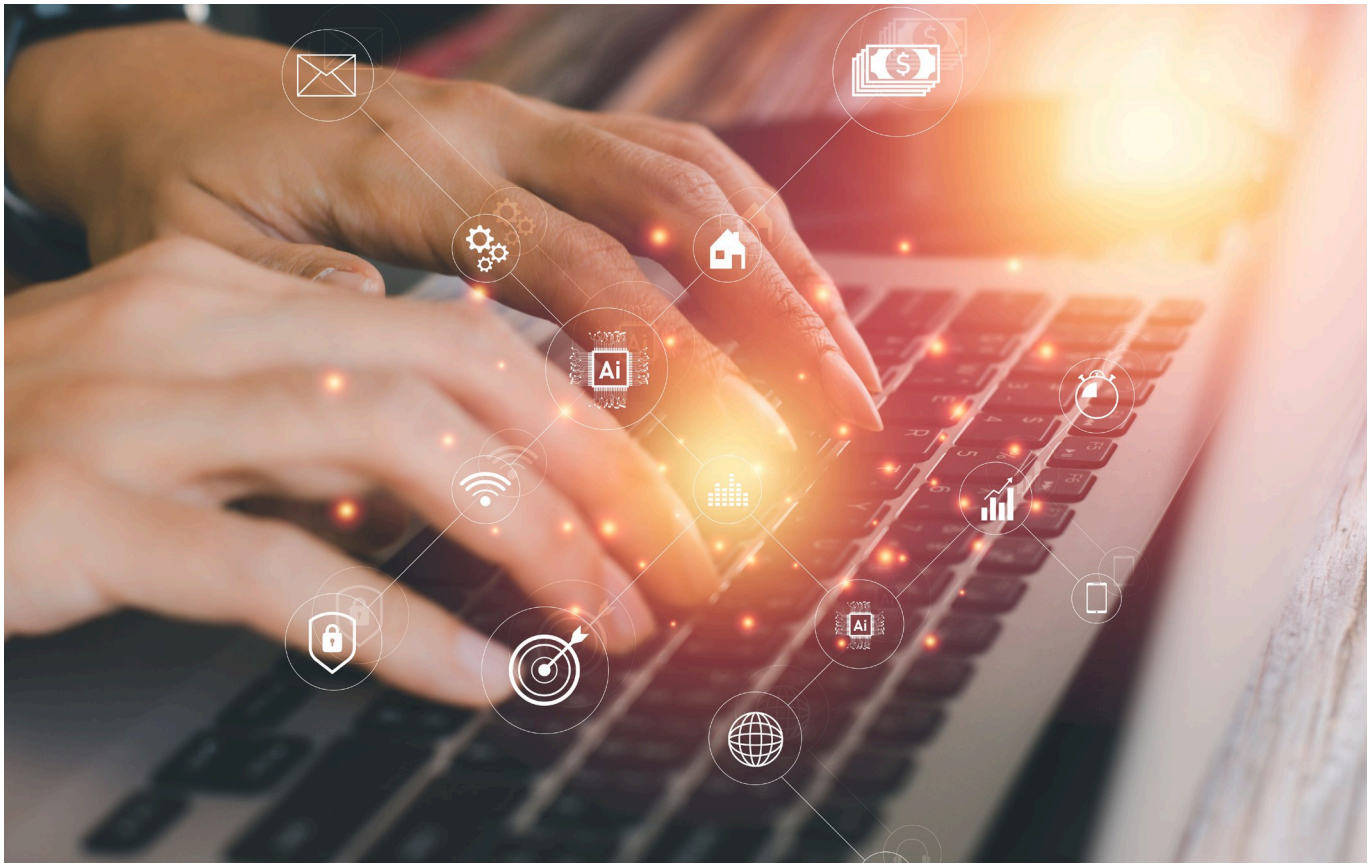
Bigger picture

It's clear that whilst many businesses do listen to their customers, employees, and wider ecosystem to gain insight to fuel their digital transformation efforts, many still don't look at the bigger picture and are implementing 'quick wins' that don't impact the customer experience or the long-term goals of the business. If we've learnt anything over the last 18 months it's that customer's expectations can dramatically change in a significantly short amount of time and therefore, we need to continuously be listening to them to stay ahead of the competition, fuel change, and grow our business for a successful future in the digital world. We are seeing that businesses want to compress change now given the challenges they are seeing, but it takes a culture change, not only a buzzword to do so. Let us help.

To learn more about IFS Customer Experience Management click here to see how we can help you gain valuable insight at the Moment of Service, today: http://ifs.biz/exr

About IFS

IFS develops and delivers cloud enterprise software for companies around the world who manufacture and distribute goods, build and maintain assets, and manage service-focused operations. Within our single platform, our industry specific products are innately connected to a single data model and use embedded digital innovation so that our customers can be their best when it really matters to their customers—at the Moment of Service™. The industry expertise of our people and of our growing ecosystem, together with a commitment to deliver value at every single step, has made IFS a recognized leader and the most recommended supplier in our sector. Our team of 4,500 employees every day live our values of agility, trustworthiness and collaboration in how we support our 10,000+ customers. Learn more about how our enterprise software solutions can help your business today at ifs.com.



