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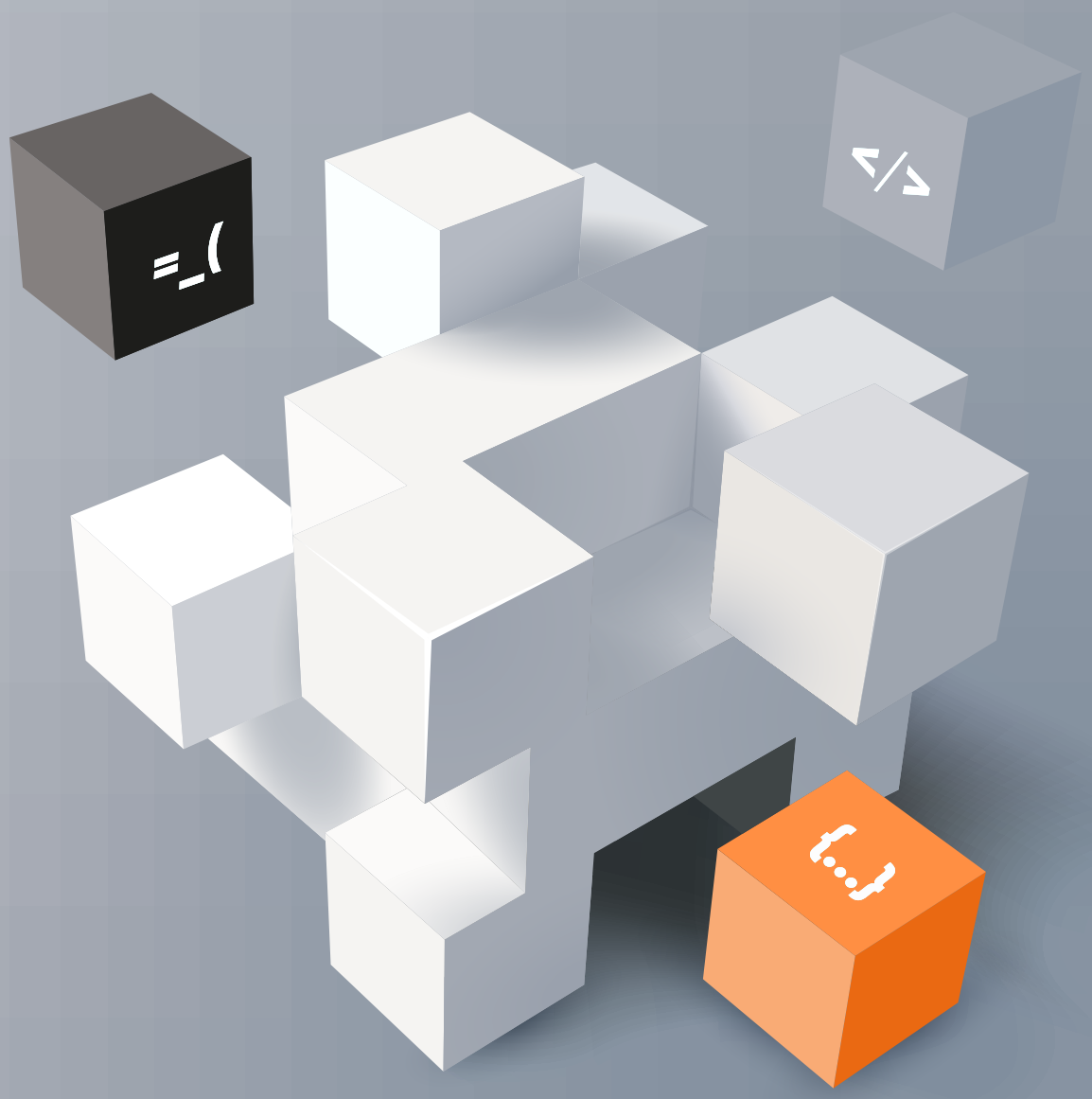
SELF SERVICE & LOW/NO-CODE ERP



Avalara

Perplexed by sales tax on software? **Avalara can help**

Get the guide

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EDITOR'S NOTE

"The two most powerful warriors are patience and time" Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace.

Regardless of the industry that a business is operating in, time is a company's most valuable resource. In an age where timely delivery of products and services is of paramount importance to maximize customer satisfaction, ignoring what the IT industry has to offer can have dire consequences for a business.

Although businesses have acknowledged the value of choosing the right software, especially in the past two years, today, a standard ERP software is often not enough. The need for customizable software that provides the most suitable solution for aligning the business processes, flexibility to grow with the business, and instant adaptation to the dynamic environment is increasing day by day. Alternative solutions are constantly evolving in this regard and low-code/no-code platforms open a new door for businesses.

Gartner mentioned that this year, eighty percent of technology products and services will be created by non-technologists, and code shortcuts will have a driving effect on this. Considering the high impact that this will have in the software industry, we have dedicated this issue of ERP News Magazine to Self Service & Low / No-Code ERP. Don't forget to check out the great interviews with the industry professionals and unique articles written by the thought leaders.

If you want to be a part of the ERP News family by contributing, you are always welcome!

Hope to see you in our next issue...

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ORACLE

ORACLE PURCHASE OF CERNER APPROVED

Oracle Corporation (NYSE: ORCL) announced that all required antitrust approvals have been obtained for its proposed acquisition of Cerner, including European Commission clearance. Cerner is a leading provider of digital information systems used within hospitals and health systems to enable medical professionals to deliver better healthcare to individual patients and communities.

Oracle expects to complete the tender offer promptly following the expiration of that offer at midnight Eastern time on June 6, 2022. Completion of the tender offer remains subject to the conditions described in the tender offer statement on Schedule TO filed by Oracle with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission on January 19, 2022, as amended.

Oracle Chairman and Chief Technology Officer Larry Ellison will discuss the Cerner acquisition and Oracle's new suite of cloud-based health management applications at an online event on June 9, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. CT.

"Working together, Cerner and Oracle have the capability to transform healthcare delivery by providing medical professionals with a new generation of healthcare information systems," said Larry Ellison, Chairman and Chief Technology Officer, Oracle. "Better information enables better treatment decisions resulting in better patient outcomes. Our new, easy-to-use systems are designed to lower the administrative workload burdening our medical professionals while improving patient privacy and lowering overall healthcare costs."

"We expect this acquisition to be substantially accretive to Oracle's earnings on a non-GAAP basis in fiscal year 2023," said Safra Catz, Chief Executive Officer, Oracle. "Healthcare is the world's largest and most important vertical market—$3.8 trillion last year in the United States alone. We expect Cerner to be a huge growth engine for years to come."

"Cerner has been a leader in helping digitize medical care, and now it's time to realize the real promise of that work with the care delivery tools that get information to the right caregivers at the right time," said David Feinberg, Chief Executive Officer and President, Cerner. "Joining Oracle as a dedicated Industry Business Unit provides an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate our work modernizing electronic health records, improving the caregiver experience, and enabling more connected, high-quality and efficient patient care."

"Oracle's Autonomous Database,APEX low-code development tools, and voice-enabled user interface enable us to rapidly modernize Cerner's systems and move them to our next-generation Cloud," said Mike Sicilia, Executive Vice President, Industries, Oracle. "This can be done very quickly because Cerner's largest business and most important clinical system already runs on the Oracle Database. No change required there. What will change is the user interface. We will make Cerner's systems much easier to learn and use by making hands-free voice technology the primary interface to Cerner's clinical systems"

Highlights

All-cash tender offer for $95.00 per share, or approximately $28.3 billion, that is immediately accretive to Oracle's earnings.

Substantially accretive to Oracle's earnings on a non-GAAP basis in fiscal year 2023, and will contribute more to earnings thereafter.

Cerner will be a huge growth engine for Oracle for years to come as Oracle expands Cerner's business into many more countries throughout the world.

The closing of the transaction is subject to satisfying certain closing conditions including Cerner stockholders tendering a majority of Cerner's outstanding shares in the tender offer.

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.

DUCATI ACCELERATES INNOVATION AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH SAP

SAP SE (NYSE: SAP) announced a global collaboration with Ducati Motor Holding S.p.A., the Italian motorcycle manufacturer, which chose the RISE with SAP solution to enable an important business transformation covering key business processes.

The collaboration is underpinned by a shared desire to improve and enrich the experiences of passionate Ducati customers through innovation excellence and cutting-edge products and services.

Technology and innovation are essential elements in Ducati's DNA. With SAP, the Italian company aims to be at the forefront. Its intent is to create an intelligent business network with suppliers and partners, extending the digitalization of processes and enhancing the accuracy and timeliness of information. These are necessary steps as Ducati puts passionate customers at the center of its business to respond effectively and efficiently to an increasingly complex global supply system.

To achieve these goals, Ducati will adopt the SAP Commerce Cloud solution for Ducati's online business management. It will also deploy the SAP Integrated Business Planning for Supply Chain solution for agile supply chain planning that will lead to an extended and integrated digital supply chain.

"Our passionate customers have always been at the center of the company strategy, and we try to offer them the best possible experience in the world of two wheels. We rely heavily on innovation and technology to be at the forefront of our business processes given our focus on product development," said Claudio Domenicali, CEO, Ducati. "Supply chains are increasingly complex and have been subject to transformation in recent years. Having a partner like SAP at our side will allow Ducati to make the supply chain even more flexible, reactive and integrated, connecting the needs of the 'Ducatisti' better to the logic of supply and production."

The Ducati brand is synonymous with excellence and known all over the world for the quality of its products and the competitiveness it expresses in every race. Ducati has the highest standards for its customer experience and operates a sophisticated supply chain, with end-to-end process integration and high availability essential.

"By combining our strengths and bringing all our innovative know-how with customer experience, supply chain and RISE with SAP, we could not be prouder to be on this business transformation journey together. Customer experience today represents everything, and Ducati wants to put CX even more at the center of its operations," commented Emmanuel Raptopoulos, President, EMEA South, SAP SE. "Working alongside Ducati in the MotoGP World Championship as official partner of the Ducati Lenovo Team is a tremendous honor for SAP. The power and excellence of Ducati motorcycles, combined with the best of SAP innovation, are a winning combination."

The collaboration between the two companies extends to the world of racing, an area in which technological development and innovation have always driven excellence. SAP joins the official partners of the Ducati Lenovo Team in the FIM MotoGP World Championship for the 2022 season.

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.

UNIT4 ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF SCANMARKET

Unit4, a leader in enterprise cloud applications for mid-market people-centric organizations, has today entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Scanmarket, a global vendor of cloud Source-to-Contract software. With Scanmarket, a privately-held company founded in 1999 and headquartered in Denmark, Unit4 will now be able to provide organizations with a unified Source-to-Pay journey, building on its existing ERP and Procure-to-Pay (P2P) offerings.

Scanmarket's suite of solutions extends Unit4's transactional procurement functionality (P2P), with the acquisition bringing additional capabilities in strategic procurement including sourcing, spend analytics, supplier management and contract lifecycle management. Customers include Emirates Flight Catering, NatWest, ISS Facility Services, MacMillan Cancer Support and Kärcher.

As the Office of the CFO has moved beyond the back office due to expansion in functional remit, increasing demands for analysis and planning, and the ability to drive greater business value, process automation and data-driven insights provide further control and understanding of company operations. This happens through a single lens, with a view to optimizing resources, delivering greater employee efficiency and satisfaction through intuitive, purpose-built technology, and driving performance optimization.

As well as supporting Unit4's growth ambitions, this deal marks a significant investment in the company's ERP solution, and will enable customers to gain deeper insight into their spend, to manage suppliers and contracts better and realize savings on procurement, with an enhanced customer experience.

Mike Ettling, CEO, Unit4, said, "We are delighted to have added Scanmarket to the Unit4 portfolio. Their market-leading global strategic procurement capabilities and cloud-based solutions are trusted by 324 customers, across more than 85 countries, and have received strong recognition from industry analysts, such as Gartner, Info-Tech Research Group and SpendMatters. As well as a great technology fit, both organizations are culturally similar in that we have developed our solutions with users and people at the center of what we do, so we are excited to welcome the Scanmarket team to Unit4."

Betina Nygaard, CEO of Scanmarket added "Scanmarket is all about people so, when considering this deal, finding a buyer who is a cultural match was of the utmost importance. People centricity is also key to Unit4 and, not only that, the company shares our core values.

Our team has been fundamental in getting us to where we are today, and Unit4 clearly recognizes the quality and skills of our colleagues. In addition, both companies are focused on digitalization and, in the case of Scanmarket, centered on transforming the procurement function through best of breed source-to-contract capabilities while effectively managing governance, risk and compliance. The combination of Unit4 and Scanmarket will deliver a comprehensive Source-to-Pay solution and bring added value for midmarket and enterprise organizations across both upstream and downstream procurement. "

The terms of the deal were not disclosed.

About Unit4

Unit4's next-generation enterprise software supports our customers in delivering an exceptional People Experience to their organization and onward to their customers – from boosting success for students and professionals, to empowering the public servants and nonprofit teams doing good in the world.

We transform work to be more meaningful and inspiring through software that's self-driving, adaptive and intuitive, intelligently automating administrative tasks and providing easy access to the answers people need.

CHANNELING THE FUTURE : NEW SAGE STUDY PUTS UPSKILLED WORKFORCE AS THE NUMBER ONE INVESTMENT PRIORITY FOR CHANNEL

A study by Sage (FTSE : SGE), the leader in accounting, financial, HR, and payroll technology for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), shows the channel ecosystem is increasingly prioritizing technical expertise in both hiring and investment.

The new study shows that challenges in finding and keeping talent are hitting the channel sector, with US resellers mostly feeling the pinch. Half of all US respondents currently in the process of recruiting noted difficulty finding both skilled management level staff, while 49 % also cited difficulty attracting skilled entry level talent. Competition was only slightly tapered within the UK, with 46 % and 40 % also struggling to source these levels.

Over half of all US resellers cited cloud computing (53 %) and data engineering (52 %) as required skillsets, while just under half listed cyber security skills (48 %), coding (45 %) and AI/ML development (44 %) as desired skills.
By contrast in the UK, just under two fifths of resellers placed cloud computing (39 %) and cyber security skills (39 %) as desired traits for new talent, while 35 % are looking for coding skills. Interestingly, the current external business climate may have forced UK reselling companies to focus more on the running of their business, with 36 % actively recruiting for essential business roles.

