



WHY AN ERP SYSTEM IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR BUSINESS

An enterprise resource planning (ERP) system can transform your business in many ways.

INTRODUCTION

What are the common struggles within your business? It could be overall inefficiency, issues with maintaining compliance with regulatory bodies, problems managing your supply chain, mounting costs, or simply the realization that you could be doing better— but you're not quite sure how to get there.

An ERP system can help with solving all of these issues—and more. Catalyst Connection has partnered with Decision Resources, Inc., the number one Infor cloud ERP provider for manufacturers in Pennsylvania, to bring you a helpful guide on how an ERP system can help your organization grow and thrive.



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Think for a moment about the areas where you may struggle with your business. Maybe there's a feeling of overall inefficiency, issues with maintaining compliance with regulatory bodies, problems with managing your supply chain, mounting costs, or simply the realization that you could be doing better—but you're not quite sure how to get there. An ERP system can help with solving all of these issues—and more.

As you read through our guide, you'll learn more about how an ERP system can help your business grow and thrive. We'll start with the basics, and then move on to explaining the importance of ERPs and how they relate to business success and customer satisfaction. We'll also cover the common signs that your business is ready to implement an ERP system. When you're ready to take advantage of these ERP benefits, you'll know exactly what to do, how to do it, and how to get the best results.



WHAT IS AN ERP SYSTEM?

Enterprise. Resource. Planning.

An ERP system makes streamlining processes easy, with the added benefits of automation.

ERP systems essentially keep track of all your business or enterprise resources. They let you in on all the important details about every aspect of your company, including processes and data.

With an ERP system you can run reports on important metrics that you are tracking, share data with other systems and platforms, and, perhaps most importantly, ensure all your business processes run cohesively. You won't have to jump through hoops to get the right data to the right systems once they are connected.

ERPs put all of the selected data into a single, centralized database. That means all of your important information will be accessible across various personnel and departments and can be easily analyzed as a whole or as individual pieces.

An ERP system could be described as the brain working behind the scenes of your business. It does the important work of keeping up with every piece of the puzzle, in real time. If you want to know anything at all about your company, the ERP system can tell you. And then it can help you make the right decisions and plan accordingly.





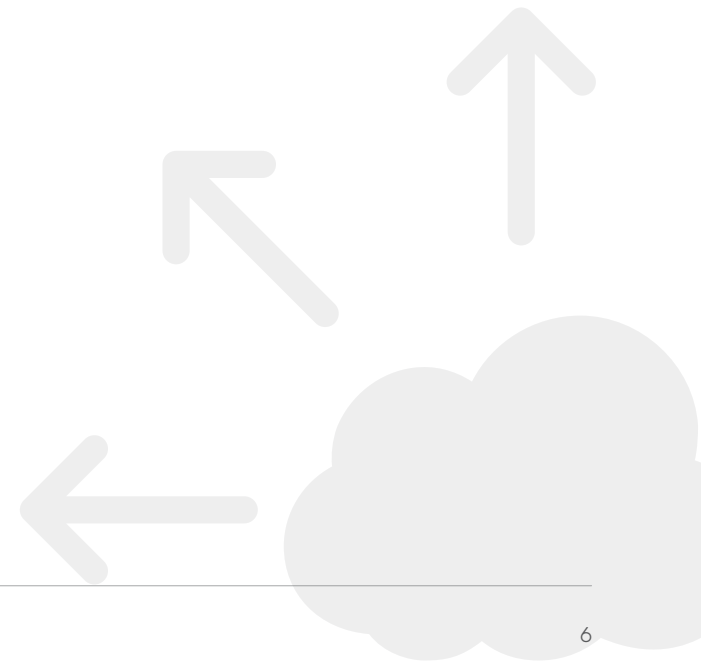
WHY USE AN ERP SYSTEM?

If you have never used an ERP system or if you are not sure if you need one, the importance of ERPs might seem cloudy. However, there are many reasons to use an ERP system, all of which will work to give your company a competitive edge and ensure you have the business intelligence you need to stay on top of your goals.

1. OPERATE YOUR BUSINESS WITH AGILITY

In your business, you have probably had to make quick decisions in order to keep the business, or an aspect of the business, moving forward. You may have needed to respond to the needs of customers, address the way your industry is evolving, and tackle other challenges, pressures, and changes. If you are locked into legacy systems, it's hard to be agile. But, with an ERP system in place, your company can take advantage of flexibility and scalability, especially when working with a cloud-based ERP.

