Managing change effectively with ERP: The impact on 5 key business functions
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Executive overview

If your critical business data resides in different business systems or spreadsheets and your everyday processes are not disciplined, your business lacks the agility to respond to change. These changes can range from an increase in demand because of a customer’s shortened delivery time or several new large orders, to a geographic expansion of your supply chain with global reaches, to changes in trends that require new product introductions. As a result, your management team is forced into a perpetual state of reaction to minimize the impact of these changes.

A flexible ERP system can be the foundation for a complete overhaul of your business processes and enable the agility you need to accommodate virtually any type of change—quickly, easily, and cost-efficiently. A flexible ERP system provides two key capabilities and benefits:

- Linking your disparate systems and automating the movement of information throughout your business provide executives in your management chain with visibility into real-time business data, enabling the best decision-making possible.
- Creating highly disciplined workflows provides the process consistency required to enable highly dependable outcomes, regardless of what type of change may occur in your business.

This white paper examines the impact of using disparate systems versus an integrated ERP system on your manufacturing operations. The detailed charts on the following pages document the effect of each on your core business areas and the associated core management team: your sales executive, plant manager, VP of operations, VP of finance, and supply chain executives. They also provide insight into how the inefficiencies associated with change management today can be easily and cost-effectively eliminated.
Your process can make “change” a dirty word

If your business data resides in separate systems, you depend on people to manually create the necessary bridges between those systems in order to manage your business. Sales managers, plant managers, VPs of operations and finance, and supply chain executives are forced to trade spreadsheets and manually manipulate data to forecast sales, respond to proposals, manage inventory and production schedules, and determine product pricing.

While these manual processes may seem to serve your business well today, in reality, there are multiple issues that are likely impacting your margins, your profitability, and your ability to handle change and respond to competitive pressures.

Reduced productivity for your most valuable knowledge workers—Manually collecting, entering, and analyzing data adds time to your business processes, expanding instead of contracting cycle times. Manual processes result in longer times to respond to requests for proposals, forecast sales, and ultimately deliver product, affecting everything from margins to cash flow.

Data inaccuracies—When data is manually manipulated outside your system and moved within and between divisions, data entry errors are inevitable. For example, an error in sales and inventory projections can result in a costly out-of-stock condition that brings the production line to an unplanned halt, affecting the ability to meet delivery deadlines.

Lack of timely data—By the time data has been compiled into meaningful reports to support critical decision-making, the information has aged considerably—by days and even weeks. If demand changes more frequently, larger stocking inventories are required to prevent costly out-of-stocks. The result is fewer inventory turns, leading to higher inventory-carrying costs that increase the cost of your products and reduce your margins, impacting your ability to compete.

Inability to handle change—Since data is not readily visible and processes are not clearly defined, it becomes increasingly difficult to respond quickly to any change—from day-to-day issues involving a supplier that is unable to perform as promised, new regulatory requirements, a new manufacturing process, or a move into global markets. Instead of consistent procedures that produce dependable results, your processes are loosely defined by the workers who are responsible for their execution. If there is a lack of consistency in your processes, you are outside the “change loop.”

In a closed supply chain where you have strong established relationships with customers and suppliers that are nearby, you can easily manage high variability. But when customers and suppliers are located across the country or halfway around the globe, variability and limited visibility can rapidly magnify issues. If you cannot respond rapidly enough to change and demand, delivery times may be compromised, impacting customer service, satisfaction, and retention levels.

The end result is that when your business depends on manual processes and disparate systems, you are forced to react to accommodate change, rather than rely on your business processes to manage the change.
The solution: A flexible ERP system for consistency, profitability

A flexible ERP system can fortify your operations to best handle change by letting you provide any business division and any employee with the data required to improve decision-making and respond rapidly to virtually any changing condition—regardless of whether data is needed from one or multiple systems. With the right ERP system, you can overlay your business processes onto your business systems to provide the timeliness and consistency to manage variability, eliminating the need and high cost of integrating your existing systems. Instead, you simply define the processes and where the data resides to execute those processes. The result is a cost-effective yet unmatched ability to streamline your operations—and best manage change.

Paper-based manual processes are eliminated. Information flows rapidly throughout your operations the moment it appears in your systems. As a result, every person in your enterprise can act as efficiently and effectively as possible, concentrating on better managing the business based on timely information, rather than wasting time collecting and analyzing aging data.