ERP REFLECTIONS

*Article By **Amitabh Das gupta,***
Director at KPMG - Asia Pacific

I have been involved in large scale ERP Business Transformation as a System Integrator since early 2000s, starting out a SAP Finance consultant to now in Senior Program Leadership roles with Top Tier Consulting Organisations across the world. In that time, I 've often reflected on how similar an ERP transformation is to run a Marathon, especially the advice I got and the experience I had with my first marathon few years ago.

Here are three reflections I got that you could consider for your next ERP implementation.

1- Don't Rush into start of your ERP Implementation*: Don't underestimate the time to prepare. If you fail to prepare well, prepare to fail goes the famous quote. I had to prepare 14 weeks for my first one and yet I almost broke down at the 33K mark. You cannot run a decent marathon without rigorous training. Without proper preparation, the chances of the breakdown are very high. You must constantly push yourself out of your comfort zone and train your muscles and mind to be ready for the big day. You must train minimum 12 -14 weeks with the running, strengthening and your diet.

-Most Successful ERP Implementations I have seen are result of rigorous preparations before the program kicks offs. This would translate to a clear Business vision, sound Business case, getting your team ready etc
-Ensure the timeline proposed by the Systems Integrator is realistic for your team and your business stakeholders. Do not forget many in your team may never have done an ERP implementation before.
-Don't be forced by external pressure to start the program. This can be from the Systems Integrator, Internal team who may be on a contract whose paycheck is directly related to the Program start.
-Have clear entry gates before the program starts.

2-Chunk it Down (CID) : Six months before running my first Marathon, I felt running a marathon was a huge impossible goal. The best advice I got was " Chunk it down or CID" Five Kilometres X 8 times. Be clear when to speed up or slow down. This made the run more fun and allowed me to focus on the process more than the goal and eventually the goal was achieved. It gave me an insight "Any impossible dream/ goal is achievable provided you break it down into smaller chunks"
-Most successful ERP transformations I have seen, chunk the program down to smaller achievable byte size transformations that the business can handle. Big multiyear transformations are things of the past specially with cloud ERPs.
-You can chunk your transformation down based on business functions e.g. Finance Transformation and then move to Procurement, Supply Chain, HR etc or consider transformation by location / geography.
-Remember not all parts of your business will have the same appetite for transformation like others.

3-People & Culture: Surround yourself with those on the same mission as yourself and with people who are going to lift you higher. Years ago, I could barely run 5 kilometres. I tried so many apps but struggled to barely complete two kilometres. I could have never run a Marathon alone if I had not joined a running group of my mentor and his friends at that time, most of whom had previously run more than 10-12 marathons. They constantly empathised with me, guided me, inspired me with their deeds and words during the 14-

week arduous training. It meant getting up at 4.30 am in the morning and driving 45 mins towards the city every Saturday for a 6.30am start for 30+Kilometer runs. I just hated doing

"ERP IMPLEMENTATIONS CAN BE HARD, YOU NEED TO HAVE A SYSTEM INTEGRATOR. WHOM YOU CAN TRUST AND WHO HAS BEEN WITH YOU AND BUILT THAT TRUST FOR LONG TIME.

this when the whole of Australia was sleeping. Without these guys, I would not have been pushed to complete it. The biggest insight for me was "Who you know and who you surround yourself with will lead you to your goal. It is very difficult to do it alone."

-ERP Implementations can be hard, you need to have a System Integrator. whom you can trust and who has been with you and built that trust for long time. Someone who will not disappear after the program.

-Someone who has done it before, someone who empathises with you, aligns to your values and culture, inspires you and takes you to the finish line.

-You also need to have a seasoned Project Director from your side who has been there, done that and get everyone along.
In conclusion, ERP transformations are arduous and at times excruciatingly painful. They take a lot out of you like a marathon and can be a roller coaster of emotions however if you do it well and hit the finish line the experience and satisfaction is like no other.

*They are lot more things to keep in before embarking on the same. The three listed above are critical.

Amitabh is a Passionate Digital Technology Leader, successfully delivering digital transformational to clients with SAP S/4HANA. He has more than 20 years' experience leading SAP and S/4HANA Business Transformational Programs globally. At KPMG, Amitabh is the Solutions Director for SAP Solutions - Asia Pacific delivering business outcomes to clients helping them move to S/4HANA using KPMG's Powered Enterprise with minimum risk and speed to value.
Amitabh is based out of Melbourne Australia. He holds a MBA and a Mathematics degree and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMI)

ERPNEWS