As your company grows and changes, it is easy to adjust your ERP system accordingly. You can simply add or remove applications. You can change the types of reports and analytics you generate. And you can continue integrating your ERP system with the latest and greatest technology, all based on your business's particular needs. These changes will not interfere with your customers' or clients' experiences. And most importantly, ERPs help navigate staff frustrations by avoiding a full system overhaul every time there is a shift or change in your industry.



2. BE MORE EFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE

An ERP system will do wonders for your company's productivity and efficiency in four main categories: automating business processes, managing supply chain, ensuring compliance with regulations, and centralizing collaboration.

ERP systems automate business processes easily, and cut down on any existing inefficiencies. You know that any time your staff spends trying to manually accomplish tasks that could be handled by an automated system is wasted time. Wasted time has a domino effect, spilling over from person to person and department to department, and ultimately frustrating your customer.

ERP systems take care of that at the source. They also eliminate common issues resulting from manual errors and accidentally missed deadlines or timelines.

If an employee forgets to click one box in your existing process, it could turn into an expensive headache. With an ERP system, that box clicks itself on time and as expected, and nobody has to wait or follow up to make sure it happened.

You can apply the same logic to tasks like monitoring inventory, tracking time sheets, or processing orders. ERPs can perform all of these on its own. Goodbye tedious and error-prone manual data entry!

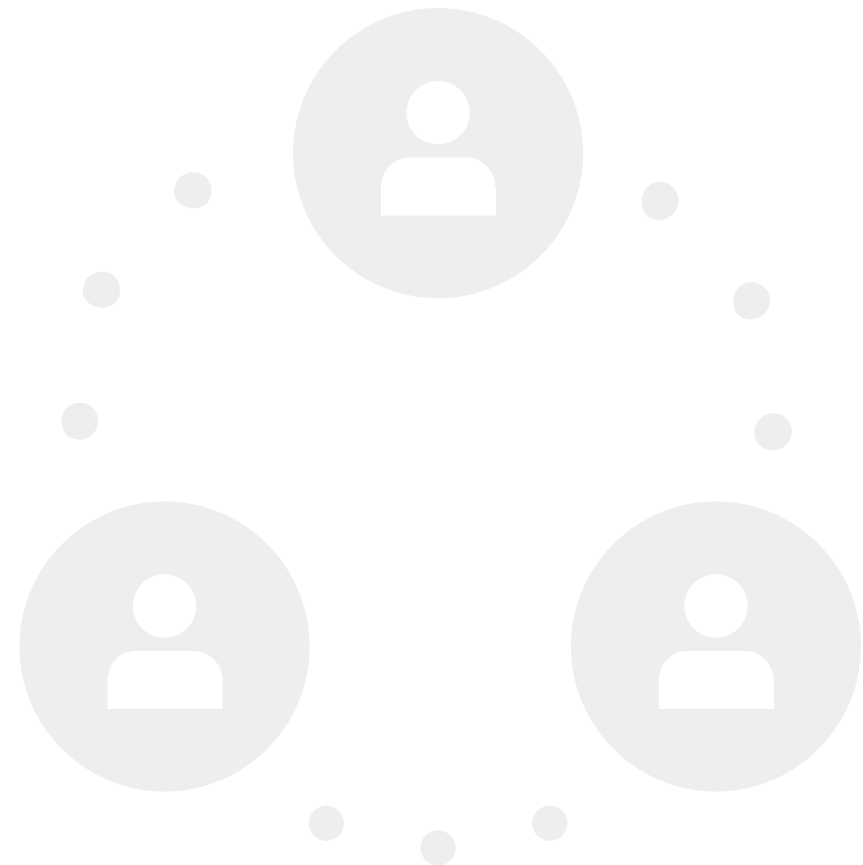
Intelligent supply chain management is one of the biggest productivity perks of using ERPs. Because the system provides greater visibility into operations, businesses using ERPs gain a better understanding of what is going on with their suppliers, inventory, and customers. With an ERP solution, it becomes easier to plan for the supply chain, procure what you need, monitor and maintain the supply chain, and assess how everything is working so you can make necessary adjustments.

Then there is compliance. The importance of ERP systems in ensuring and maintaining compliance is key. This especially resonates for companies operating multi-nationally and dealing with various rules and regulations.

BE MORE EFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE (CONT.)

ERP platforms allow you to document your compliance and generate reports as evidence that you are following the rules. You'll save time and resources by generating this information as you go, instead of scrambling to create a report if and when a regulator comes knocking on your door.

Finally, in the vein of productivity and efficiency, ERP systems improve business collaboration through centralization. With an ERP system, everyone is working from the same information—information that is updated and accurate, in real time. Nobody is accessing out-of-date data. And, with an ERP, nobody works in a silo. When someone needs information, they can access it immediately without delays and with the knowledge and reassurance that it is accurate.





