WHITEPAPER

How to take control of your ERP implementation

How to plan a successful launch

Choosing a new ERP system is a vital step toward protecting your manufacturing business for the future. However, software alone cannot guarantee results; the way you manage the implementation determines its success. Unrealistic deadlines, a lack of staff buy-in, and messy data can quickly stall progress or derail the project entirely.

Research highlights the impact of a well-run launch:

96% of companies work more efficiently after installing an ERP system

- **85%** see a major improvement in their reporting and operational visibility.
- **80%** benefit from modernised IT systems.
- **68%** gain a stronger competitive edge and sustainable business growth.

To ensure your investment delivers these results, follow these seven essential steps.

Seven critical steps for a successful ERP implementation

1. Secure complete commitment from leadership

An ERP system changes how every single department operates. Without active involvement from leaders, the project risks stalling because of staff resistance or competing daily priorities. The executive board must:

- **Set clear goals** and link them directly to the company's business strategy.
- **Explain to all employees** why this change is urgent and necessary.
- **Stay visibly involved** from the first day of planning through to the launch.

An ERP project succeeds or fails based on the strength of its internal champion.

2. Manage the change with a clear plan

Dislike of change is one of the most common reasons software rollouts fail. Staff who have managed tasks the same way for years will naturally worry about unfamiliar processes.
To prevent this:

- **Focus on the benefits:** show staff exactly how the software will make their daily jobs easier.
- **Involve end-users early in the project** so they can help design their new ways of working.
- **Provide thorough training and support** so everyone feels prepared.

When employees understand and support the vision for change, they adopt the new system far more quickly.

3. Build a realistic implementation plan

ERP implementations usually take between six and twelve months, depending on the size and complexity of your operations. **Detailed planning is your best defense against shifting goals and unexpected costs.**

A typical phase-by-phase timeline looks like this:

- **Weeks 1-4** – Review current business processes and set target goals.
- **Weeks 5-8** – Assess ERP vendors, choose your system, and sign contracts.
- **Weeks 9-12** – Prepare your data for migration and set up a test environment.
- **Weeks 13-16** – Run staff training sessions and test the system internally.
- **Weeks 17-20** – Launch the system and begin refining your live operations.

A helpful rule of thumb:

Total software costs ÷ 100 = required implementation hours.

For example, a £100,000 software investment requires roughly **1,000 hours** of implementation effort.

4. Appoint an internal project leader

While your ERP vendor handles the technical setup, you need a dedicated internal project manager to keep the rollout on schedule. This person coordinates tasks across departments and acts as the main point of contact for internal questions and problem-solving.

Choose someone who has:

- **A strong, balanced understanding of both your manufacturing processes and your IT setup.**
- **Excellent communication and people skills.**
- **A proven ability to motivate and lead teams through a transition.**

Research shows that **72% of failed ERP project**s trace back to a lack of internal support. Protect your business from this risk by putting a capable implementation team in place.

5. Prioritise and fund staff training

An advanced ERP platform is only as good as the people using it. **Rushed or inadequate training** is a major cause of project failure. Design specific training plans for different groups:

- **Super-users:** These employees will become your internal system experts and provide first-line support to colleagues.
- **Factory and office staff:** Training focused entirely on their specific daily tasks.
- **Managers and team leaders:** Focused heavily on data analysis, custom reporting, and performance tracking.

Ask employees to complete practical checks before the system goes live. This gives you clear proof that your workforce is ready for the switch.

6. Insist on high standards of data quality

Messy or disorganised legacy data causes system errors, slows down operations, and skews management reports. **Before your launch date, all your old data must be checked, cleaned, and properly formatted.**

Your data checklist should include:

- **Removing duplicate customer, client, and supplier records.**
- **Updating obsolete product specifications and stock entries.**
- **Checking that all Bills of Materials (BOMs) are accurate and structured logically.**
- **Running test imports to make sure the new ERP system reads the data perfectly.**

Work closely with your software vendor during this stage to make use of their migration tools and experience.

7. Partner with the right ERP vendor

Your relationship with the vendor heavily shapes the outcome of your project. When evaluating suppliers, look for:

- **Deep industry experience:** Do they understand the specific rules and operational challenges of manufacturing?
- **Responsive customer support:** Is their helpdesk reliable and easy to reach?
- **Modular software:** Can the system scale and adapt as your business grows over the long term?

Summary

An ERP system is a powerful tool for improving efficiency and strengthening your position in the manufacturing market. However, without a carefully structured plan, projects easily run over time, bust budgets, or fail entirely.

By building these seven strategies into your project plan, you ensure a smooth launch and get a faster return on your investment.

If you want advice on how to choose an ERP system that fits your business, get in touch with us.

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