



WHITEPAPER

How to Find the Right Implementation Partner for Your ERP Project?

The Importance of Choosing the Right Implementation Partner for Your ERP Project

When you're looking to modernize your ERP platform, the last thing you need is a partner that doesn't understand your business operations or is not willing to collaborate in a transparent environment with your internal teams. In fact, choosing the right partner may define the very success or failure of your ERP implementation project and arguably may be just as important as selecting the right software partner. The quality of your partnership will be the key to your ability to get maximum value from your ERP solution.

Choosing the Right ERP Partner Effectively

You need to take some time to analyze your partner in technology, just as you would to review the technology and the ERP system itself. For business leaders that have little experience with direct ERP implementation or have not previously engaged with third-party consultants, systems integrator or a value-added resellers (VAR), the task of selecting the right partner can be not only challenging but also overwhelming. So how do you define the guidelines to select the right ERP partner from different providers in the industry? A simple four-factor methodology can help you cut through the chase and find the right ERP implementation partner for your business.

Experience:

Some things cannot be taught; they must be experienced. Roy T. Bennett

The most important parameter on which you can measure the compatibility with an ERP implementation partner is **experience**. ERP implementation impacts the very backbone on which your business operates – from business operations, processes and standards to employees and human resources.

You need experienced consultants to effectively guide your team through meandering ERP implementation processes with minimal hiccups and help you leverage the full potential of your new system. The ideal ERP implementation partner should not only know how an ERP system works but must also understand how your business operates and how the new system will contribute to your overall business objectives.

A good way to test a potential partner's experience is through reference checking. Review their track record. What claims do they make to measure the success of their previous projects? Are those claims backed by solid customer references? What do their past customers have to say about their experience with the potential ERP partner?

Industry-specific Experience:

How much experience do they have within your own industry or vertical? Have they worked in your industry before? Each sector/industry has its own unique set of requirements and peculiarities. An ideal ERP partner must be able to recognize these peculiarities and understand how the ERP system can be adapted, integrated or modified to address business needs unique to your sector. Industry specific case studies with highlights on successful implementation within your vertical is the easiest way to verify if the potential partner has a proven track record and the right experience to deal with your vertical.

Multi-sector Experience:

While industry experience is preferred – make sure the company does not work solely in one segment/vertical only. Implementation partners that specialize in single/vertical or sector cannot help you leverage the full potential of your ERP system due to their single segment tunnel vision. A multi-segment ERP implementation partner can extract the best practices from various industries and apply it to optimize the usability and effectiveness of an ERP system within your vertical. For e.g. Manufacturing segment can really benefit from the customer-centric approach of Financial segments. There is no question that industry experience is valuable, but if yours is the only area that an ERP implementation partner focuses on, then its viewpoint – and the services it offers – will be the exact same from client to client – negating any competitive advantage you want to derive from your new ERP system.

Ask them to describe their most successful implementation and ask them what their least successful project has been. See if they can share and ask how and what they learned from each project. and how each project.

You will need a partner who brings together a team of experienced professionals that have the expertise in the ERP system and the right experience in your sector. The key then is to find an ERP implementation partner that specializes in your vertical yet has substantial cross-industry experience necessary to differentiate against competition.

Implementation Methodology and Technique:

Methodology, in simplest of terms, is the framework to get the work done. Finding an ERP Implementation partner that has a sound implementation methodology that has been tested and tested over the years is a crucial factor to be considered during the selection procedure.

Without a systematic approach and a proven methodology, an implementation project is like a runaway train with escalating budget and repeatedly missed timelines. ERP is a dynamic process - constantly evolving with new information coming every day. Your ERP partner

should be equipped enough not just to handle these ever changing needs but to also proactively address potential gaps.

A proven methodology with successful track record brings to light various gaps throughout the implementation process – giving your implementation team the ability to modify the process in response to these new demands. Being flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances guarantees a more holistic outcome.

However, having a methodology is not enough. It is important to understand if the methodology is home-grown utilizing the lessons learned over past projects or is it a text-book version used just for getting a check mark on the “requirements” document. Ask the prospective partner to fully describe and illustrate its method of implementation, deliverables, timescales, and identifying key roles. See how well documented their processes are. Are they able to clearly articulate various steps in their process? Is it the holy book that the entire team adheres to and relies on? Afterall, implementation methodologies are the very blue-print of success.

Accessibility to the Right Resources:

When it comes to ERP implementation – one size *does not* fit all. It is important to understand the knowledge, availability and the limitations of key resources of your potential partner. Review your potential partner’s expertise and system application in companies like yours – both in terms of size and scope.

It is important to ensure that your potential partners have the necessary resources required to complete the project even if the scope was to expand over time. Have they worked on multi-site projects before? Can they handle a global ERP implementation?

How efficient have they been in communicating and collaborating across geographically dispersed sites? How accessible are the resources that your team will be working with? Are they easy to connect with – can you communicate with them online, over the phone, in-person if you so desire?

The expertise and knowledge of your partner team is also an important factor. Ask whether the consultants of your ERP partner have the right education and qualification to deal with the requirements of your organization? Do they have engineers with formal education and the right expertise to be able to handle any technical situation that arises during the implementation process or are they relying on technicians to do the work via trial and error?

Diversity in the knowledge and specialization of the team is also important. A company with experienced professionals that have handled different situations efficiently will have the ability to deal with possible roadblocks during the implementation process.

A mega-firm, with global resources may not be the right fit either. Unless you are one of their biggest clients, you are likely to get “second string” resources. Even if you are one of their bigger clients – a global organization will most likely not be flexible to your business requirements. Your needs will always be secondary to their pre-set processes.

The Reputation of the Company in the Industry:

Sometimes a difficult factor to assess due to intangibility, but the reputation is critical to your choice of partners. Check carefully about their previous associations with other companies. How good are they at building the rapport with their existing clients? Reference calls to existing customers should give you an insight-valuable when working with a long-term team.

The history and stability of the partner is also critical. Review the history of your prospective partner to see if they're a stable partner. Find out how long the company has been in business. Understand if your potential partner is there to stay.

Another factor you may want to consider is the relationship of your ERP implementation partner with the software providers. Are they in good standing with their suppliers, partners and other developers in the industry? Are they well recognized within the ERP user's community? Are they actively involved with the ERP community? These factors are important as your implementation partner is the conduit between you and your ERP system provider. A strong relation in the community translates into their ability to tap into the bigger source of knowledge.

Conclusion

Often companies focus on the wrong factors when choosing an ERP implementation partner. Choose your ERP partner based on its experience, knowledge and reputation in your business niche. When evaluating each prospective partner, consider whether their structure, planning, and people fit your company well.

A partner that understands your business, brings the required technical expertise & experience and has a transparent, collaborative approach with systematic processes is ideal.

About eOne Infotech

eOne Infotech is an award-winning Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) consulting company and Oracle Gold Partner. Since its incorporation in Piscataway, NJ in the year 2004, eOne Infotech has been chosen as the trusted advisor for implementation and maintenance of their mission critical business processes, by hundreds of customers. We specialize in helping businesses implement state-of-the-art technology solutions including Oracle JD Edwards, Oracle ERP Cloud, and Oracle NetSuite. Contact us for more information today.