3. SUPPORT YOUR CUSTOMERS

Customers are key to the success of any business. An ERP system works well to support your customers - the ones that keep your business growing. ERP systems that come with a customer relationship management (CRM) tool are especially useful because they give your company and your staff access to important data about each customer and their needs. With this data, you can proactively manage each customer relationship.

Whether accessing the most up-to-date, preferred form of contact for each customer, or taking a look through their purchase history before making a sales call, an ERP combined with customer relationship management software ensures that your staff is fully informed of each customer's wants, needs, and pain points. An ERP system will help your customer service staff tailor their approach to every customer, every time.

4. REDUCE COSTS

While implementing an ERP system requires an upfront investment, its ability to reduce costs over time cannot be ignored.

We talked about productivity and efficiency earlier. These factors represent an important part of your company's overall spending. When your staff can make the most of their time and resources, your money and efforts go further. ERPs provide an excellent return on your investment. Every minute saved is money saved, and ERPs will save your company a lot of time.

As your business grows, you will find that using an ERP solution enables a lean approach to expansion. In other words, even though your business is producing more and making more money, you don't need to spend a lot of that money to expand your staff or IT infrastructure. ERPs keep everything running smoothly, even as a business grows.

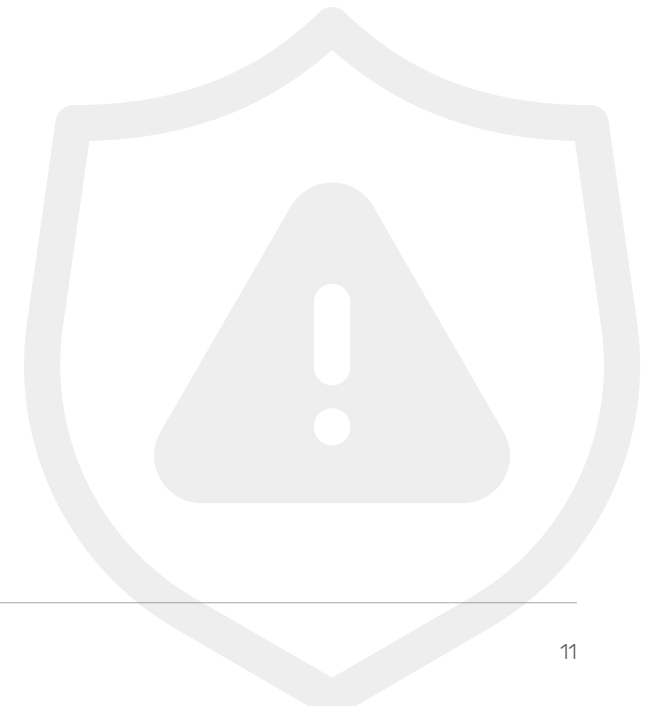
An ERP system can also reduce costs by automatically consolidating your financial information. Along with looking at the financial overview to see where and how money is being wasted and where and how your resources could be better invested, you will also be able to avoid expensive audits and tax issues, because the financial reports you need can be generated with just one click.



5. INCREASED SECURITY

We understand that centralized data might make you or other stakeholders feel a bit nervous. Data breaches and other security issues are frequently featured in the news, and they can cause major problems for businesses. However, there is good news – an ERP system can improve your company's security and reduce the risks you face.

A cloud-based ERP system is built on a secure foundation, meeting or exceeding best practices and standards for application security, network security, physical security, and operational security. It also provides ongoing monitoring to ensure that there are no breaches. A good ERP system will provide role-based access controls so that people only have access to exactly what they need, as well as providing regular software and security updates, password controls, and quick management of any known security issues or vulnerabilities. ERP providers take security seriously. That is passed on to you and your business in every way.



6. BETTER REPORTING AND ANALYTICS

Without strong reporting and analytics, your business decisions essentially boil down to your best guesses about what will work best in a given situation. This makes it difficult to pin down exactly why the outcome of a decision was a success or a failure. You may not even be able to track the actual numbers that prove it either way. An ERP system overcomes these issues and puts you in control.

All of your data tells a story. An ERP system will showcase that story in ways that are easy to understand and easy to report. Not only can you drill down into how a particular product is performing, or how a specific employee is impacting business costs and revenue, but you can also dive into the reports and analytics that give you the big picture of your business.

ERPs will show you when your company is busiest, any bottlenecks in your processes, which departments could be running more efficiently, and so on. If it exists in your data, a good ERP system will turn it into a report that you can use to plan and make data-driven decisions.