Finally, manual ad hoc processes are replaced with disciplined processes to achieve peak business flexibility and efficiency. Although the word “discipline” traditionally evokes thoughts of rigidity, disciplined processes are exactly the opposite—they become flexible. Highly disciplined procedures allow one automotive giant to produce multiple models on one assembly line. Visibility into demand in real time enables just-in-time ordering of the right materials, and disciplined processes ensure that the right parts for different vehicles arrive at the right assembly line at the right time. Production-line real estate and staffing requirements are minimized, improving use of these crucial business resources. And the company can easily adapt to changing automotive trends, yet minimize costs, increase margins, and reduce delivery times.
The impact of a flexible ERP system on your management team

The ability to treat all your disparate business systems as one cohesive system dramatically impacts the day-to-day productivity and effectiveness of your management staff. The following charts detail the tasks and inefficiencies associated with manual procedures as well as the change to new streamlined procedures and their benefits for the following positions:

- Sales executive or manager
- Supply chain executive
- Plant manager
- VP of operations
- Finance executive
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Managing sales team actuals and measuring against forecast (quota)

Increasing sales revenue while maintaining margins

Measuring field performance

Quoting process disconnected from actual costs; inability to effectively discern "good" margin from "bad"

Tracking orders after receipt

Providing accurate, sustainable promise dates to customers

Inability to predict and communicate shorts and back orders

Higher inventory and reduced customer service levels due to an undisciplined connection between sales and operations (S&OP)

A single system providing all information

Configurable automatic reports

Many automated sales operations tasks

Delivery of a fast cycle S&OP forecast

Order tracking in a single system without requiring a flurry of phone calls or an army of people/epidemics

Immediate and automated notification of order changes or cancellation

A foundation for a consistent S&OP process

Metrics provided on operational performance for all direct reports

Improved productivity of sales personnel

Faster and more timely monthly sales reports

Improved pipeline management

Reduced administrative labor in order tracking

Increased customer service and ability to set more accurate delivery dates and manage open orders

Better order tracking and ability to set better order tracking and ability to set more accurate delivery dates and manage open orders

Inability to provide realistic and acceptable promise dates to customers

Pricing system disconnected from actual costs, leading to a lack of consistent margin

Inability to predict and communicate shorts and back orders

High inventory levels and reduced customer service levels due to an undisciplined connection between sales and operations (S&OP)

Typical Activities or Processes

Reactive Management: Day-to-Day Tasks

Managing sales team actuals and measuring against forecast (quota)

Managing sales team expenditures while maintaining margins

Measuring field performance

Quoting process disconnected from actual costs; inability to effectively discern "good" margin from "bad"

Tracking orders after receipt

Providing accurate, sustainable promise dates to customers

Connecting forecast to demand to operations

Providing metrics to the CED on sales effectiveness

BEFORE: MANUAL PROCESSES

AFTER: FLEXIBLE ERP SYSTEM

Typical Activities or Processes

Proactive Management: Day-to-Day Tasks

Manage multiple systems.

Wait for IT to deliver raw data or reports with latent data that is rarely timely.

Move raw data into Excel to create and run common calculations, which can take several days.

Once calculations are complete, move the information into a format for valid forecasting, which can take a few more days.

Make numerous phone calls, plant visits, or permanent staffing for expediting orders.

Perform data entry and forecasting through ad hoc meetings, emails, or offline analyses that in older years was not placed or cancelled.

Faster and more detailed monthly sales reporting

Improved pipeline management

Reduced administrative labor in order tracking

Elimination of order expediting

Improve order customer service through better order tracking and ability to set more accurate delivery dates and manage open orders

Reduced administrative labor in order tracking

Increased customer service and ability to set more accurate delivery dates and manage open orders

More accurate cost information that leads to better margins and higher win rates

Inability to provide accurate and timely forecasts

Increased customer service and ability to set more accurate delivery dates and manage open orders

Reduced administrative labor in order tracking

Elimination of order expediting

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"Sales is the engine that drives growth. It is what great companies do best."

Without a flexible ERP system, the sales executive or manager is placed in a reactive mode of chasing data and spending time pulling data together. Instead of spending time improving sales performance, with deployment of a system that enables disciplined and consistent processes, sales executives are free to focus on delivering orders and a reliable forecast, while also servicing customers.

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Position: Supply Chain Executive

“Visibility into our suppliers’ abilities and performance gives the needed visibility into ours.”

Lack of a flexible ERP system places the supply chain executive in a reactive mode, with a great deal of time spent gathering data and pulling data together into a format that can be properly analyzed, instead of spending time improving supply chain performance. With the deployment of a system that enables disciplined and consistent processes, the supply chain executive is free to focus on supporting operations and reducing material costs, while continuing to service customer needs.