"Customers are looking to their channel partners to help make digitalization a reality as they embrace new revenue streams and invest with an eye on the future. They are being asked to provide expertise in the most complex technological areas – from protection against the latest cyber threats to the enablement of AI and ML," said Aziz Benmalek, President, Sage North America, and EVP Global Partner Organization. "This requires the channel workforce to shift – at Sage we are prioritizing providing our channel partners with the tools and technology tools needed to thrive."

Upskilling the workforce

Over the past 18 months alone, 39 % of the 1000 channel resellers surveyed have invested resources to technically upskill their workforce, while 36 % adopted greater eCommerce functionality during the same period.

This investment in technology is unlikely to slow. Resellers surveyed predicted that by 2024, services requiring more specific technical expertise such as cybersecurity service provision (40 %), SaaS application management (38 %) and public cloud consumption (33 %) will be among those most demanded by clients. Almost one-third (30 %) also believe that customers will be looking to specifically increase the efficiency, intelligence and automation of their business processes or operations (BPO).

When predicting areas of investment for their customers over the coming months, almost half (49 %) believe customers will look to grow their data center management revenue, while 40 % have a sharp focus on generating revenues from data analytics and AI software enablement.

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. Learn more at www.sage.com and www.sageintacct.com

Avalara

NON-COMPLIANCE IS NOT AN OPTION!

*Interview with **David Lingerfelt,***
Senior Director of Tax Content at Avalara

Although Nexus is a legal obligation, it has a quite complex structure. Tax assessment can be a barrier to business growth by straining cash flow. Businesses that want to remove this obstacle have been looking for the right software in recent years to ensure compatibility. Avalara is one of the leading names that businesses come across during their search. David Lingerfelt, Senior Director of Tax Content at Avalara, answered our questions about tax compliance.

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

I am the senior director of tax content at Avalara. In this role, I am responsible for sourcing, analyzing, and organizing the tax content that powers Avalara's calculation and research product suite. My day-to-day job involves efficiently scaling and maintaining boundaries, rates, and taxability decisions. I work closely with the product, global returns, and engineering teams to meet our client's tax calculation and research needs, so our clients do not have to worry about tax.

What's one tax challenge you believe all SaaS/software companies should be aware of?

Nexus is the legal obligation to register and collect sales tax in a U.S. jurisdiction. A significant tax challenge for SaaS and software companies is determining where they have nexus.

SaaS and software companies commonly establish economic nexus. Economic nexus is created when a software seller meets a jurisdiction's annual sales threshold or, in some instances, the transaction threshold. For example, Florida has a $100,000 annual sales threshold, while New York's thresholds are $500,000 in annual sales and one hundred or more annual transactions. The differing ways states determine annual sales adds to the complexity. Florida excludes exempt sales from the calculation, while New York includes exempt sales. There are no geographic boundaries for SaaS and software companies in the digital economy, so they have the complicated task of understanding economic nexus thresholds in all U.S. jurisdictions, and VAT implications for sales abroad.

SaaS and software companies lead the way with remote work. Furthermore, they engage in mergers and acquisitions (M&A) more frequently than other industries. As a result, SaaS and software companies typically establish physical nexus by hiring or acquiring employees or offices in new locations. This complicates tax compliance for the tax team as they must stay connected to everyone across an organization like the People and Culture and M&A teams.

Moreover, software and SaaS companies may create nexus by helping buyers avoid use tax. If the buyer uses the purchased software in various locations, the buyer may expect the seller to collect the applicable taxes in each jurisdiction. This prevents the buyer from having to assess and remit use tax. However, the seller must register and remit the sales tax collected even if the seller has no physical or economic nexus in the jurisdiction, which increases complexity for the seller.

Nexus is complicated, but non-compliance is not an option. The penalties and interest for non-compliance detected during an audit are significant. A tax assessment can strain cash flow, slowing growth. Furthermore, non-compliance discovered during M&A due diligence will result in purchase price adjustments.

What should SaaS/software companies expect to change from a tax compliance perspective in 2022?

I expect states to introduce legislation to modernize their statutes and regulations to extend sales tax to SaaS and software products during the 2022 legislative sessions. One such example is the recent Mississippi legislation creating a commission to study the taxation of cloud computing.

"

THE TAX MANAGEMENT SOLUTION MUST STORE AND AGGREGATE SALES TRANSACTIONS TO MONITOR FOR ECONOMIC NEXUS EXPOSURE. MANUALLY DETERMINING WHEN ECONOMIC NEXUS IS TRIGGERED IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR SAAS AND SOFTWARE COMPANIES THAT CAN SELL ANYWHERE AND BE NOWHERE.

"

DAVID LINGERFELT,
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF TAX CONTENT AT AVALARA

BEST-IN-CLASS TAX MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS HAVE EXTENSIVE LIBRARIES OF TAX CONTENT MAINTAINED BY TAX EXPERTS LEVERAGING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO ENSURE THE TIMELINESS AND ACCURACY OF TAX CALCULATIONS.

The digitization of the economy continues to accelerate. SaaS and software companies are central to this transformation. Many jurisdictions have antiquated statutes and regulations that do not account for how businesses use SaaS and software to serve customers today. Currently, only 18 states tax SaaS, meaning that the majority of states are leaving additional tax revenue on the table.

Along with divergent tax treatment, there is a myriad of definitions that apply to SaaS and software companies. In Connecticut, tangible personal property includes "software that is electronically accessed or transferred." Texas defines SaaS as data processing, and Arizona treats SaaS as a rental of tangible personal property. To say it is confusing is an understatement.

Technology, particularly SaaS and software technology, powered the economy through the recent pandemic. States took notice, and I expect them to respond by modernizing or investigating how to modernize their statutes and regulations to capture additional revenues from the sales of SaaS and software.

What should a tax management solution provide SaaS/software businesses to better monitor and manage ever-changing transaction tax laws and regulations?

Best-in-class tax management solutions have extensive libraries of tax content maintained by tax experts leveraging artificial intelligence to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of tax calculations. Tax technical expertise and machine-assisted intelligence are critical to monitoring thousands of jurisdictions for tax law and regulation updates.

Also, the tax management solution must store and aggregate sales transactions to monitor for economic nexus exposure. Manually determining when economic nexus is triggered is extremely difficult for SaaS and software companies that can

sell anywhere and be nowhere. The best tax management solutions fully automate economic nexus monitoring tasks.

A best-in-class tax management solution should seamlessly integrate exemption certificate management (ECM). SaaS and software sellers need to collect and store valid exemption certificates for sales for resale or sales exempted because the purchased software will have multiple points of use. Auditors always examine exempt transactions, so a failure to collect and store valid exemption certificates for exempt transactions is risky.

Additionally, SaaS and software companies should select a tax management solution that integrates calculation with return filing. Failure to timely file returns and remit taxes held in trust is an expensive proposition. The failure to file and pay penalties and interest are significant. The easiest way to ensure compliance is to have your tax management solution file and pay the taxes with the sales data used to calculate tax on clients' invoices.

What can you say about the future of taxes impacting SaaS/software companies? What will be the greatest tax challenges software companies will face in the next decade?

I see two tax challenges for software companies over the next decade. The first one is where to source the sale of SaaS or software. In general, sales taxes are sourced to the location where the benefit of the software is consumed. However, SaaS is accessible anywhere from any web-enabled device, making it difficult to determine where the benefit is consumed. Today, sellers commonly use the purchaser's billing address to source software and SaaS transactions. However, a billing address is not required to access a SaaS application. All that is needed is a credit card number and a web-enabled device. Where should a software seller source a purchase if the purchaser does not provide a complete billing address?

Two policy proposals offer a glimpse into the future of digital goods sourcing. The first is a draft rule by the Streamline Sales Tax Governing Board (SSTGB) allowing a seller to source a sale to the jurisdiction in the 5-digit zip code with the highest sales tax rate. The primary drawback to this proposal is that it will lead to the overcollection of tax.

Let us illustrate this issue using zip code 30316. Zip code 30316 includes the City of Atlanta in Dekalb County, Georgia. The Atlanta suburb of Gresham Park is also covered by zip code 30316. The Atlanta Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax applies to sales sourced to the portion of zip code 30316 that includes the City of Atlanta in Dekalb County. However, the SPLOST does not apply to sales sourced to the suburb of Gresham Park.

As of June 1, 2021, the combined sales tax rate for sales sourced to the portion of zip code 30316 in the City of Atlanta is 8.9%. The combined sales tax rate in the suburb of Gresham Park is 8.0%. Under the SSTGB draft rule, the seller would over-collect tax for SaaS or software consumed in Gresham Park.

The second policy proposal is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) draft nexus and revenue sourcing rules. The focus of these rules is on the allocation of global income taxes. However, there are sales tax implications. Under the draft rules, sales of digital goods, which includes SaaS and software, will be sourced as follows:

1.The billing address of the purchaser,
2.The user profile information of the purchaser,
3.The geolocation of the device of the purchaser, or
4.The device IP address of the purchaser.

Sellers of software and SaaS should watch these developments closely. The outcome could require costly ERP modifications or replacements to enable the collection and storage of additional transactional information to determine where to source SaaS and software purchases.

The second challenge facing SaaS and software companies in the next decade is how to classify and tax Web 3.0 digital products. Web 3.0 has many definitions, but at its core, it is about decentralization and three-dimensional interactive web experiences.

One example of Web 3.0 developments is a non-fungible token (NFT). An NFT is a link to a digital asset and a record of the asset's ownership stored on the blockchain ledger. The token is non-fungible, which means it unique and irreplaceable.

All the big fashion houses are getting in on wearable NFTs. You can buy an original Dolce & Gabbana NFT for your avatar to attend Decentraland's fashion week events. Is the original Dolce & Gabbana wearable NFT software, clothing, or something different?

As previously mentioned, we will likely see jurisdictions modernize their statutes and regulations to better define SaaS and Software in the near-term. However, modernization is unlikely to keep pace with the rapid Web 3.0 developments, creating more complexity for SaaS and software companies trying to determine how to tax Web 3.0 products in the absence of statutory or regulatory guidance.

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.

UNIT4

ERP HAS REINVENTED ITSELF AGAIN, AND THIS TIME IT'S GOING DESIGNER

Article by ***Claus Jepsen***
Chief Technology Officer, ***Unit4***

As early as the '90s, businesses and analysts alike have foretold the death of the ERP system. Over 20 years later, however, ERP is still alive and well. Globalization, digitalization, the internet and a whole host of other technologies have made it virtually impossible for businesses to move away from ERP. There's simply too much critical data housed in the underlying databases for elimination to ever be a viable option.

ERP was criticized for its complexity and for being difficult to change without expensive and time-consuming coding — and still is. Customization is almost always a necessity and can mean locking into a current version or vendor because those customizations are impossible to maintain.

However, this whole dynamic has changed in a relatively short period of time thanks to cloud technology advances and the burgeoning low-code/no-code market. Citizen developers are taking advantage of visual coding environments and machine-generated code to easily and quickly create high-performance applications that are custom-built to fit a business' exact needs. While these low-code/no-code environments have been quickly adopted in consumer technology and app development, adoption has been slower in the enterprise space -- and for good reason. Skeptics worry that we've been down this road before and that the rise of the "citizen developer" will lead to Shadow IT all over again: ungoverned, unmanaged solutions built outside of IT's domain.

I believe the citizen developer market will be huge in the coming years, but this growth should be driven by the citizen developer – not big software vendors like us. The true power of low-code/no-code development comes from the industry-specific and tailored functionality that can be added by smaller, specified app development platforms and their citizen users, which can be far more tailored to a single micro-industry than the software of an industry giant ever could. Even our company, which offers ERP solutions for many industries, can't compete with the enterprise-specific apps citizen developers may create. And those apps will only be augmented by interfacing with and extending the capabilities of ERP platforms that already exist (no matter which ERP vendor they come from).

To prepare for and be ready to fully take advantage of the benefits low-code/no-code can offer, organizations should put in place an integrated, "all hands on deck" approach, where apps built by citizen developers are governed and managed by IT, leading to a more successful digital transformation. While there will undoubtedly still be bumps in the road ahead, it's time to set aside reservations and explore the possibilities of low-code/no-code — but not without a solid plan in place.

The Power Is In Your People

Relinquishing the design of overlaying interfaces will be a hard thing for many ERP vendors to do. For decades, the big brands have been dictating the best practices business should follow, forcing companies to map processes and programs to the prefabricated designs of the ERP solutions they purchase. While these out-of-the-box capabilities may be ideal for a small fraction of the industries they were initially designed to map to, businesses and industries change rapidly. It is, therefore, naïve to think that any vendor, no matter how large, could know the ins and outs of any business or department better than the business itself — and especially its employees.

This is where businesses can leverage their employees to take advantage of low-code/no-code applications. Citizen developers represent a new generation in the workforce. They see technology as a way to create value in their work, opening doors to innovation and higher efficiency, and providing new ways of accomplishing goals. When given the tools to quickly develop front-end applications, the solutions they develop will map exactly to the processes used by their organizations, their departments and even their individual teams. The enterprise applications these citizen developers will create, as Jason Bloomberg wrote, "will focus almost exclusively on AI-supported, model-driven and declarative application construction," taking advantage of business

data and intelligence that was once relegated to the back office. Enterprise systems like ERP will have to be designed to support this change, enabling customers to build out from the core using loosely coupled microservices so employees can create service-enhancing ERP extensions in their own image.

Of course, this capability to code in-house will fundamentally change the role of in-house IT. As we move further into this new world, modern IT organizations must move away from dispensing limited solutions that are governed with an iron fist, and instead should empower employees and facilitate citizen development. Successful IT organizations will be those that provide their employees with the tools and technologies to design and develop their own IT solutions — as well as the classes and education needed to do so successfully. With review and approval processes in place, both IT organizations and employees can find mutual benefit in the creation of "citizen-built" applications.

The migration of customization and workflow/process design will also transform the ERP vendor, which will start focusing more and more on underlying platforms, tools and databases, as well as embedded technologies like AI and machine learning. For example, Unit4 does not offer a specific platform for citizen developers, but we do provide an API that allows the apps created by citizen developers to access the underlying information and workflows.

