Is Your ERP Ready?

BOB VORMITTAG, CEO & President, VAI

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New advances in business intelligence (BI) and mobile cloud technology are transforming enterprise resource planning (ERP) as we know it. Bolstered by new innovation, ERP has become an even stronger business asset, and this is changing how mid-market customers define successful ERP implementations.

Key mid-market industries — such as manufacturing, retail, distribution, food and services — are eager to harness the power of cloud computing to implement cost-efficient information technology (IT) solutions that ultimately drive improved bottom-line benefits to their organizations.

At the same time, these mid-market customers are seeking to understand how to leverage the vast amounts of ERP data. More specifically, they are trying to determine how they can easily access, manage and interpret the reams of information scattered throughout their enterprises to make faster, more informed business decisions. A recent study by McKinsey’s Global Institute reported that a mid-size retailer recently improved its operating margins by 60 percent by implementing BI and analytics solutions that gather, interpret and manage operations.

New advances in BI and mobile cloud computing will drive efficiencies across every business function. Mid-market customers who make the investment in BI and the cloud will realize improved cost and operational efficiencies, expanded real-time collaboration with customers, vendors and partners, as well as faster and more personalized customer relationships.

But how do you get there? What steps do you need to take to add BI and the mobile cloud across your enterprise successfully?

VAI works with hundreds of mid-market customers eager to amplify their existing ERP investments with new technology innovation. Here are a few steps that you can take to enhance your ERP implementations and reap the resulting business benefits almost immediately.

1.) Imagine the Possibilities for Your Organization.

Listed below are examples of how key mid-market industries will benefit from adding BI and the cloud across their enterprises:

1. Manufacturing. Mobile networked devices and on-demand software will enable seamless integration, tracking and optimization of tasks from inventory, shop floor and warehouse management, to capacity and materials planning, and product quality control.
2. Distribution. Workers at any point in the value chain will access real-time inventory information, uncover slow-moving and out-of-stock items, and improve order fill rates, inventory turns and responses to customer demands.
3. Retail. Automation of tasks and processes will improve inventory, purchasing, supply chain and customer relationship management at point of sale (both in-store and online).
4. Service. Improved integration via mobile cloud of customer interaction and product-related information will ease and hasten superior service and repair, increasing customer satisfaction.
5. Food service. Workers will hasten production and lower operational costs by replacing manual, error-prone paperwork with integrated solutions for tablets and smartphones.

2.) Next, Embrace Adaptability

To truly benefit from BI and the cloud, you need vertical applications that focus on your specific business and operational requirements with the ability to configure it for your specific needs. Invest in a solution that will provide the flexibility, so that you can further personalize applications in the future.

3.) From There, Conduct an Audit

The senior executive team — such as in the areas of finance, operations and manufacturing — should undertake a complete audit of ERP-related policies and processes, detailing the technology resources that support them. Examine your readiness to integrate analytics and BI with the mobile cloud. From there, collaborate with your IT counterparts to develop specific criteria for upgrading the existing ERP system.

4.) Lastly, Create an ERP Playbook

Bring the business and IT teams together to create playbooks that document ERP goals, processes and supporting IT resources. The playbooks should relay how you will leverage key processes and technologies to strengthen your business, such as improved compliance with key business processes through automation. Update playbooks regularly to account for changes in business goals, new technologies and other factors. Also, be sure to include information on comparing and evaluating existing and new ERP-related IT solutions from both IT- and business-focused decision-makers.

By following these four steps, you can ensure that your organization will enjoy the key benefits of BI and the mobile cloud — well ahead of the competition.

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