BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

BUYING ERP

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When it comes to selecting an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution, there will be endless ways to evaluate the options to best fit the needs of your company. Choosing the optimal suite of services for your company's needs in the long and short term may be more complex than you might imagine. As you venture into the e-commerce world of moving consumer products through a myriad of sales channels using complex supply chain management, it will be important to gain insight into your organization as you winnow down the options to fit your requirements.

Start by asking these important questions as you plan your ERP solution needs:

Are you Omni-channel ready?

Before you start seeking out solutions to a large-scale inventory or supply chain solution, you should look at the needs and current readiness of your operation. When shopping for a fixed-price, fixed-scope solution, take an honest inventory of your current capabilities to adapt in the disruptive e-commerce market, and decide if you are ready for the future. Omnichannel readiness is all about getting the full scope of your supply chain monitoring needs and looking at your channels holistically. Are you able to see where all of your inventory is going in a single glance? On a single page? Can you access all that data from any device, mobile or desktop?

How complex is your supply chain?

Are you selling direct to your customers? Are you an Amazon partner, or do you have distribution partnerships with other third-party retailers? Do you drop ship direct from your own manufacturer's warehouse or are you fulfilling purchase orders and shipping inventory to partners' warehouses? Are you shipping overseas? To Hawaii? All of these questions are necessary to figure out how much help you will need managing your supply chain, as every diversion of the pipeline presents a slightly different market, different customers, and different points of sale. More important than how complex your supply chain is today, is how complex will it become as your brand expands and product lines evolve. The more complex your supply chain is, the more you will benefit from a series of automated solutions that can streamline everything from shipment to receiving returns and damaged items.

How well is your current system designed to scale?

You almost certainly have a growth plan in place before you even go to market, but how far does that plan reach into the future? How quickly would you be able to adapt if a new ecommerce platform sprang up and took off? Would you be able to shift inventory and get product where it needs to be beyond the timeframe you currently have set for your growth plan? Scalability isn't just about growing mere volume, but should also include growth for individual product lines and be scalable based on where your customers are most active. You should not only be able to anticipate long-term growth but also be able to gauge where you need to move your inventory in the short term and how to spread out those sunk costs to reach both new and existing customers as you grow.

Are you managing multiple suppliers and retail outlets?

Another question for gauging the needs of your ERP solution is whether you are already managing multiple suppliers and retail outlets. Are you sourcing parts or ingredients from several suppliers

and sending them to multiple customer-facing brick-and-mortar locations? If you're jumping in with a complex supply chain, it will be especially important for your brand and business to be able to efficiently manage these elements and produce automated processes for them so you can maintain operational excellence and focus on brand development.

When it comes to staying on top of retail outlets, being able to instantly visualize inventory data can help you track down instances of excessive loss or theft before they become a major problem. If you're always waiting for reports and responding to that data, you're never really stamping out the problem so much as remedying it after the fact. If you're opening your inventory to direct customer access in a retail space, having a cloud-based solution for instantly tracking your inventory can help you identify weak points before they become major spillways.

Do you support EDI today?

Does your current logistics system support electronic data interchange to help bring some of your back-end labor down? Do you use any system to automate processes like purchase order generation and online direct-to-customer orders? If you're not already EDI-ready, now might be a great time to automate all of your processes in a single stroke, as future expansions will not be possible without automating some of these simpler processes. Using a strong ERP solution, you can incorporate EDI functionality into your already established SCM system, streamlining the process and making it that much easier to communicate both with your customers and your suppliers.

What is your e-Commerce strategy?

You almost certainly have a well-planned ecommerce strategy in place with planned expansions across different platforms and with different partnerships. What matters most is being able to stick to those goals, and to know which platforms are targeting their customers the best. After all, a strategy is only as useful as it is effective in helping you achieve your stated goals, and if it's not working for you, conserving as much of your cash flow will in a timely manner will be essential.

How accurate are your product forecasts?

Once again, prediction tools can be invaluable when it comes to planning for the future, but they are not always consistent -- even when you have access to high-quality, instantly-available analytics and reports. Because even if you're working with the most accurate reporting and forecasting data, it doesn't change the volatility of customer attention and desires as the ecommerce market swirls around them. What is most important is being able to see the moment your real data begins to diverge from what your forecast predicted, using up-to-the-moment accurate data to guide you gently through a change of course.

Navigator can help you find the most elegant and cost-effective solution to managing a complex supply chain. Trade your current headaches for real-time data, and your weekend stuck at your desk for weekends spent the way you want to with access to accurate data wherever you are in the world. They've got hundreds of satisfied customers as proof, and over 100 years of combined experience in supply chain management solutions

About Navigator Business Solutions

Navigator is the recognized expert in providing complete packaged SAP Cloud solutions to small and mid-sized companies. Our proven approach provides our customers the experienced leadership to leverage cloud solutions to support growth and change, while reliably controlling back-office costs and improving operating margins. Navigator has a proven track record of on-time, on-budget, and fixed-price implementations – all of which have enabled Navigator Business Solutions to serve as a SAP Gold Partner for the last 10 years.

By helping more than 500 clients better manage and grow their businesses, we understand how to work with you to apply our proven expertise to deliver solutions for your business needs. We offer an entire suite of SAP-certified, integrated extensions to help better leverage your SAP system. These integrated extensions include credit card & shipping integration, EDI, eCommerce (Magento, eBay, Amazon, WooCommerce), point-of-sale, WMS, DCAA reporting, and configurator.

Headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, Navigator has more than 20 sales & service locations across the United States and Canada, ensuring that help is where and when you need it.

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