To jump-start the low-code/no-code transformation, it will be crucial for vendors to provide the necessary tooling, platforms and APIs to enable a digital business platform that can be utilized by low-code/no-code technologies.

ERP From The Inside Out

Organizations actively embracing citizen development by providing training, IT support and access to low-code/no-code design environments will set themselves up to be more agile and innovative, and in a better position to succeed with their digital transformation efforts. Consequently, I believe that ERP vendors that respond to the changing market and build their solutions around this "designer ERP" philosophy, providing an extensible platform for digital transformation, will be the most successful. The path to innovation and true digital transformation will start with IT managing the development environment while simultaneously allowing citizen developers the room to creatively find solutions to enable higher productivity.

Chief Technology Officer I've been fascinated by technology since age 14: from my first Tandy TRS Model 1, through to developing cloud-based, super-scalable solutions and bringing innovative technologies such as AI, chatbots, and predictive analytics to ERP.

About *Unit4*

Unit4's next-generation enterprise software supports our customers in delivering an exceptional People Experience to their organization and onward to their customers – from boosting success for students and professionals, to empowering the public servants and nonprofit teams doing good in the world.

We transform work to be more meaningful and inspiring through software that's self-driving, adaptive and intuitive, intelligently automating administrative tasks and providing easy access to the answers people need.

THREE AREAS THAT ERP AIDS SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Article By ***Brent Dawkins,***
Director of Product Marketing ***QAD***

Sustainable manufacturing refers to the ability to manage manufacturing operations "in an environmentally and socially responsible manner," according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Most people understand the increasing importance of sustainability and reduced environmental impact. We continue to witness events such as fires in the western US, excessive flooding in Europe or heat waves across different parts of the country. And, whether you believe these recent events to be the result of global warming – or not – manufacturers are expanding their sustainability and environmental efforts.

So, where does ERP come into play with manufacturer sustainability efforts?

Today, manufacturers view sustainability as a required corporate strategy for long-term business viability and success. And many companies utilize ERP to boost production efficiency, better coordinate demand and supply, track waste and strive for more sustainable practices and efficiency. Let's cover just three areas where ERP drives greater sustainability:

•**Responsible Sourcing** – Manufacturing ERP systems support efforts to identify responsible, sustainable sources of materials. Increasing numbers of global manufacturers have instituted objectives to boost the number of suppliers that meet defined social and environment standards. Take Ford as an example. Ford is working with key suppliers in China, India, Thailand and South Africa to eliminate over 4,900 metric tons of CO2 and 24 million gallons of water usage over the next three years. As companies include more sustainable sourcing efforts within their procurement and supply chain operations, ERP plays a key role in accurately analyzing, evaluating, and monitoring suppliers to ensure the right choices are made to meet sustainability goals and preserve resources.

•**Waste Reduction** – Nobody likes waste, especially manufacturers. It's a constant area of focus to eliminate waste throughout an organization and drive continuous improvement. Lean techniques have played a key role over the years to improve operational performance and save money. Many ERP systems support lean approaches to drive efficiency and reduce waste resulting in a lower carbon footprint by doing more with less. In other examples, you'll find ERP provides the necessary insights and metrics, like OEE, to enhance production execution.

•**Supply Chain Efficiency** – The supply chain is another area with room for improvement to advance sustainability efforts. The complexity of global supply chains, lack of communication with trading partners and the rush to meet on-time delivery requirements results in unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions. Consider the effects of excess inventory and unnecessary shipments. Having comprehensive control over the movement of stock and orders helps manufacturers combine orders and reduce inefficient shipments. Practitioners know that inefficient logistics activities increase the supply chain carbon footprint and, at times, cannot be avoided. By improving supply chain collaboration and effectiveness, the number of lifetime miles material or a product travels can be reduced, and CO2 emission savings achieved.

Sustainability is a topic of growing importance for customers, investors, governments, and manufacturers across the globe. Ultimately, enhancing manufacturing and supply chain sustainability boosts a company's reputation with the ethical sourcing of materials, reducing waste on the shop floor and across the organization, and showing genuine concern for the environment. And, ERP can – and does – play a strong role.

Sustainability drives growth when companies commit to more sustainable practices and establish effective strategies and meaningful objectives. We need to ask the hard questions, "What is the current status of your sustainability initiatives? How would you like those initiatives to progress?" Only when we start to ask the tough questions can we tackle sustainability together.

Brent is QAD's Director of Product Marketing with over 20 years of manufacturing and supply chain experience. In his spare time, you can find him hiking the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, coaching youth hockey or enjoying time with family.

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.

servicenow

SERVICENOW TO ACQUIRE HITCH WORKS TO HELP CUSTOMERS ADDRESS TALENT GAPS

ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW) announced it has signed an agreement to acquire Hitch Works, a skills mapping and intelligence company. Hitch will add a new layer of AI-powered skills insights to the industry-leading Now Platform to help customers address talent gaps by tying employee learning and development to workforce planning. Companies will be able to more effectively match people to projects – all from a single platform.

The employee experience matters more than ever. According to IDC, CEOs in North America believe that managing the talent skills gap is the biggest risk impacting business in 2022.1 Faced with high employee turnover and an accelerated pace of change, companies today are under immense pressure to attract, train, and retain a workforce that can respond to evolving business needs. With Hitch's AI and ML capabilities, managers will be able to identify which employees are best suited for projects based on skills and interests.

"If skills are the new currency for business, insight into these skills is critical to driving talent retention and adapting to evolving business needs," said Gretchen Alarcon, vice president and general manager of HR Service Delivery, ServiceNow. "But skills management has historically been siloed, with numerous point solutions and fragmented processes that don't work together. With Hitch, ServiceNow will streamline skills intelligence on a single platform to help business leaders match employees with meaningful work."

Hitch was founded by HR-industry veteran Kelley Steven-Waiss, who served as CHRO and CIO of HERE Technologies prior to founding Hitch. The company is led by CEO Heather Jerrehian, a successful serial entrepreneur and one of the founders of the venture capital firm, How Women Invest. Both leaders are expected to remain with ServiceNow post-acquisition.

"AI-powered skills intelligence is the foundation for the future of work," said Jerrehian. "Joining forces with ServiceNow allows us to scale our skills and talent mobility solutions across a global ecosystem of business leaders, managers, and employees. Together we will make work more meaningful and purpose-driven for employees and deliver better business outcomes for companies."

ServiceNow will build Hitch's capabilities into the Now Platform, beginning with its Employee Workflow solutions, where Hitch's ability to boost employee engagement and

productivity across the enterprise is a natural extension. ServiceNow also expects to later expand Hitch's features across its portfolio for customer service, IT, and developers.

"A productive and engaged workforce is the greatest asset of an organization," said Steven-Waiss. "As we emerge from the pandemic and face the challenges of the Great Resignation, employee experience is the key differentiator to winning 21st century talent. ServiceNow will advance Hitch's vision of creating the next generation of workforce and skills solutions."

Together, ServiceNow and Hitch will help companies provide equal access to work and development opportunities, regardless of who an employee knows or how well they network. This acquisition is another investment ServiceNow is making to enhance employee experiences and power the future of work by unlocking skills intelligence on a single platform within the ongoing flow of work. Over the last year, ServiceNow added new solutions to its Employee Workflow portfolio to support employees at every stage of their career, including Employee Journey Management, which enables employee learning and feedback in the flow of work.

ServiceNow expects to close the acquisition in Q2 2022. To learn more about Hitch and how ServiceNow will deliver skills intelligence and learning systems for the modern workforce, visit the ServiceNow blog.

1 Source: IDC's Worldwide CEO Survey, 2022: The CEO Tech Agenda in a Digital-First World, Part 1 — Big Themes, Business Priorities, and Risks, Doc # US48898922, March 2022
Use of forward-looking statements

This press release contains "forward-looking statements" about the expectations, beliefs, plans, intentions, and strategies relating to ServiceNow's acquisition of Hitch Works Inc. Such forward-looking statements include statements regarding future product capabilities and offerings and expected benefits to ServiceNow. Forward-looking statements are subject to known and unknown risks and uncertainties and are based on potentially inaccurate assumptions that could cause actual results to differ materially from those expected or implied by the forward-looking statements. If any such risks or uncertainties materialize or if any of the assumptions prove incorrect, our results could differ materially from the results expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements we make. We undertake no obligation, and do not intend, to update the forward-looking statements. Factors that may cause actual results to differ materially from those in any forward-looking statements include, without limitation, the inability to assimilate or integrate Hitch's technology into our platform; the inability to retain employees of Hitch after the transaction closes; unanticipated expenses related to Hitch's acquired technology; potential adverse tax consequences; disruption to our business and diversion of management attention and other resources; and potential unknown liabilities associated with Hitch's business. Further information on factors that could affect our financial and other results is included in the filings we make with the Securities and Exchange Commission from time to time.

About ServiceNow

ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW) makes the world work better for everyone. Our cloud-based platform and solutions help digitize and unify organizations so that they can find smarter, faster, better ways to make work flow. So employees and customers can be more connected, more innovative, and more agile. And we can all create the future we imagine. The world works with ServiceNowTM. For more information, visit: www.servicenow.com.

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Acumatica
The Cloud ERP

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT ERP SYSTEM FOR YOUR BUSINESS

*Article By **Lynne Jackson** ,*
Product Marketing Manager, General Business at
Acumatica

Hunting for an ERP solution? If you answered "yes," you're setting your business up for success in today's digital economy.

The digital economy is a global network of economic interactions occurring through digital technologies, but, according to Mary K. Pratt at TechTarget, it's more than just using computers to automate tasks once done manually or with analog devices. Pratt writes: "[T]he digital economy highlights the opportunity and the need for organizations and individuals to use technologies to execute those tasks better, faster, and often differently than before."

One example of such technologies is an ERP system. An ERP solution integrates all a business's data, departments, and applications (e.g., sales, financials, CRM, etc.) into one platform—allowing employees to access the same, accurate information at the same time. If the system is cloud based, this information is available anytime, from anywhere.

To choose an ERP solution that fills your needs, you must first ask a few questions. For example: "Am I searching for an ERP system because of the digital economy? Or because my business is operating on a legacy IT system? Or both?"

It is important to have a solid "why" behind your decision to research ERP solutions. It is also important to understand just how large scale an ERP implementation is in terms of time and financial resources. So, you should ask: "What is the ERP implementation lifecycle?"

Another important question is, "Do we have an ERP strategy in place?" If the answer is "no," then the following information will be a guide to help point you in the right direction.

Identifying Your Organizational Framework

The first step of your ERP strategy is to identify your organizational framework. This framework is composed of two parts: your IT environment and your "political" structure.

Let's start with the IT environment.

> **THE FIRST STEP OF YOUR ERP STRATEGY IS TO IDENTIFY YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK. THIS FRAMEWORK IS COMPOSED OF TWO PARTS: YOUR IT ENVIRONMENT AND YOUR "POLITICAL" STRUCTURE.**

Assuming you're replacing a legacy ERP solution or multiple disconnected systems, you've probably been facing some challenges—such as no single source of truth, limited access to organizational data, reliance on manual workarounds, lack of communication, and expensive IT maintenance costs. Implementing a modern ERP system eliminates these pain points, and you benefit from improved collaboration, automated business processes, a 360° view of the entire organization, and more.

These benefits are obviously selling points from the IT perspective, but, in terms of your "political" structure, they need to appeal to your entire organization. Organizational support, from the top down, is essential to ensuring a successful ERP implementation.

A CIO article on ERP system selection notes:

Every organization experiences power struggles and political issues borne of the differing mandates and pressures its various groups work under. A classic example? The tussle between IT security practitioners and "shadow IT," in which lines of business deploy technology without explicit IT approval. Then there is basic human nature around change, with some individuals trying to drive evolutionary shifts in the business, while others prove more resistant to change, worrying that new technologies will disrupt their everyday work routines, or even take away their job[s].

Resolve these concerns by communicating the ERP implementation plan to your team members before starting. Describe the features and benefits it will provide and say that you and your leadership team are fully backing the plan.

Once you've unified your teams around the idea of an ERP implementation, it's time to proceed with the ERP research, evaluation, and selection process.

Understanding Your Main Functional Requirements

Before contemplating the many cloud ERP systems on the market, it's important to think through your main functional requirements. Assemble a project team, made up of team members from across the organization, and, together, determine:

- What specific challenges do we need to solve?

- Do we want a system with general or industry-specific functionality?

- What do we expect the ERP system to provide (e.g., advanced financial management features, a fast implementation, easy integration to third-party systems, high usability, vendor support, etc.)?

To help answer the last question, prioritize your functional requirements into levels of necessity.

1. Absolute

2. Highly Desirable

3. Not Needed Now but Important for the Future

4. Not Essential but Nice to Have

Your Budget and Available Resources

Of course, implementing one of the many available cloud ERP solutions that could fulfill your required functions is only possible if you find a system that lands within your budget. Look at how the vendors price their ERP software. Do they charge per user, or do they charge for the features and resources you actually use? (Charging by user limits the system's effectiveness and employee access to accurate information.)

It's also critical that you know what resources (such as capital and staffing) you have available for implementing and then operating the proposed ERP system. Without establishing a budget that matches your resources, you'll encounter problems down the road.

Scalability, Total Cost, and Future ROI

Researching an ERP system's total cost of ownership (TCO) will help you set a budget. Calculate TCO by adding up the system's purchase, implementation, and ongoing infrastructure/people costs over a five-year period. Ask each ERP vendor for these numbers. If any of them attempt to evade your question, take note. Evasive behavior may indicate that a vendor is not for you.

An ERP system's scalability (or lack thereof) is another indicator of suitability. Because your business will change over time, the ERP software must be able to manage your current and future needs. It should also have a proven track record of keeping up with developments and innovations in the ERP industry.

Technical and User Support

Finally, because you'll need different levels of support throughout the sales process, the ERP implementation, and the future operations of the ERP platform, you must choose a trustworthy vendor.
Analyst Brian Sommer of Vital Analysis released a whitepaper

on this very topic: Partner or Predator?. In it, he writes, "Great cultures can be found in yogurt, acidophilus milk, and some firms. Unfortunately, great cultures don't always exist in technology firms that you've come to rely upon. And, if you do business with a technology firm with a bad culture, it could be a very expensive, frustrating, long-term decision."