BEFORE: MANUAL PROCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Activities of a Supply Chain Executive</th>
<th>Reactive Management: Day-to-Day Tasks</th>
<th>Business Inefficiencies</th>
<th>Proactive Management: Day-to-Day Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balancing inventory levels with manufacturing use</td>
<td>Log into multiple systems that may be wholly represented by Excel spreadsheets.</td>
<td>Higher inventory levels to compensate for supply chain unknowns.</td>
<td>Immediate access to real-time inventory, shipping status, and delivery dates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing changing and distant supplier base as more suppliers locate offshore</td>
<td>Wait for IT to deliver raw data or reports with latent data that is rarely timely.</td>
<td>Higher labor costs to manage warehouse and maintain delivery efficiency.</td>
<td>Immediate reporting of issues to operations and sales managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining accurate supply chain performance levels while reducing labor</td>
<td>Move raw data into Excel to create and run common calculations, which can take several days.</td>
<td>Higher stock-outs due to lack of visibility into demand and suppliers</td>
<td>Automated tracking of supplier performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring supply chain performance</td>
<td>Once analysis is complete, put financial metrics into a report or format for proper decision-making.</td>
<td>Higher material costs due to the inability to manage suppliers efficiently.</td>
<td>Real-time sales and operations planning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AFTER: FLEXIBLE ERP SYSTEM

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A single system provides all information</td>
<td>Configurable automatic reports.</td>
<td>Lowered inventory and inventory management costs.</td>
<td>Automated order tracking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configurable automatic reports provide immediate access to real-time inventory, shipping status, and delivery dates.</td>
<td>Immediate access to real-time inventory, shipping status, and delivery dates.</td>
<td>Improved productivity of material handlers and warehouse workers.</td>
<td>Real-time sales and operations planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate reporting of issues to operations and sales managers.</td>
<td>Lowered inventory and inventory management costs.</td>
<td>Greater visibility into demand.</td>
<td>Optimized manufacturing use as delivery from inventory improves on-time visibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automated tracking of supplier performance.</td>
<td>Improved productivity of material handlers and warehouse workers.</td>
<td>Greater visibility into demand.</td>
<td>Optimized manufacturing use as delivery from inventory improves on-time visibility.</td>
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Reduced inventory and inventory management costs
Improved productivity of material handlers and warehouse workers
Greater visibility into demand
Optimized manufacturing use as delivery from inventory improves on-time visibility

Reduced inventory and inventory management costs
Improved productivity of material handlers and warehouse workers
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### Typical Activities or Processes

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactive Management: Day-to-Day Tasks</td>
<td>Proactive Management: Day-to-Day Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log into multiple ERP or finance systems.</td>
<td>A single system for all information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait for IT to deliver raw data or reports with limited data that is rarely timely.</td>
<td>Configurable automatic reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manually enter information into multiple systems.</td>
<td>Immediate access to resources, costing information, asset availability, and delivery status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct frequent meetings to keep information flowing between units and processes.</td>
<td>Immediate reporting on issues to executive management, finance, procurement, and sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out via email, phone call, or offline analysis that an issue has developed, often too late to put immediate corrective action in place.</td>
<td>A project tracking system that includes cost management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in frequent informal discussions with sales to determine demand, material planning, and operational planning.</td>
<td>Immediate reporting on issues to executive management, finance, procurement, and sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use outdated costing information for product quoting and pricing.</td>
<td>A project tracking system that includes cost management.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Business Inefficiencies

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High material costs due to lack of tight relationship between material planning and operations.</td>
<td>Reduced material costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower quality due to limited information on disposition of scrapped product and customer issues.</td>
<td>Improved quality and reduced scrap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower productivity due to limited visibility into demand, driving poor labor leveling.</td>
<td>More accurate cost information that leads to better margins and higher win ratios.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated staff for tracking orders and dispositions.</td>
<td>Reduced material costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited S&amp;OP process leading to poor resource leveling and material planning (high inventory).</td>
<td>Improved delivery and commitments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Benefits of a Flexible ERP System

- Reduced material costs
- Improved quality and reduced scrap
- A project tracking system that includes cost management
- Immediate reporting on issues to executive management, finance, procurement, and sales
- A flexible scheduling system that can react to changes with minimal disruption
- A foundation for a consistent S&OP process

**Position: VP of Operations**

"Having the discipline for consistent processes is what makes a company successful in manufacturing."

Disjointed systems require manual data collection and analysis, preventing the VP of operations from accessing the timely data required to make the best decisions. With the deployment of a flexible ERP system, that enables disciplined and consistent processes, operations executives are free to focus on balancing resource allocations, customer service, and cost management.

