



Five Essential Qualities of an Awesome ERP Partner

Selecting the right ERP partner is no easy decision. Yet it can make all the difference between a successful or disastrous ERP implementation. You're more likely to succeed if you establish certain criteria beforehand. Here are five qualities you should consider when it's time to make a choice.

System expertise

During the selection process, clients tend to focus on the consultant's product and technology expertise and demonstration experience. You may have had the painful experience of working with a consultant who was learning the system with you. When this happens, the consultant doesn't know what he doesn't know, so you may end up with workarounds, pointless customizations, or an ERP solution that uses only 50% of the new software's capabilities.

Knowledge of business processes

Product expertise is a legitimate concern, but knowledge of business processes is paramount. If the goal of your ERP project is to drive value through improved process efficiency—and it should be—you need to work with a consultant who can go beyond automating and integrating existing processes with ERP software. The best ERP partners have the right blend of technology and business process experience. So make sure you ask about their methodologies and talk to their clients to learn how they've leveraged their expertise to redesign the clients' business processes and make the most of their ERP investment.

Industry-specific experience

Is it better to work with an ERP implementation consultant who has experience in your specific industry or vertical, or with someone who can provide innovative ideas from other industries?

Ideally, you need both, and your consultant's industry experience is only relevant if it was acquired in the context of an ERP implementation. Similarly, you want to get an idea of the type of ERP projects your consultant is accustomed to. Do they typically work on plain vanilla projects or complex implementations tied to many front- and back-office systems?

Cultural fit

Several studies have shown that behind every successful ERP implementation is a strong project team. Thus the importance of evaluating the cultural fit with your ERP consulting firm.

Cultural fit is hard to define because it is largely subjective.

Cultural fit is that “gut feeling” that you will be able to work with these people over the next 12 to 18 months without any major clash of personalities. It is a mix of values, behaviors and unspoken rules that helps you answer key questions such as whether you trust them and feel comfortable around their people.

Breadth of services to support your long-term vision

In general, an ERP project is not a one-time transaction. So you need to look at post-implementation services such as training and levels of customer support, upgrades and periodically re-evaluate how you use the software.

But when ERP is just the first step in a complete business transformation strategy, it is preferable to find a partner with the ability to support your long-term vision with additional services and offerings such as e-commerce, BI or big data.

Take the time to talk to different ERP partners. Find out about their complete service offering, and the skills and personalities of the people you will be working with.

Bottom line: Know why you're implementing a new ERP solution, what tradeoffs you're willing to make and what is most important to guarantee your ERP success.

About Thinkmax

To bring your company to the next level, you need a partner. With offices in Montreal and Toronto, Thinkmax focuses on improving business processes through best-practices and technology for companies with complex operations in the area of supply chain, process and discrete manufacturing, distribution, retail and professional services.

Whether you are evaluating Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Business Intelligence (BI) and e-Commerce / Digital-Commerce solutions or have already implemented them and want to further leverage your investment, we can assist you.