He says the answer for software buyers is to "find the vendors that will treat them fairly and transparently"—vendors that do not exhibit predatory behaviors. Such behaviors include focusing on short-term needs, forging a better relationship with your wallet than with you, and using long, confusing contracts.

How Acumatica Can Help

Acumatica passionately pursues being a vendor you can trust. We have created the ERP industry's first Customer Bill of Rights, which promises an easy and understandable End User Licensing Agreement (EULA), an open platform for rapid integrations, consumption-based (not user-based) licensing, sustainable pricing, ERP implementations without hidden fees, and more.

Acumatica is an award-winning ERP system. Born in the cloud, our software helps businesses transform with cutting-edge technology and best-in-class functionality, which are necessary for success in today's digital economy.

If you're wondering how to choose an ERP system that you can afford, that supports you from the get-go (and throughout the entire process), that will grow with you and provide a return on investment—Acumatica can help. Contact our team of experts today. They can answer questions or set up a demonstration to show what Acumatica can do for you.

"ACUMATICA IS AN AWARD-WINNING ERP SYSTEM. BORN IN THE CLOUD, OUR SOFTWARE HELPS BUSINESSES TRANSFORM WITH CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY AND BEST-IN-CLASS FUNCTIONALITY, WHICH ARE NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS IN TODAY'S DIGITAL ECONOMY.

About Acumatica

Acumatica is a leading innovator in cloud ERP with customers located around the world. Acumatica ERP delivers adaptable cloud and mobile technology with a unique all-inclusive user licensing model, enabling a complete, real time view of your business anytime, anywhere. Through our worldwide network of partners, Acumatica provides the full suite of integrated business management applications, designed to help mid-sized companies thrive in today's fast-moving markets.

HOW IS THE SELF SERVICE & LOW / NO-CODE ERP TREND AFFECTING THE SOFTWARE INDUSTRY?

Manufacturing is experiencing a severe shortage of labor, and the industry will face 2.1 million open positions by the end of the decade according to Deloitte. To cope, manufacturers are looking to Industry 4.0 technologies to increase productivity and automate repetitive tasks. Low-code tools may be a solution to this challenge.

Low-code or software application design tools make it easy for non-developers to design, build, and launch software applications quickly. With the provision of a low-code tool, manufacturers have an opportunity to improve workflows, speed up implementations and even innovate.

It will be vital to ensure that your low-code tool can connect with your ERP solution as a central point of data. Without an ability to connect, operational visibility may be lost and labor productivity reduced. The key is to ensure that the core business system that you invest in supports low-code extensibility, power tailoring and customization.

Darren Edwards,
Head of Product Operations at SYSPRO

SYSPRO
Say Yes to Next

ORACLE NETSUITE

MPOWERD ILLUMINATES ITS BUSINESS WITH NETSUITE

MPOWERD's mission began nearly 10 years ago with the invention of Luci, the world's first inflatable solar light. Since then, MPOWERD has strived to bring clean, affordable energy products to the world and in the process, it has positively impacted over 3.8 million lives, while averting more than 2.5 million tons of CO2.
This unrelenting desire to run a successful business while doing good in the world has seen MPOWERD rapidly expand its operations. Today, it operates in more than 90 countries and provides aid through a network of over 700 non-governmental organization partners that deploy its lights in emerging markets.

Operating in the Dark

Like many organizations, MPOWERD acquired different technology platforms to meet different needs as its business grew. While this met short term requirements, it created disconnects that made managing its financial operations, including cash flow analysis, accounts payable, and reporting, extremely complex as its global operations expanded.
"When I first joined the company, I had a difficult time understanding the company's financials. said Seungah Jeong, president & CEO, MPOWERD. "Cash flow is so important to understand, especially for smaller companies, but with a complicated system and the resulting gaps in information, we were not set up to plan and run the business effectively. We knew we needed to make a switch to a system that would integrate our operations, consolidate our data, and ultimately give us more visibility into our business."

After evaluating several systems including SAP, MPOWERD replaced Salesforce and other point solutions with Oracle NetSuite.

Powering Operations with NetSuite

With NetSuite in place, MPOWERD has unified its financial operations. This has given the MPOWERD team more visibility into their business and has helped them reduce the time to close their books by almost 70 percent. In addition, NetSuite's robust reporting capabilities and customizable dashboards have enabled MPOWERD to efficiently keep its board members, shareholders, and partners updated.

"I really appreciate the ability to create customized reports, fields, and actions that free up our time and give us the ability to handle issues proactively. Where we used to produce reports monthly, we are now doing so daily and it is really making a difference in our business," said Jeong.

NetSuite has also helped MPOWERD increase efficiency and agility in other areas of its business. For example, it has made it easier to hire and onboard new employees thanks to the familiarity of NetSuite and its ease of use.

Another major benefit comes from the cloud-based functionality delivered by NetSuite. It has enabled MPOWERD to transition to full-time remote operations, which has given its employees more flexibility and helped reduce the company's carbon footprint.

"NetSuite has made it easier to run our business and make the decisions to keep moving in the right direction," said Jeong. "NetSuite brings us together as a team with built-in collaboration tools, reporting capabilities, and a single version of the truth. This is a huge benefit. Our team can now easily work together across departments and processes – whether its sales, shipping, or finance – and has access to the real-time insights required to adapt our operations as needed."

Looking to a Bright Future

MPOWERD plans to continue to build on its success with NetSuite. It's exploring how NetSuite can help automate its supply chain and inventory management operations, and evaluating how NetSuite can aid the impact side of its business.

"We think there is huge potential for NetSuite to support us on the impact side of our business by helping us provide aid for natural disasters," said Jeong. "When disasters occur, we convert monetary donations into lights and charging products. Traditionally, these calculations have been complicated as they are not a standard business transaction. By managing all our information within NetSuite, we can seamlessly run calculations to deploy the right products, at the right time, where they're needed the most."

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.

EPICOR RECOGNISED AS A LEADER IN THE 2022 NUCLEUS RESEARCH SMB ERP VALUE MATRIX

Epicor, a global leader of industry-specific enterprise software to promote business growth, today announced it has been positioned as a Leader in the inaugural Nucleus Research Small and Midsize Business (SMB) ERP Value Matrix published in June 2022.

The Leader position is based on the evaluation of the Epicor Industry ERP Cloud, the company's portfolio of people-centric, open, and connected industry productivity solutions that help the essential businesses that make, move, and sell succeed in today's complex market.

Nucleus ranked ERP vendors with a proven track record of servicing organisations between $10 million to $499 million in annual revenue on the functionality and usability of their solutions, as described by their customers.

"The Epicor Industry ERP Cloud portfolio is built to deliver a variety of integration, automation, and performance capabilities that help customers maximise the power of their data and grow their businesses," said Lisa Pope, Epicor President. "Our Leader position in the Nucleus SMB ERP Value Matrix underscores our deep commitment to work hand-in-hand with our customers, creating industry-specific software solutions and services that enable a world of better business."

In the ranking report, Nucleus commented that "The Epicor Industry ERP Cloud platform combines financial, supply chain management, planning, CRM, product management, project management, business intelligence, and analytics capabilities into one integrated system. One of Epicor's core value propositions lies in its configurable infrastructure, offering various industry-specific ERP packages. With low-code/no-code functionality, pre-built API connectors, and extensive library add-on modules, businesses can set up their Epicor ERP system to meet their organisation's unique requirements."

A complimentary copy of the report is available for download here. For more information on the Epicor Industry ERP Cloud portfolio, please visit our website.

About Epicor

Epicor equips hard-working businesses with enterprise solutions that keep the world turning. For 50 years, Epicor customers in the automotive, building supply, distribution, manufacturing, and retail industries have trusted Epicor to help them do business better. Innovative Epicor 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 its customers' ambitions, whether to grow and transform, or simply become more productive and effective. Visit www.epicor.com for more information.

priority™

THE BENEFITS OF USING AN AI-BASED ERP SOFTWARE

*Article by **Olly Lukatski***
Marketing Communications, Priority

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a paradigm of technology that allows smart machines to perform tasks that generally require human-level intelligence. In many cases, AI-enabled devices are smarter and quicker than humans and less prone to making errors. AI has wide-reaching implications in enterprise resource planning (ERP). In 2021, Gartner predicted that over 80% of emerging technologies would possess AI abilities, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that as we are hurtling down towards the end of 2022 and into 2023, the importance of AI in ERP will only continue to solidify.

What is the connection between AI and ERP?

Artificial intelligence is a formidable technological component that bolsters existing and future ERP solutions. It combines machine learning, neurolinguistics programming, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) to enhance the functionality of ERP solutions, providing actionable forecasts and insights which allow companies to improve their operational efficiency. In addition, AI features provide ERP users with advanced automation capabilities like chatbots, digital assistants, voice recognition features, and the ability to process vast amounts of data in a manageable and sustainable manner to allow businesses to constantly improve the way their internal procedures are managed and processed.

Smarter data processing and analytics

When it comes to artificial intelligence, it's all about superior data processing and report generation. AI can make smarter forecasts and generate context-relevant reports compared to standard computing technologies. AI recognizes the context in which data reports and analytics are sought and generates valuable predictions and insights that regular ERPs often cannot. In addition, AI-enabled forecasting tends to be very accurate, taking multiple variables into account. As a result, you can minimize losses and maximize revenue growth.

Improved customer experience

ERP often combines shipping and deliveries, e-commerce

> **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS NO LONGER A BUZZWORD AND RAPIDLY BECOMING PART OF THE MAINSTREAM. ERP IS NO STRANGER TO THIS PHENOMENON AS AI IS GRADUALLY INTEGRATED INTO ITS MODULES, HELPING BOTH ENTERPRISE USERS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS.**

functions, and Point-of-Sale (PoS) alongside customer service and CRM. AI can recognize patterns that a regular ERP can often miss and predict what customers truly want. Instead of retrieving past conversations and assessing a customer's needs and wants, AI-enabled ERP can enhance CRM and e-commerce modules by giving the customers what they want, exactly when they need it. In addition, your contact center executives will find it a breeze to engage with customers and provide them with improved support.

AI-enabled inventory management is unrivaled

While a traditional ER system is a robust tool that allows inventory and stock management and provides procurement process automation capabilities, it cannot take extraneous variables into account and make predictions that might warrant reduced and increased replenishment. AI-enabled inventory management foresees demand and supply variables in ways that an ordinary computer cannot. As a result, you will have adequate control over your inventory management and will be able to eliminate wastage and lack of product availability.

Bring life to your ERP

Whether your ERP is engaged in frontend or backend operations, AI can breathe new life into it. Your staff will benefit from smart assistants and chatbots, answering the customers' queries and leading them through complex business workflows. Your customers will be able to engage in a "self-service" manner to replace products or request returns. In addition, when combined with advanced Internet-of-Things (IoT) technology, AI-enabled ERP is often the gold standard for manufacturing and production lines. It simply changes how one approaches repairs, maintenance, and after-sales support.

AI-based ERP is here to stay.

Artificial intelligence is no longer a buzzword and rapidly becoming part of the mainstream. ERP is no stranger to this phenomenon as AI is gradually integrated into its modules, helping both enterprise users and their customers.

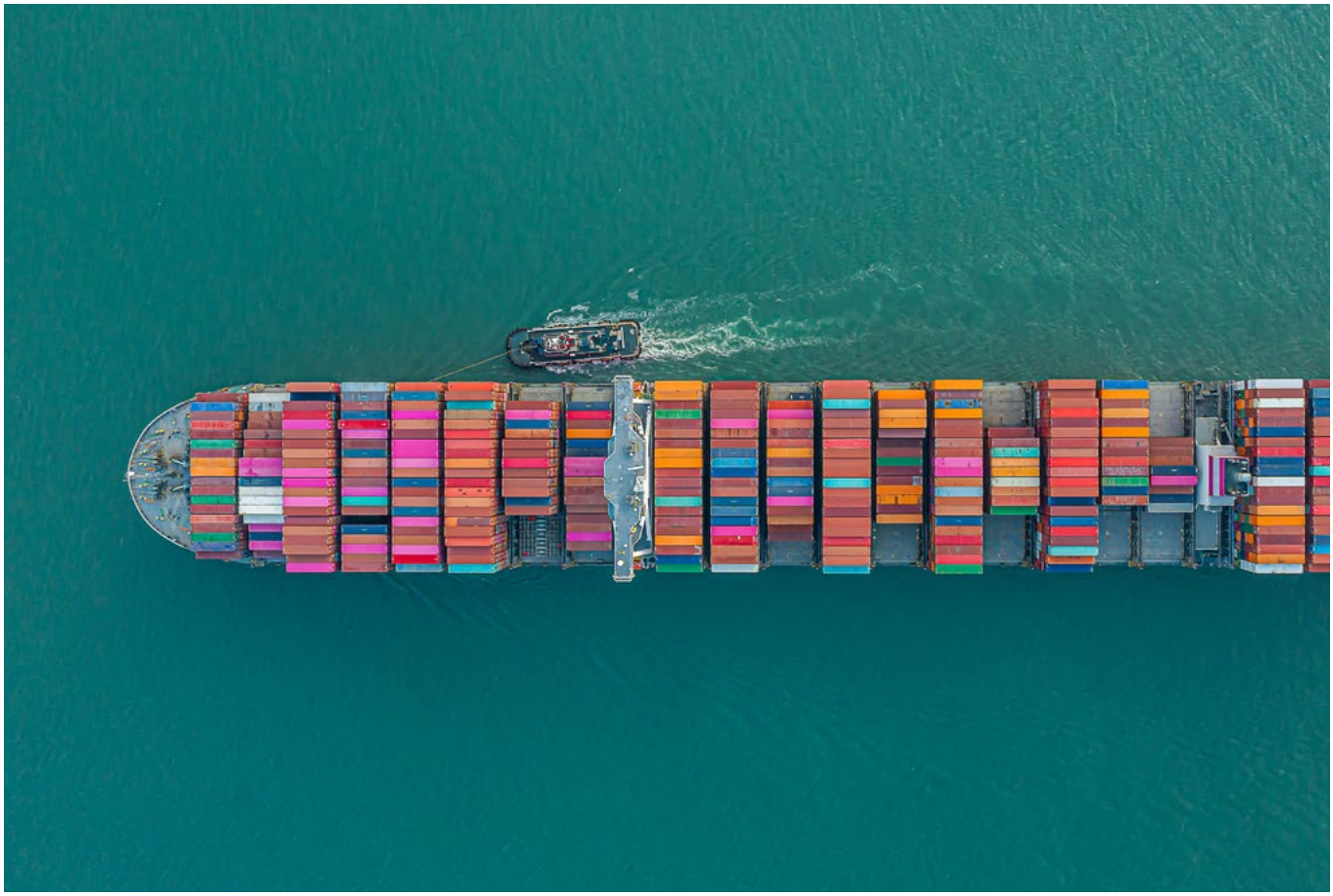
If you wonder how AI can help your existing ERP function better, contact us today. You might also want to discuss how choosing an AI-enabled ERP will help you go digital in a more future-proof manner.