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**BEFORE: MANUAL PROCESSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Activities or Processes</th>
<th>Reactive Management - Day-To-Day Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracking cash flow in a useful cycle time</td>
<td>Books close too late, resulting in inaccurate information</td>
<td>A single system for all information exposure to compliance issues, increasing the risk of overexposure on outdated cashflow, and working capital management issues, increasing the risk of overextending or underextending capital, and inventory status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending payment terms from offshore customers</td>
<td>Move raw data into Excel to create and perform common calculations, which can take several days</td>
<td>Immediate access to AR/AP status, costing information, asset availability, and delivery status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing complicated tax compliance issues</td>
<td>Once analysis is complete, put financial metrics into a report or format for comprehensive reporting, which can be used for decision making.</td>
<td>Immediate reporting on issues to executive management, finance, procurement, and sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining visibility into actual operations costing</td>
<td>Use large data of analysts for detailed analysis and reporting on all departments.</td>
<td>A project tracking system that includes cost management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking too long to close books</td>
<td>Wait significant periods of time for analysis and reporting, which are too narrow to properly support the business.</td>
<td>A flexible scheduling system that can react to changes with minimal disruption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve analyst productivity</td>
<td>Inaccurate costing that can lead to overpricing product or margins that are too narrow to properly support the business.</td>
<td>A foundation for a consistent S&amp;OP process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AFTER: FLEXIBLE ERP SYSTEM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved analyst productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster closing times and better accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An S&amp;OP process that aligns sales, demand, materials planning, and operational planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More visibility into cash status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accurate cost information that leads to better margins and higher win rates</td>
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**POSITION: FINANCE EXECUTIVE**

"Finance is the key group for measuring the ultimate performance of the company."

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"Finance is the key group for measuring the ultimate performance of the company."

When disjointed systems and manual procedures require finance executives to manually collect and analyze data, the result is outdated cash flow information and long delays in closing the books. A flexible ERP system automates the data collection process. The required accurate information is always available with just a few keystrokes, and finance executives are free to focus on the initiatives that improve the company’s financial health—such as cash management and regulatory reporting.

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The definition of a flexible ERP system

While ERP systems accommodate standard processes such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, and resource planning, ERP systems are not all equal. Not all ERP systems also allow you to scale in terms of users to accommodate growth in staff.

One of the most important aspects of scalability is not related so much to the number of employees, but to the ability to help manage the process changes required to accommodate changes in the business. To best manage any type of change, you need the ability to add business process-focused components providing disciplined and consistent workflows to allow your business to flex and bend as needs change. Although typical ERP systems allow you to add standard modules such as product line marketing (PLM) or customer relationship management (CRM), you also need the flexibility to customize your processes for meeting your business needs, rather than requiring your processes to be tooled to the requirements of your ERP system. An ERP vendor who can provide open standards-based components allows the expansion of your ERP system as needed, with minimal deployment and integration costs.

Investing in an ERP system that meets these criteria will provide you with confidence that it will meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, preserving your core ERP investment well into the future.
Summary: Flexible ERP systems mean rapid ROI

A flexible ERP system provides you with the power to respond to change—any kind of change. Access to timely data combines with process consistency and process discipline, dramatically streamlining everyday operational procedures and improving business flexibility. As a result, your business can easily adapt to virtually any changing condition, such as:

- An unexpected delay in a shipment of raw materials
- New government and industry regulations
- The need to develop new product to keep up with changing trends
- The need to collaborate with customers and suppliers who are no longer local—in different time zones with different computer systems and different languages

Business processes that previously took a week to 10 days can be shaved down to minutes, executed automatically by enabling the effective virtual integration of all your business systems (See Figure 1). The many benefits delivering a rapid ROI for this critical business solution include:

- Increased employee productivity
- Increased plant throughput
- Decreased inventory levels and work in process (WIP)
- Reduced operating costs
- Increased margins
- Increased profitability
- Improved cash flow—and order-to-cash cycle times
- Faster production turnaround times
- The ability to set and deliver on “capable to promise” (CTP) delivery dates
- Increased customer service, satisfaction, and retention
When you choose the right ERP system, you gain the ability to seamlessly combine your business data into a single voice and view. The discrete manual and paper-based processes associated with separate systems are no longer required, replaced by a flexible solution that can grow as your business grows. The ability to move information electronically throughout your operations in real time automates everyday processes and eliminates paper, while providing a detailed audit trail and ensuring compliance with disciplined procedures. For example, the end-to-end process associated with a customer order can be completed in one-tenth of the time. And the resulting reduction in cycle times provides the business agility required to manage change today—and tomorrow.
About Infor

Infor acquires and develops functionally rich software backed by thousands of domain experts and then makes it better through continuous innovation, faster implementations, global enablement, and flexible buying options. In a few short years, Infor has become one of the largest providers of business software in the world. For additional information, visit www.infor.com