

ERP Implementations

Eight Things to Get Right

Like the roots and branches of a tree, there are many considerations in an ERP implementation. Focus too much on the minor details, and you can lose sight of the tree.

In an ERP implementation, you must get eight major things right to be successful. Ignore any of them, and your implementation will fail. Get them right, and you will likely succeed.



Value

The project must provide value that significantly exceeds potential project costs and should be aligned with the company's strategy. Its value and strategic alignment must be part of a vision shared by the company's leadership. Value from the project must be delivered in a way that respects resource constraints.

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Capability

The company and the implementation team must be capable of implementing the project on their own or with help. The project must have the following:

- **Resources** required, including people, time, and budget.
- **Processes** required, usually delivered through a comprehensive methodology.
- **Prioritization** required because an ERP project will need the commitment of the entire company.

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Functionality

An ERP project must support required business processes, both now and in the future. A systematic review of all business processes and how they will be supported, either by the system or otherwise, is crucial.

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Data

ERP systems are data-hungry creatures. Please be careful before assuming that because so much data goes into them, an equal amount of insight will emerge. Getting data right means considering data architecture, migration, integration, governance, and, perhaps most importantly, access.

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Technology

What is the platform for the system? Is it offered by a vendor that will be around for as long as your system? Will it integrate with your other systems? Are resources available to support it? Can you change it without painting yourself into a corner? Will your technology scale as you grow?

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Change Leadership

Change leadership (often called change management) considers the human side of an ERP implementation. Change is hard, even if it's a good change. Training is an important element of change leadership. But beyond training, consideration must be given to the people using the system. How are they involved in communication and important decisions? What will motivate them to make the implementation a success?

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Quality

Quality is multi-dimensional, and it's more than a measurement; it's a perception. An ERP needs to be reliable. But poor performance or poor user experience are often root causes of implementation failure. Take an approach to quality that starts with perceptions and considers all aspects of quality.

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Governance

ERP projects require both management and leadership. Planning, changing plans, communication, decision making, and guidance are critical aspects of management. But without the leadership qualities of motivating a team, setting clear goals, and using influence to reach goals, even well-managed projects can fail.

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