Olly manages Priority's global marketing communications and content strategy. Over the past 10 years, Olly has gained vast experience in executing marketing initiatives in high-growth B2B companies, quickly adapting to the constantly changing market demands and bringing new concepts to life.

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.



SYSPRO STUDY HIGHLIGHTS EXTERNAL COLLABORATION AS KEY TO REALIGNING THE LINKS OF THE DISCONNECTED SUPPLY CHAIN

SYSPRO, a global provider of ERP software, has announced new research findings from their latest global research survey, which explores the challenges and solutions to ongoing supply chain disruptions that manufacturers and distributors face today. Conducted towards the end of 2021, the online survey assessed the sentiment of 163 manufacturing and distribution industry professionals of different managerial levels within EMEA, the Americas and APAC regions. The report reveals four key themes and illuminates the need for a long-term digital strategy that incorporates improved customer centricity, external collaboration and data driven decision-making to engineer a bounce-back.

Theme one: The disconnect between the investment in internal efficiencies and external collaboration

With global lockdowns and ongoing disruptions driving increased pressure, it comes as no surprise that 70% of businesses experienced supply chain disruptions over the last few years. Concurrently, 60% of businesses were unable to engage and collaborate with customers and suppliers in real-time. As a result, those businesses were often unable to deliver to their customers.

Pre-pandemic technology investments and outdated business models had been partly to blame for these ongoing challenges. In response to pressures, businesses have invested in short-term technology solutions to address the immediate impact of the pandemic. Even though 65% of businesses invested in business systems aimed at meeting order requirements and 64% of businesses invested in business systems to manage inventory control, the supply of inventory was not protected.

According to Paulo De Matos, Chief Product Officer at SYSPRO, "While the investment in internal efficiencies is crucial for any business, customer and supplier engagement should also be a top priority. What we are seeing now, is a knock-on effect of supply chain disruptions. It won't matter how businesses try to up their game internally, if they are unable to communicate effectively with their external ecosystem and respond to shifts in the supply chain, businesses may fall behind."

Theme two: Digital roadmaps do not align to execution

In response to the immediate impact of the pandemic, many businesses looked at building a digital strategy. The survey found that while building those roadmaps, 69% of businesses considered a digitalization strategy aimed at enhancing existing business processes with digital technologies. However, only 29% of businesses committed to a fully-fledged digital transformation strategy.

Within the roadmaps, 48% of businesses committed to improving customer service, yet only 23% of businesses included external collaboration (i.e. the ability to talk to the customers) as part of their digital strategy.

When exploring the execution of the digital strategy, the survey found a clear disconnect. With 34% of businesses focused on investments to improve internal operations management, quality management and warranty management, and 33% of businesses looking at improving sourcing, procurement and inventory management, only 18% of businesses invested in business systems to improve

external collaboration. Additionally, 50% of businesses chose to not invest in any systems at all, and to rely on current systems to keep the lights on.

As De Matos noted "When deep diving into the reasons behind the disconnect between digital strategy vs. digital execution, we found that 71% of businesses outsourced it to external service providers with no real understanding of the core business challenges or everyday reality of what was affecting the business. Businesses now have an opportunity to reset for the future and revisit their digital roadmap with the assistance of trusted advisors and industry experts. Of course, the inclusion of external collaboration solutions will be key."

Theme three: Supply chains are not competing at a global level

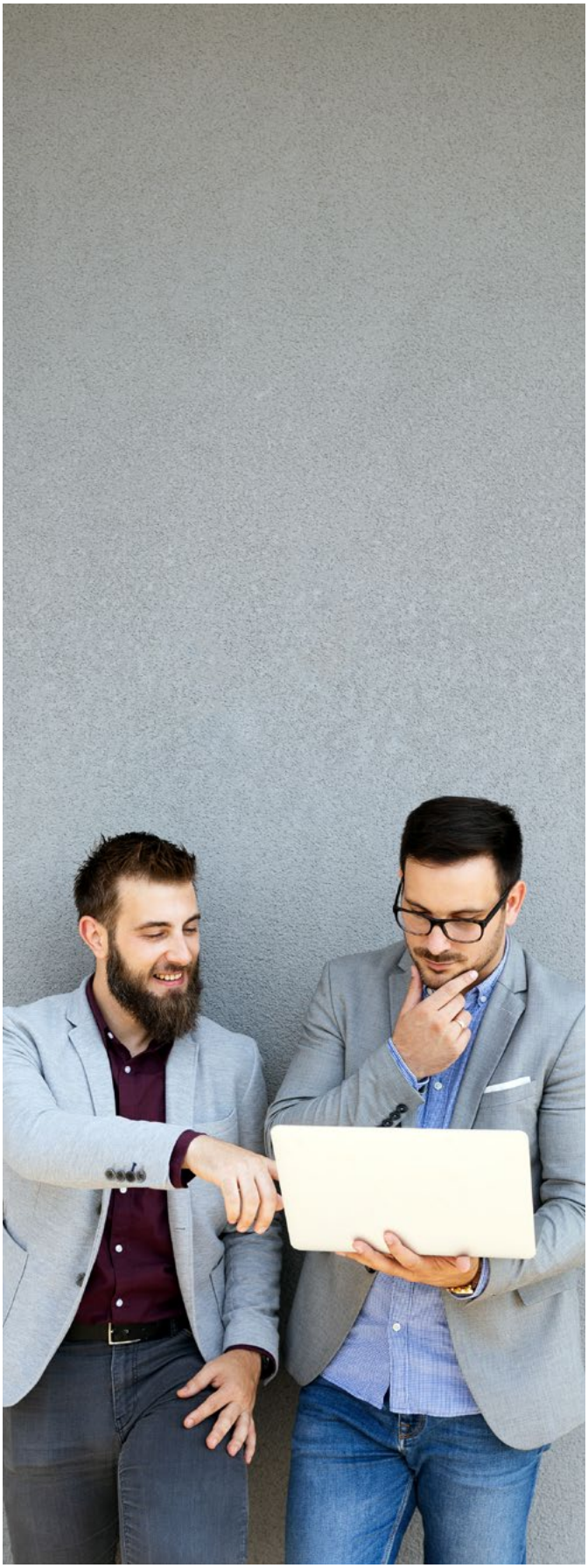
When asked about technological investments, 47% of businesses had invested in sensors, and IoT networks. At the same time, only 20% of businesses had invested in data analytics tools to process and analyze the data that they were collecting, while only 5% of businesses had looked into AI and ML to draw any long-term benefit from the data collection.

"Business models as we know it are changing before our eyes. The classic model of company vs company is giving way for supply chain vs supply chain where simply selling a product is no longer good enough to survive in the long term. Manufacturers today should ideally assemble a team of companies to offer the best product and best service at the best price. To do this successfully, the right data insights are imperative," states De Matos

Theme four: Customers are placed at the end of the supply chain and not at the centre

When exploring the knock-on effect of the above challenges, it was not surprising that only 22% of businesses had experienced revenue growth and only 26% of businesses had achieved customer satisfaction over the past 12 months. "The customer experience can make or break a business. While businesses improved operational visibility through technological investments such as IoT or even looked into alternative eCommerce sales channels, the reality is that ongoing and real-time external collaboration with suppliers and customers is vital. A balance along the supply chain can be achieved when a customer is placed at the centre of the supply chain, and their experience is not regarded as an afterthought. With real-time data insights into customer needs, improved revenue will soon follow," states De Matos.

"Overall the study showed that your digital roadmap should be carefully aligned to changing business needs, to address ongoing challenges. Reverting back to old business models or investing in technologies to keep the 'lights on' will no longer suffice. An ERP system can support manufacturers and distributors to digitalize by providing the platform that resolves the biggest areas of impact; implementation and automation of business systems to handle procurement and sourcing policy changes, distribution and lead time planning; and analytics providing data real-time to support improved decision-making. While there has been downtime, manufacturers have the opportunity now to make a change to improve operational efficiency and thrive now and into the future," concludes De Matos



About SYSPRO

SYSPRO specializes in key manufacturing and distribution industries. Established in 1978 by CEO Phil Duff, SYSPRO remains one of the longest standing privately owned vendors of ERP software in the world. With a strong commitment to channel partner growth and offices in the United States, Canada, Africa, the UK, Asia and Australasia, SYSPRO customers are backed by a team of global experts that drive maximum value out of IT systems and business solutions.

WHAT IS SAP APPLICATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES?

Over the last 50 years, SAP has become one of the largest Enterprise Resource Planning software distributors globally. What started off as finance management software has gradually evolved into a business application suite that spans more than 50 functional modules. Not only has the wide-ranging scope of SAP's modules added to its technical complexity, but each module requires its own specialized sets of skills and knowledge to run effectively.

As companies continue to expand the scope of their SAP projects, they must choose between hiring new specialists and technicians or partnering with a knowledgeable Application Management Services (AMS) provider.

What Is Application Management Services?

Application Management Services is an outsourcing option where businesses partner with an IT service provider to manage, maintain, and provide user services for the SAP systems. IT service providers offering AMS services should have years of transferable experiences that will be invaluable for companies looking to improve and expand their SAP systems. Service providers simply access the SAP systems externally and carry out their functions as an internal IT team would.

Levels of Application Management Services

No two companies are alike. Your company's needs are unique, and choosing the right amount of support for your business is paramount to the success of your business relationships. That's why there are numerous different levels of Application Management Services outsourcing that companies can engage in.

If your business faces time-sensitive projects or strategic initiatives, you can partner with an AMS provider for short-term coverage of your everyday management tasks. This allows your internal teams to focus on mission-critical functions without being bogged down.

A hybrid AMS agreement is another great way for companies to cover any gaps in their support structure. So, whether you're looking to expand your application capabilities, lose key personnel, or simply don't have the necessary staff to keep your SAP environment running smoothly, an Application Management Service provider can provide critical assistance where it's needed the most.

Of course, the most beneficial model is outsourcing the entirety of your application management. While all forms of AMS outsourcing can benefit an organization, letting an AMS provider handle the entirety of your functional support allows them to truly maximize your return on investment.

Benefits of Partnering with an AMS Provider

No matter how much or how little support you need, a good AMS provider can help you assess your company's situation and craft a plan to propel your business forward. The benefits of partnering with an AMS provider should not go unstated. Whether you need to reduce your IT costs,

scale your operations, or provide better response times, an AMS provider can help you achieve your strategic goals. Here are the top 5 benefits you receive by using application management services.

1. Reduced Operating Cost

One of the most significant pain points companies face today is rising costs. While many associate IT costs with tech stacks and critical infrastructure, personnel costs have begun to cut deeper into budgets than ever before.

Experienced IT professionals who understand the intricacies of SAP modules are hard to come by. Talent is so scarce that a survey conducted by Robert Half Technology found that 89% of the 2800 IT decision-makers surveyed have trouble finding skilled employees to fill openings.

Even if you can find an IT specialist who can fulfill your company's needs, you must be ready for the high price tag of a new in-house employee. For example, an IT expert capable of managing your SAP modules can run anywhere between $125,000 and $175,00 with a complete benefits package. Depending on the number of modules you need to be managed, the cost of labor can quickly balloon into millions of dollars a year.

Partnering with an Application Management Service provider can help reduce the strain that increasing labor costs have on your company's budget. A good AMS provider will help you find the right support plan with a TCO that makes sense for your company.

2. Scalability

Workforce instability is a constant issue facing IT leaders. LinkedIn Corporation found that IT had the highest industry turnover rate at 13%. High employee churn not only hurts your company's bottom line. If you're unable to retain top talent, keeping your systems maintained can become an arduous task.

If you're having difficulty maintaining your current systems due to employee attrition, scaling your IT systems is virtually out of the question.

This is where an AMS provider can help. Outsourcing to an experienced partner allows you to increase the scale of your SAP systems without having to worry about the adverse effects of losing key employees or navigating a hyper-competitive labor market. In addition, your AMS partner will have access to top talent that can help expand your current systems and keep your end-user experience running smoothly.

3. Technological Advancement

Partnering with an AMS provider for SAP can immediately enhance existing systems. Instead of onboarding new IT specialists, or seasoned professionals who know their way around a single SAP module, AMS gives you access to an entire team of experienced professionals.

IT servicers have provided AMS to a wide range of clients for years. The teams you'll be working with are experienced in refining SAP systems to optimize clients' end-user experiences and push innovative solutions. These experiences help service providers optimize existing systems at the start of every new client relationship.

4. Internal Flexibility

External issues such as the small IT talent pool and workforce instability inevitably lead to time constraints on internal IT teams. If your internal IT team is constantly having to focus on ensuring things run smoothly, they won't have the

time needed to push the needle forward on the company's strategic IT goals.

Partnering with an AMS provider takes the responsibility of day-to-day application management off your CIO and other key professionals so they can focus on strategic initiatives like digitalization and modernization. Considering these initiatives are essential to continue long-term success, freeing up your key IT personnel to focus on them is paramount.

5. Faster Response Time

ERP systems like SAP have reached such a level of depth and complexity that even seasoned experts cannot master every module. So, unless you have a team of well-versed employees for every SAP application your business runs, responding to end-user issues or outages can take a long time.

Since time is money, resolving issues quickly is critical to maximizing your company's ROI. AMS providers have professionals experienced in every area of SAP. So, when a problem arises, your strategic partners will be able to deliver swift and consistent responses to any issues that arise.

1. One Region for All

As the name suggests, this model relies on providing support services for a single geographical region. So, if an IT service provider is headquartered in the U.S., all their clients will be serviced during standard U.S. working hours.

Advantages

The "One Region for All" model is one of the most popular support models on the market for a reason. Since all support is provided from a single region, communication is streamlined, and requests tend to be taken care of quickly and at a low cost. Seamless documentation processes, cost transparency, and a single point of contact make this an attractive option for many small and medium-sized businesses.

Disadvantages

The main disadvantage that clients will have to deal with is the time offset. Of course, if your business is in the same region as the service provider, then you'll have a much easier time. But even so, restricting your support team to a single region means that you likely won't be able to get assistance during non-standard work hours.

AMS Models to Consider

When choosing an AMS provider, there are three different support models that businesses should be aware of: the "One Region for All" model, the "In Region, for Region" model, and the "Follow the Sun" model. Each has its own advantages and drawbacks. Not all models are a good fit for every company, so choosing a provider that offers a model that suits your business's needs is imperative for a successful AMS partnership.

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.

HOW IS THE SELF SERVICE & LOW / NO-CODE ERP TREND AFFECTING THE SOFTWARE INDUSTRY?

The adoption of low/no-code ERP increases the speed at which applications are built, addresses the current shortage of IT workers in eliminating technical barriers, and is cost effective in saving time and resources. However, despite the self-service and low/no-code ERP trend affecting the software industry, it is greatly overhyped. Most low code tools are cloud-based services that are run by multiple different vendors, which poses a security threat for companies. Security is top priority at Unit4, so we wouldn't allow this access to vendors or the individual employee due to the risks involved. Additionally, low/no-code tools appear to be offering a UI layer on top of existing applications, which does not give you access to the core data in these systems. If you want the low/no-code UI to interoperate with your core data, this means that you not only need people with coding knowledge to maintain these key systems, but you also need to know how to do business logic. Lastly, the low/no-code model requires adherence to a disciplined process and good governance. Leaders need to be strict about how low/no-code tools interact within their existing environment and ensure these tools don't have unfettered access for obvious security reasons. Although low/no-code ERP has many benefits, organizations need to keep these potential downfalls in mind upon integration.

Claus Jepsen ,
CTO Unit4

UNIT4

Pillir

HOW LOW-CODE DEVELOPMENT CAN GREATLY ACCELERATE ERP MODERNIZATION

Article By ***Vaidya Aiyer,***
CEO and Founder, ***Pillir***

Low-code and no-code development platforms are valuable tools for a variety of reasons. Their graphical, drag-and-drop workspaces minimize — or, in some cases, eliminate — coding, and they bring more people (regardless of training and experience) into the application development fold. Businesses and organizations can add up the ROI from using these platforms with time and cost savings, quicker time to market for mission-critical apps, increased operational efficiency, and greater competitiveness. It's clear that low-code platforms offer advantages, but arguably, the greatest advantage is for companies modernizing their enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

Challenges with ERP Modernization

It's a simple truth: Technology advances. In response, ERP platforms evolve as new technology is available. An example that virtually all ERP users are familiar with is the shift from on-premises systems to the cloud. While the cloud promises greater agility, scalability, access to advanced technologies and opportunities for innovation, users do need to find a way to migrate there.

Businesses using an up-to-date ERP system with a clean core can make the transition relatively easily. But those businesses are rare. Although ERP systems offer long lists of features and capabilities, every operation is unique. Companies have found that they can increase productivity — and the bottom line — by deploying custom applications that streamline their specific, mission-critical processes. Long-time ERP users often have custom code that's decades old and has been carried from on-premise systems update to update, but that would be difficult to move to the cloud. The developers that created the custom apps are long gone, moved on to other positions or retirement, and it's harder and harder to find new developers wanting to work in proprietary language (e.g. SAP ABAP) to manage legacy applications written many years ago.

Therefore, businesses planning their transition to the cloud are looking for the best way to deal with custom code. SAPinsider's Application Strategy and Development for SAP S/4HANA and Cloud research report states 18% of businesses are refactoring code for the cloud, 21% are retiring custom applications and settling for standard functionality, 28% are not moving custom code to the cloud, and 28% are still evaluating their options.

The Low-Code Solution

Low-code platforms created with ERP modernization in mind enable the transformation of legacy code and allow developers to upload legacy code to a workspace — much like importing information from a spreadsheet to a database. The platform can help developers identify legacy code that is necessary versus code that should be eliminated to minimize technical debt. These sophisticated low-code platforms then transform the legacy application to generate new applications on the low-code platform that developers can enhance with new capabilities.

It's like jump-starting the development process for a new application using the legacy application and, at the same time, eliminating technical debt of legacy applications. Furthermore, the platform provides agility when technology advances in the future. So, practically, enterprises could modernize legacy custom code now and continue to use it with their current ERP system. Then, they can use the low-code platform to prepare for an easier move to the cloud — or other potential transformation — later.

The Impact Low-Code Solutions Are Making on ERP Modernization

The contribution low-code development can make to ERP modernization is more than theoretical. It's proven. One success story is Dole Packaged Foods. The company leveraged low-code development to create mobile applications for its operations and saved 30% on costs, simplifying the upgrade from SAP ECC 6.0 to SAP S/4HANA along the way.

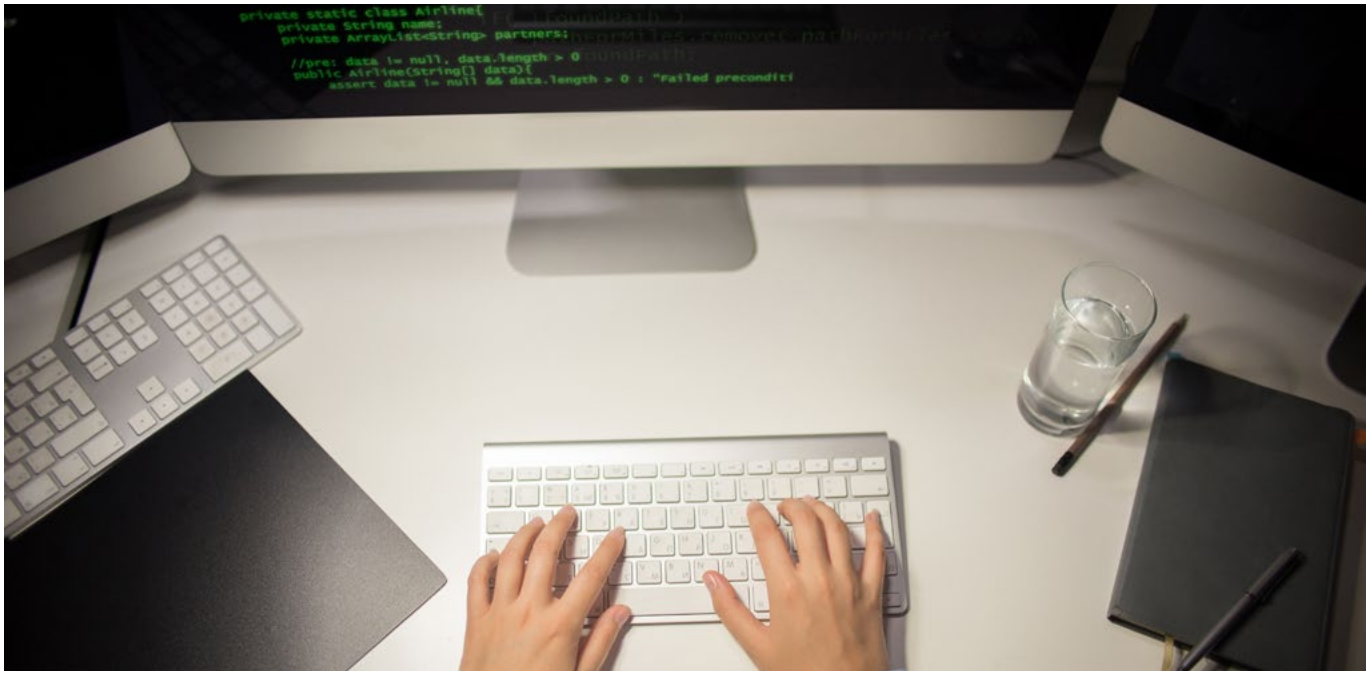
A global oil and gas drilling contractor also chose low-code development to modernize, digitize, and mobilize dozens of applications — especially in no-connectivity scenarios, something common in oil and gas operations. Moreover, the company reduced development time from months to weeks, with significantly fewer resources.

Look to Brown-Forman as well, who chose low-code development to upgrade manual processes and create future-proof apps that can adapt to new systems or devices their team might in the future, while making their ERP's core clean.

The Competition Isn't Waiting

Each day that a business waits to modernize its ERP environment is a day's head start they're giving to their competition. An updated IT ecosystem with ERP at its core gives users almost limitless capabilities to connect and automate processes, collect data for smarter business decisions and better customer service, and to control costs and increase profitability. When enterprises find the solution to the problem of legacy code during cloud migration, they should act as quickly as possible to maintain their competitive position.

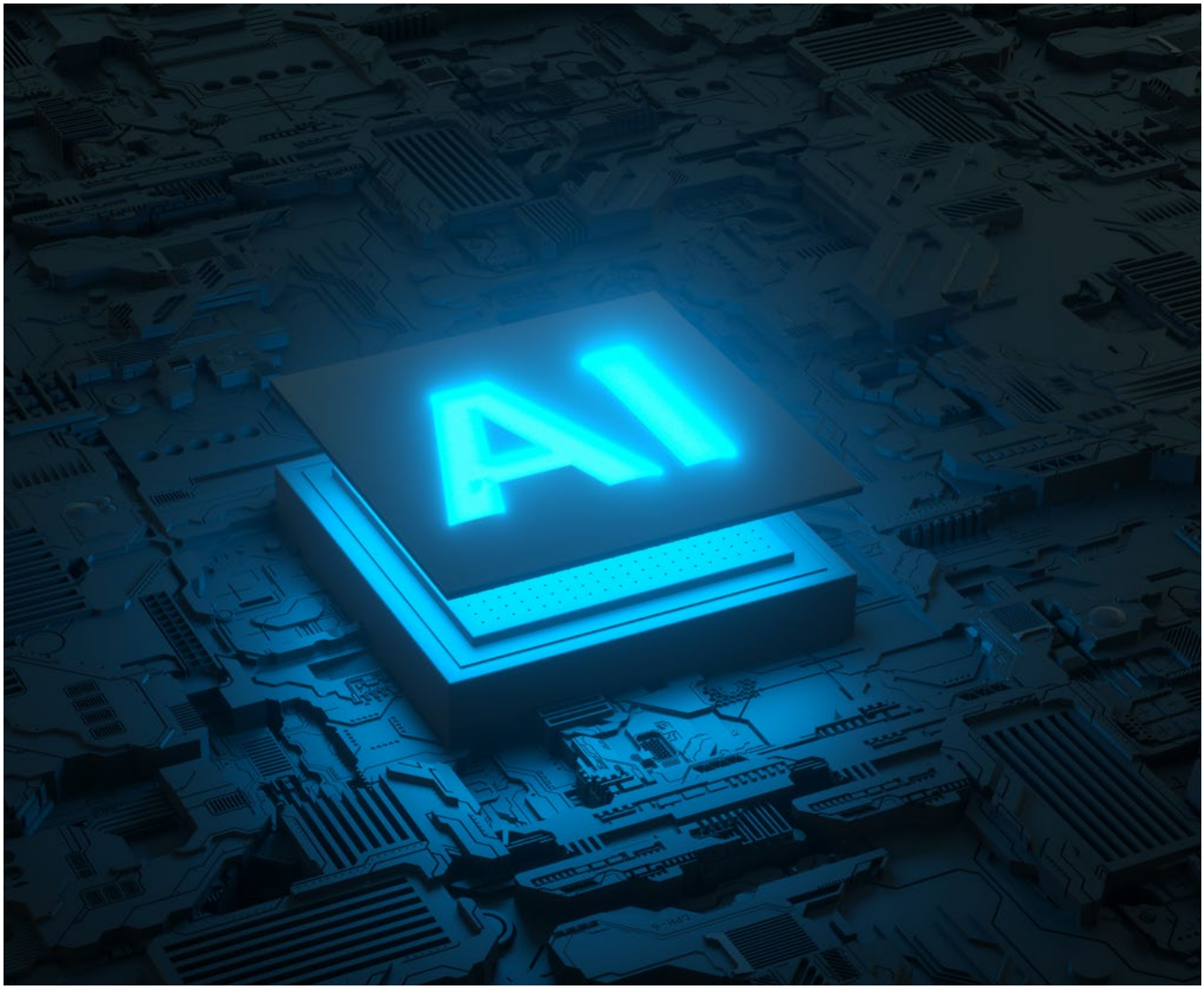
"THE CONTRIBUTION LOW-CODE DEVELOPMENT CAN MAKE TO ERP MODERNIZATION IS MORE THAN THEORETICAL. IT'S PROVEN.



Vaidya Aiyer is a leader, innovator, entrepreneur and technology geek. He has a reputation as a major leader and innovator in the low-code space, specifically regarding ERP modernization. His 25 years of ERP/SAP experience has propelled his company's vision of accelerating modernization and digital transformation. Vaidya has also held executive positions at Lenovo, SEAL Innotech (enterprise mobility and Google Apps solutions), and Medtronic (lean manufacturing solutions).

About Pillir

Pillir is the developer of a low-code/no-code, cloud-native platform that enables organizations to develop mission-critical apps 20 times faster than traditional methods, leveraging the power of SAP's digital core from any device, with or without connectivity. The platform enables organizations at any stage of their SAP journeys to innovate quickly and easily, with little-to-no programming requirements, rapidly moving custom development to the edge. www.pillir.io



Prophix

AI IN FINANCE: THEO LAU EXPLORES THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

From chatbots to facial recognition, artificial intelligence (AI) is already a part of our daily lives. As it becomes more sophisticated, AI offers incredible potential for Finance departments: it can help automate manual tasks, support faster reporting, and analyze data at scale, making Finance teams more predictive than reactive.

Despite the potential, most Finance departments remain in the early-adoption phase, if they've approached implementing it at all.

To learn more about the state of AI in Finance as well as the drivers and roadblocks toward greater usage across the field, we talked to Theodora (Theo) Lau. Theo is the founder of Unconventional Ventures, which seeks to transform the banking industry to better address the needs of all consumers. Between her consulting, thought leadership, and speaking engagements, she's well-equipped to answer our burning questions about AI.

AI in Finance Today

If you've done any sort of personal or business banking in the last few years, you've probably noticed more AI-supported processes, many of which are being integrated into Finance functions too. Virtual assistants and algorithms to detect fraud are a few of the more common applications.

Finance departments are also using AI to put statements together or to pre-fill forms with data that employees can review. However, "AI can do much more than that," says Theo. "But the easier use cases will be the tasks you can easily automate – let's get the lower hanging fruit."

Shoring up security is one area of untapped potential, especially with the increasing incidences of ransomware attacks. While tight security is vital across the enterprise, it's especially crucial for the Finance function as cyber-attacks get more sophisticated. "That's where AI can do a lot – it can go through event logs and transactions much faster" to spot anomalies and help prevent breaches.

The Challenges of Implementing AI in Finance

What's stopping Finance departments from taking AI to the next level? In part, it's the time and effort it requires to implement. "It's not like an OS, where you install it and off you go," says Theo. Data may be fragmented across legacy systems and in organizational silos, making integrating AI a task that requires a lot of thought and planning.

As with all technology, there's also the danger of buying into the hype and integrating AI just because it's the thing to do – even if it's not actually helping the Finance team be more efficient and productive. "Are you doing it because

you see a real business need, versus because you see all your competitors doing it?" asks Theo. It's important to consider where AI can provide the most value, and then carefully map out its functions and impact across the team.

A good starting point: ask what problem the team is trying to solve and who it is being solved for. "Those two questions will be your guideposts and mandate why you invest in technology," says Theo.

Maintain Transparency and Humanity

While many think of AI as a "black box" that simply ingests data and spits out answers, this is a misconception. "Especially in Finance, humans still need to be in the loop," says Theo. Finance departments need to embrace and enforce transparency around how the technology works, including being able to explain the models it uses, ensuring it is compliant with applicable laws and regulations, and validating the results.

It's also important to remember, and to reassure employees, that using automation to handle mundane or repeatable tasks doesn't necessarily mean that people will be replaced. AI can help increase operational productivity by freeing employees to focus on more critical and creative tasks. "It just means that what you're doing might be different," Theo emphasizes.

Looking Ahead to the Near Future

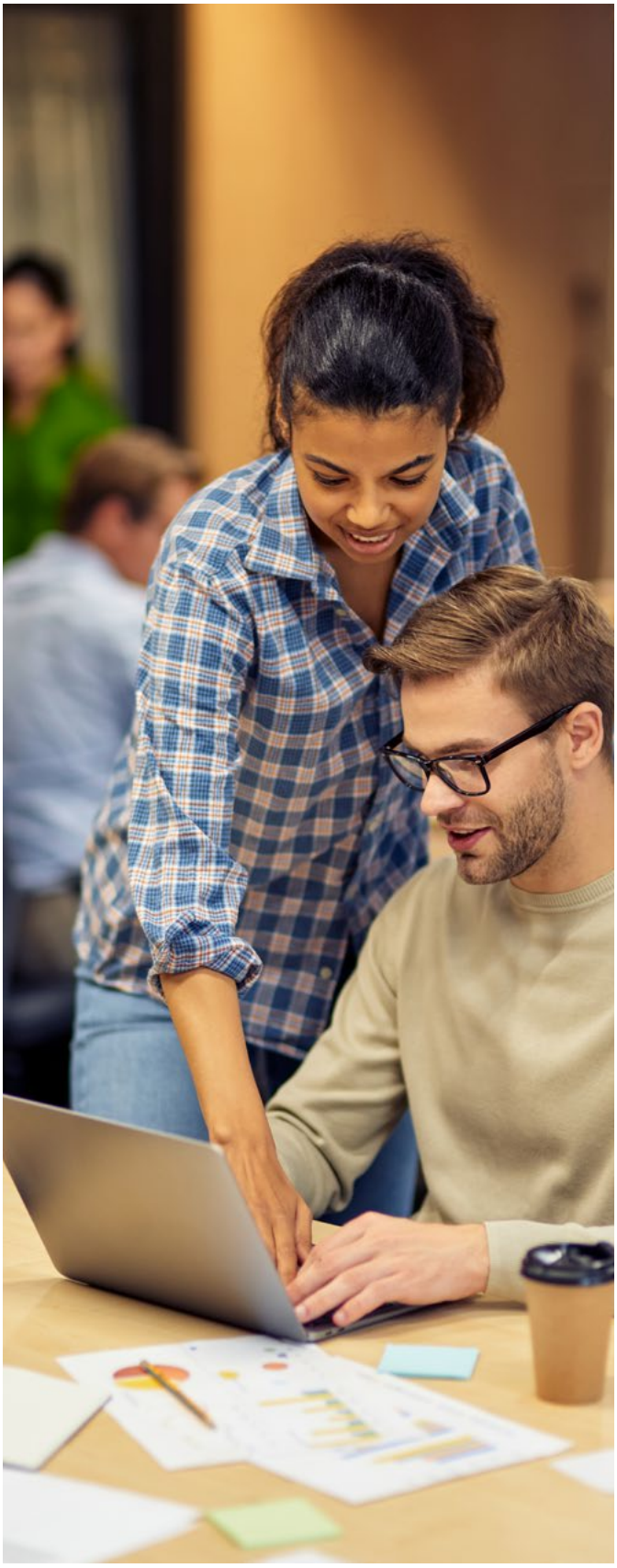
AI may be instrumental in helping Finance departments evolve by allowing team members to learn higher-level skills and take on new responsibilities, resulting in greater output per person. This is a more efficient approach to operational growth and productivity than simply adding employees. "Another way to do it is to get more output per person, and to enable people to work longer into the future," Theo says.

Ultimately, the insights from AI-supported data analysis in the back offices will especially help small- and medium-sized businesses make decisions faster and more easily. Automating functions like risk assessment – such as deciding which loans to underwrite – can improve efficiency and allow smaller Finance departments to scale quickly without the need to find, hire, and train large numbers of new employees.

Don't Delay on AI

Finance departments should start integrating AI now to maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace and keep up with consumer expectations. The resulting increases in efficiency and productivity, as well as the insights that data can bring to reporting and forecasting, will put the team in a powerful position to help guide your organization to success.

Ready to start taking advantage of AI in your Finance department? Try a free trial of Prophix today or dig into our interactive AI for Finance guide.



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.

SAGE DELIVERS DEEPER SUBSCRIPTION BILLING FOR CUSTOMERS IN NEWEST RELEASE OF SAGE INTACCT

Sage (FTSE: SGE), a leader in accounting, financial, HR, and payroll technology for small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs), today announced the availability of Sage Intacct 2022 Release 2. Building on its leading subscription billing solution for SMBs, Sage Intacct Release 2 adds support for evergreen subscriptions.

Evergreen Subscriptions

In today's competitive market, many SaaS and subscription businesses grow by offering a variety of billing models to meet varying customer needs. As businesses grow their blended subscription models, SMBs have long struggled to reconcile customer needs with the challenges this causes the back office.

With Release 2, Sage Intacct supports customers in SaaS businesses to easily bill auto-renewing subscriptions, report, and forecast billing and revenue. Sage Intacct now handles 300+ product-led growth, usage, evergreen, enterprise, and hybrid billing models as part of its solution – making it the only accounting vendor to support hybrid subscription models. This enables customers to:

-Manage billing and revenues in perpetuity, including all future up-selling and down-selling, cancellations, and recurring billing cycles.

-Eliminate the need to manually aggregate, integrate, and reconcile subscriptions with third-party solutions.

-Navigate the complexity of hybrid models, accurately predict consumption, and roll out new pricing models with minimal impact to accounting and revenue operations.

-Gain a consolidated view of financials, billing, revenue, cash, and SaaS metrics across billing models and cohorts, including historical, current, and forecasts.

"Supporting our customers to be successful in their given industry is core to what we do," said Dan Miller, EVP Sage Intacct Business Unit. "Managing subscription billing manually is complex, the enhancements we have made in this release provides customers with an automated solution to a complicated manual process. This, in turn, helps our customers to focus on what matters – providing great customer service!"

Inventory Fulfilment

In addition, the latest version of Sage Intacct offers improved warehouse efficiencies and real-time inventory visibility. Furthering Sage Intacct's support for product-based companies, Release 2 provides improved warehouse

efficiencies and real-time inventory visibility throughout the order fulfilment process.

Customers gain 360-degree insights into the status of orders by providing visibility into where items are in the fulfilment process. With Sage Intacct, users can:

-Create customizable workflows to stage and fulfil orders with more efficiency.

-Track order status as items move through the pick, pack, ship, and invoicing stages, without needing to enter new transactions. Unique to Sage Intacct, users simply change the status on the order, and the stage updates automatically in customizable and dynamic dashboards.

-Gain visibility into the orders that are ready for action on their grid.

Using the new fulfilment workbench, everyone in the organization benefits from real-time visibility of operational data, enabling faster more informed decisions and quicker, more accurate customer responses.

Construction Contracts and Billing

A new streamlined progress billing process with more options for time and materials billing has improved the creation of AIA-style payment applications. New enhancements to construction billing provide more options to create and manage construction contracts and schedules that integrate change requests and change orders. Benefits include:

-Comprehensive management of a construction contract and a schedule of values.

-Increased flexibility in managing billing and contracts for general contractors and speciality contractors.

-Fully integrated cost and revenue change management from the estimate to the contract.

With Release 2, Sage Intacct Construction has more flexibility to meet the complex demands of construction businesses across general and speciality contractors allowing them to access leading accounting functionality on a modern, cloud solution.

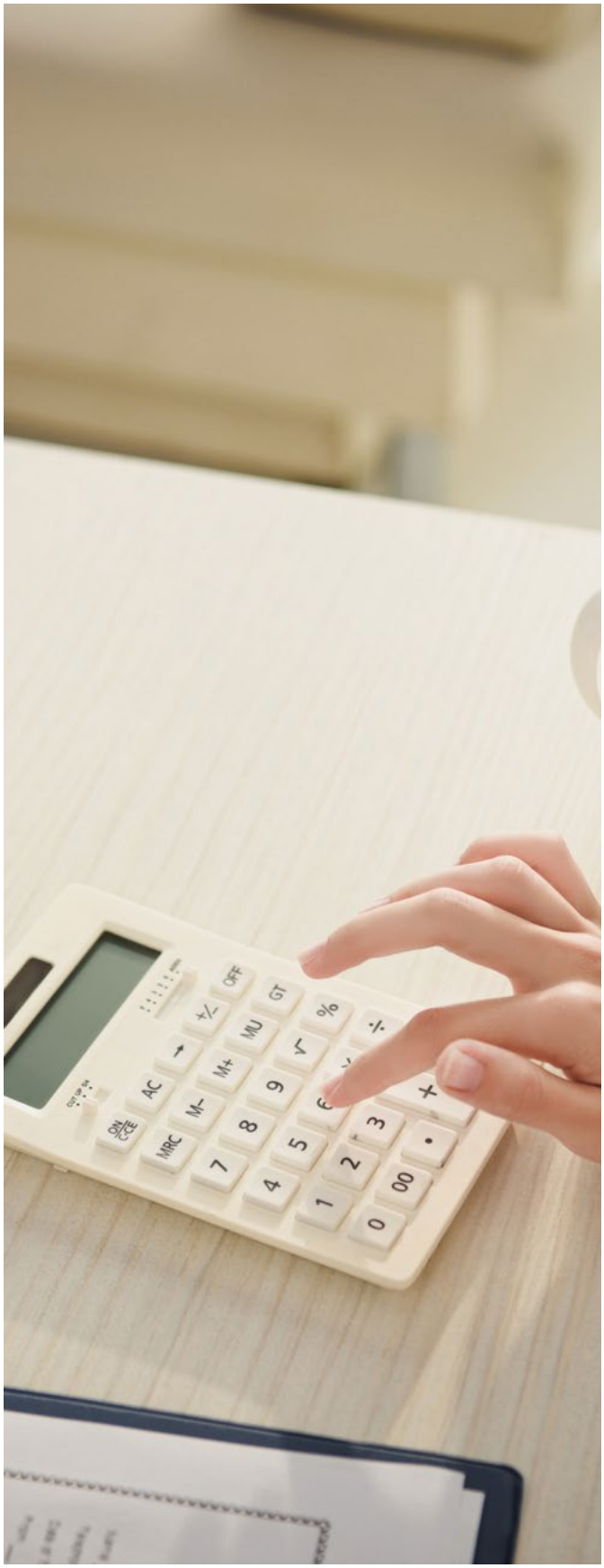
Availability

The highlighted solutions and enhancements outlined in this announcement are available in the following regions:

-Evergreen Subscription Contracts: Generally available, all regions

-Inventory Fulfilment: Early adopter, United States

-Construction Contracts and Billing: General availability, United States



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. Learn more at www.sage.com and www.sageintacct.com

FINANCIALFORCE

NO INTEGRATIONS: THE FUTURE OF CLOUD

Making two software systems work together is a minor irritant; orchestrating three or more quickly becomes a real headache. The Cloud was supposed to rid us of this meddlesome challenge, reducing client-side interfaces to just one (the browser), and making all the Cloud-based systems communicate smoothly.

Unsurprisingly, this utopian future has yet to emerge. Knowledge workers today operate largely through the browser, and developers are improving user interfaces as rapidly as the technologies can move.

The Cloud – which, let's be honest, should probably be called the Clouds – simply cannot seem to reach its promised land. However, you combine your Cloud infrastructure, incompatibilities from provider to provider sneak in.

Meanwhile, there is a very active dilemma smoldering at the heart of technology acquisition. Organizations either seek to reduce complexity with a Single Vendor approach; or to maximize system value by opting for Best of Breed.

The Single Vendor approach sounds like a no-brainer: trade marginal best-in-class benefits for reduced administrative overhead.

Except it turns out that most vendors maintain growth after their initial products mature by acquiring other technology. While their business models and systems might merge cleanly together as one, their offerings often don't, which can adversely impact customers.

The irony! An organization selects a Single Vendor, buys a range of different packages from them – then discovers those systems can't communicate with one another natively. The compromises, which seemed utterly reasonable in return for a smoothly self-orchestrating environment, now loom large.

The ugliest noun in all of technology is ... integration.
An integration is a free-standing piece of technology that helps two or more systems to interact with one another. It can be more or less complex, depending on the level of incompatibility between the connected systems – but it is a source of guaranteed pain over the course of its service. When any of the integrated systems upgrades, the integration requires regression testing. Cloud systems, ironically, increase the likelihood of downtime, because each cloud-based package may upgrade multiple times a year – on their own schedule. With unsynchronized schedules, integrations may need attention six to eight times a year for just a two-system connection.

If the Single Vendor approach requires compromise without a guarantee of full compatibility, are we back to best-of-breed? Given the likelihood of yet more integrations, the answer is, thankfully, no.

Platform-as-a-Service

Today there is the option of using Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS), a complete development and deployment environment. Architecturally, PaaS sits in between IaaS (cloud-based

infrastructure without market-ready applications) and SaaS (discrete software applications hosted in, and accessed through, the cloud).

The prime example of a fully-realized PaaS is Salesforce.com (SFDC). While SFDC sells a full suite of SaaS products, the company also delivers a broadly-available platform upon which other software developers can build and market adjacent solutions. This platform ecosystem unlocks a crucial characteristic: because everything built on it shares a database, core data model, and fully-realized business logic, each individual solution can properly communicate with all the others. In other words, a Professional Services Automation (PSA) application running on SFDC can (within its granted security rights) interact natively with the CRM, and anything else that is SFDC-resident.

When business systems that solve discrete (but connected) problems communicate natively, integrations can be discarded.

The SFDC platform ecosystem has been broadly adopted, meaning Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) have developed a wide range of solutions that can be merged into any organization's environment. Now an organization can have the best of both worlds: best-of-breed strategy, standardized on a single platform.

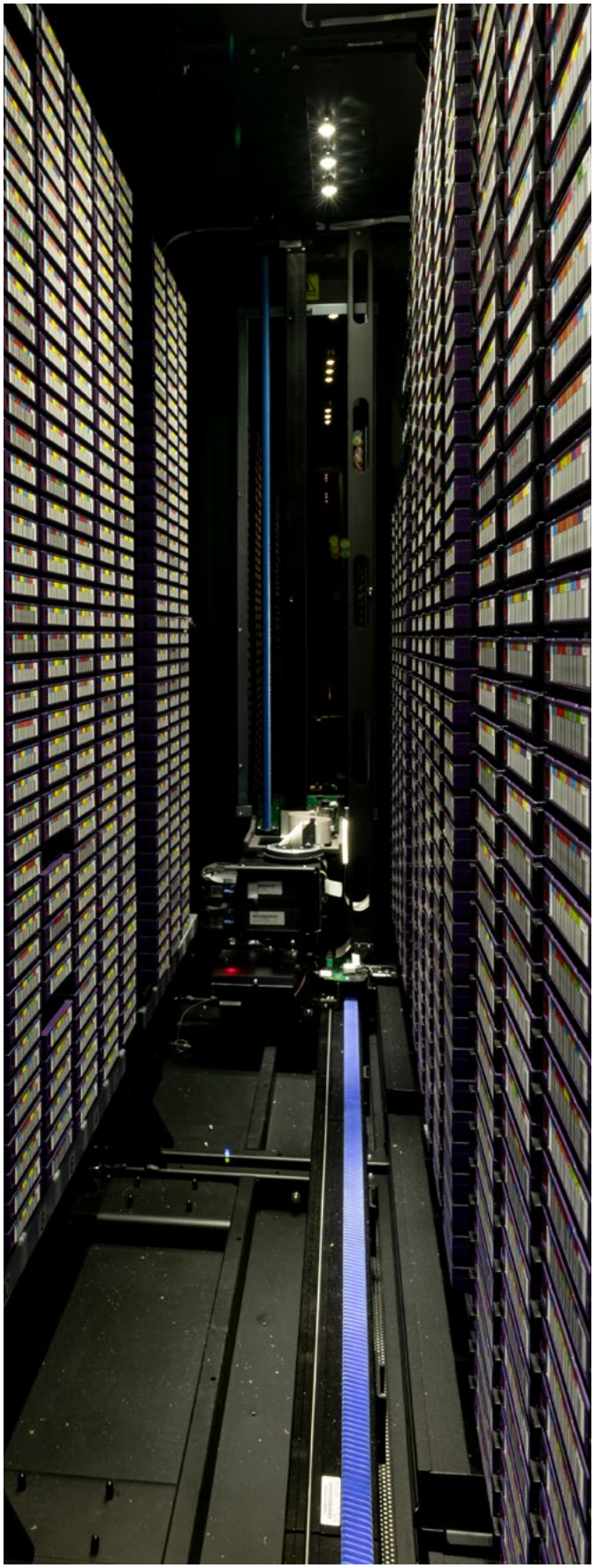
PaaS-based solutions fit into a composable technology strategy
The solutions that run on the foundational platform can be mixed and matched over time with lower transition costs than would be experienced with freestanding alternatives.

The alternatives compound already chilling Cloud challenges. The riskiest of all is the Single Vendor-Multi-Platform (SVMP) strategy. A subset of the Single Vendor strategy is rarely selected deliberately but is normally contracted when the Single Vendor acquires new technology that is both (1) in the cloud and (2) based on a wholly different infrastructure. For instance, an organization might commit to a Single Vendor for financials and HR business systems, then acquire their PSA – only to discover the latter uses completely different technologies, and requires integrations, as though it had come from a wholly different source.

In the rapidly-consolidating business systems space, finding oneself unwillingly and unwittingly in the midst of an SVMP environment is increasingly common.

Organizations can protect themselves by knowing the options available through the PaaS solutions already in place. SFDC users, for instance, can explore the AppExchange to discover adjacent business solutions that require no integrations. They should also clarify the infrastructural relationships between their vendors' offerings: a shared logo does not guarantee smooth, integration-less connectivity.

The future of the cloud is clear: smoothly coexisting systems, seamlessly sharing data and logic, powering continuous organizational transformation. While integrations represent obvious danger zones for bugs and downtime, using the best-of-breed solutions offered by a single PaaS offers the very real opportunity to achieve perhaps the most elusive yet hard-to-attain goal: no integrations.



About FinancialForce

FinancialForce accelerates business growth with customer-centric ERP, Professional Services Automation (PSA), and Customer Success solutions. Run on the leading cloud platform, Salesforce, FinancialForce enables organizations to see their customers in full color to unlock customer insights, deliver innovative experiences, run a digital business, and achieve agility and resilience.

POLISH FURNITURE COMPANY NOWY STYL UPGRADES TO IFS CLOUD TO DRIVE DYNAMIC GROWTH

IFS, the global cloud enterprise software company, today announced that Nowy Styl, a European leader in comprehensive furniture solutions for office and public spaces, has chosen to upgrade its existing ERP software to the latest IFS Cloud™ solution to drive ongoing international growth.

Nowy Styl chose to upgrade to IFS Cloud because of the solution's flexibility and ability to support its dynamic growth and deliver operational efficiencies. IFS Cloud enables the company to add new capabilities incrementally as and when needed, including tools for advanced automation and the latest AI-driven technologies. The solution will help facilitate a wide range of Nowy Styl's business processes including finance; distribution; manufacturing and supply chain as well as customer service processes and reporting and operational activities.

Following the implementation of IFS Cloud, Nowy Styl's initial focus will be on driving efficiencies across its manufacturing scheduling work. The solution will also help with supporting the automation of its manufacturing execution system (MES) to help transfer information quickly to the shop floor. The company is additionally assessing IFS Cloud's CRM capability with a view to taking on this added functionality in the future.

Looking ahead, Nowy Styl also plans to use IFS Cloud to optimize and automate its shipping processes, in addition to further enhancing production scheduling.

Mariusz Sobocinski, IT & Business Analyst Director at Nowy Styl, says: "Soon football fans from all over the world will discover the high quality of Nowy Styl products. We have become experts in arranging auditorium spaces and have reached the championship level! We are proud that we will be installing Nowy Styl chairs at the six stadiums that are being built for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. This achievement shows Nowy Styl's rapid growth path – and requirement to implement additional IFS Cloud modules to meet our supply chain and production requirements. The solution's flexible component architecture helps to facilitate this. Nowy Styl also sees IFS Cloud as a future-proofed solution, helping to prepare it for the coming world of advanced automation and artificial intelligence (AI)."

While Nowy Styl is self-sufficient in its use of IFS solutions, it does turn to IFS for assistance on a time and materials basis, when required. However, the recent signing of a service agreement between the two companies means that they are likely to work together in partnership more closely moving forwards.

Nowy Styl and IFS also share the values of sustainable development. Both companies encourage their Partners and Suppliers to take responsibility for their actions in this area. In 2022 Nowy Styl was awarded with prestige EcoVadis platinum medal.

Marek Glazowski, managing director, Poland and CEE, IFS, says: "Nowy Styl is an ambitious company focused on fast-growth with a willingness to innovate and adopt modern technologies to achieve their strategic goals. It is excellent news that they have chosen IFS Cloud to help them move forward on their journey to success. We are looking forward to collaborating with them to help ensure their strategic goals are realized."

IFS is well placed to continue to support Nowy Styl's dynamic growth. Whenever Nowy Styl brings a new entity into the organization, the company integrates the entity's digital systems. And, to achieve synergy, it introduces proven IFS solutions that have already been developed and deployed elsewhere in the organization.

About Nowy Styl:

Nowy Styl is a European leader in comprehensive furniture solutions for office and public spaces. Thanks to its unique business model, Nowy Styl offers an excellent interior furnishing service based on the in-depth analysis of customers' needs, efficiency, work organisation, ergonomics and acoustics. Nowy Styl experience and technological and production facilities ensure that every offer is "tailor-made." It is Nowy Styl flexible approach to customers, innovation and exceptional organisational culture that helped the company become one of the largest and the most dynamically-developing furniture companies in Europe.The company has its own international distribution network comprising local sales structures around the world (in the most important European markets and in the Middle East). Nowy Styl manufactures its products in modern production plants located in Poland, Germany, Switzerland and beyond. For more information, please visit https://nowystyl.com/en/

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.

THE ERP SELECTION PROCESS: SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED: DETERMINING THE COSTS OF YOUR ERP SYSTEM

Article By ***Jim Reilly***

You have your power team, you've determined your top business drivers, and you've even developed your short list of business needs your ERP system must meet. What next? Time to factor in the cost versus the value of a new ERP system.

Can you put a value on your ERP system? Assume you will be asked to show ROI or Return on Investment. If you cannot prove the monetary value of your new ERP system will outweigh the cost, you'll probably end up dead in the water. Unfortunately, the financial impact of a new ERP system can be difficult to measure. Difficult, but not impossible.

In this blog, we'll tackle the easier of the two issues, costs, though "easy" is a relative term, here. First, ask yourself the right question, which is: What will be the true cost of the solution? To calculate the total cost of ownership (TCO), you'll need a comprehensive, itemized price list, along with your company's documented customization approvals. Having the list and the approvals will minimize if not eradicate "scope creep," which can cost your company tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Up-Front Costs

Basic Pricing Information: Like a new car's sticker price, the "entry-level" costs of a new ERP system include the core functionalities and supporting technologies; however, those rarely cover all your ERP system needs. Be sure that the ERP vendor has factored your "short-list" of requirements into the initial sticker price as much as possible.

(Potentially) Hidden Costs

The following costs may or may not be a part of the initial "sticker price," but they will need to be included in the overall price of the TCO:

Licensing Fee: This line item covers either on-premises license fees or cloud subscription fees if you are working with a software-as-a-service (SaaS) provider, and it is usually a part of the up-front pricing. But this cost will vary depending on your number of users or the number of add-in modules or capabilities (short-list requirements) you need, so be sure

you have as accurate a count of people and documented requirements as possible to include in the pricing. Be careful when calculating this fee because what is standard in one ERP can be a pricey add-in or customization for another one.

Vendor/Partner Consultation Hours for Implementation: Nothing rarely goes as planned, and as much as you desire the ERP rollout to be hassle-free, you should factor in consultation support. How many service hours will you need to ensure the new ERP system will be up and running as quickly as possible and covering your key business processes? Be sure to factor in any "extras" needed to cover requirement gaps that are not part of the initial pricing.

Vendor Training & Support: Support and training help your staff efficiently utilize your new ERP system. When calculating this cost, ask the vendor what all is included. Will your departments have access to training videos and documentation, an online knowledgebase, online resources, a user community, in-person training, 24-hour access to a call center? Have you factored in temporary support you may need to cover normal hours during employee training sessions? Thanks to the due diligence of your ERP selection team, you should already know what your users will need, so be sure your vendor includes these necessary items in the costs.

Ongoing Costs

Maintenance & Protection: When you buy a new car, the costs don't stop the minute you drive it off the lot, and the same applies to the costs associated with your new ERP system. What do you need to ensure your new system continues to run as efficiently as the day you "drove it off the lot"? And more importantly, how do you protect your company's investment? Your pricing should include three important items: routine maintenance, hardware/software upgrades, and a comprehensive data security approach. As data hacking and ransomware become more prevalent in our digital society, it is imperative not to skimp on this last line item. One key advantage of a cloud provider versus an on-premises one is the former will provide disaster recovery and data security as part of their subscription. The cloud provider will also manage the maintenance and upgrades for you as opposed to an on-premises deployment. All key advantages to consider when selecting your new ERP.

Overall, when calculating the cost versus value of your ERP system selection, consider three things: You don't have to pay full sticker price, you shouldn't overpromise and underdeliver on the ROI, and most importantly, you don't have to go it alone. Consider hiring a consultant who has experience in negotiating the best price for the right ERP system for you, even those ERP vendors you considered out of your price range.

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.

ERP NEWS