7. GAIN AN EXPERT SUPPORT PARTNER

ERP providers—like us—are industry experts. We can say that because we have seen firsthand how our support helps companies thrive.

We are here to help you navigate any growing pains, provide solutions to common business issues, train users on how to best use the ERP system, and otherwise lend a helping hand. Your success is our success.

We want to help you use an ERP system to the fullest extent of its capabilities. We are always ready to act as a professional partner for our clients, and we are dedicated to supporting your business, now and as you grow.

8. GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Together, these benefits demonstrate the importance of ERPs in growing your business to the best it can be.

It starts with agility, allowing your company to go where it needs to go and do what it needs to do to remain competitive. Increased productivity and efficiency follows, ensuring that your staff can keep up with your success. Your ERP solution will reduce human error, and your staff will not spend time performing tedious and repetitive tasks.

Then, add in happy, supported customers who are getting exactly what they want and need from your business, greater compliance with regulations, centralized collaboration, reduced costs and fewer wasted resources, improved security, and the analytics and metrics that prove it all. With an ERP solution removing one business constraint after another, you will be in the perfect situation to leverage your success for business growth.

We are here to help you shape your ERP solution into the exact system you need today, as well as one that will grow with your company as it evolves.





SIGNS IT'S TIME TO IMPLEMENT AN ERP SYSTEM

If you are nodding along with this information or you're eager to let a colleague know about ERPs, that is a great sign that it is time to implement an ERP system. If you recognize your own company's challenge areas or opportunities in this guide, it is well worth exploring what ERPs can do for your business.

BUSINESS IS UNPREDICTABLE

Are you or your employees struggling to understand why things in your business are happening the way they are? We've seen too many businesses that are attempting to function and keep up, despite a constant backlog of accurate data, which means that they are not able to make decisions based on what's happening in real-time.

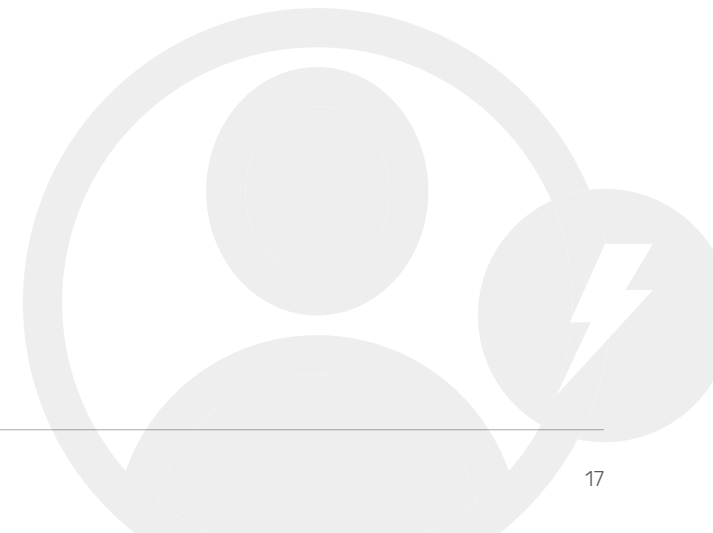
An ERP system gives you the accurate, up-to-date information you need when you need it. It will offer you the insight that you—and your competitors—are seeking.



DISGRUNTLED CUSTOMERS

Angry and upset customers or a declining customer base are signs that something needs to change, and ERPs can help. Customers are ultimately impacted the most by operational inefficiencies, whether it is demand outweighing supply, late shipments, slow customer service, or just a general feeling that your business doesn't have the resources or the time to care about each individual customer or client.

An ERP system gives your staff the data they need to accurately communicate with customers and provide ongoing excellent service.



YOU USE LEGACY SYSTEMS

Perhaps you are still working with manual entry systems or even physical paper record systems. Today's technology has far surpassed hard copy paper documentation. It has gone beyond requiring staff to sit at a computer for hours performing manual data entry. If these inefficiencies sound familiar, consider investing in an ERP system to bring your business up-to-date and make it more dynamic and profitable.

Even if you are already using more current systems, they may not be integrated—or it may not be possible to integrate them. If this is the case, it is worth switching to an ERP system. You may be amazed at the difference integration makes. When you centralize your data, this allows your staff to be centralized, too. When you can do away with departmental and data silos, your business has more opportunities to thrive.

In short, if there are problems with your company that automation, centralization, and efficiency would solve, check out an ERP system. It's as easy as choosing the right ERP provider for your company, and then following their guidance to ensure a smooth transition for your staff and your customers. Choosing the right ERP provider is critical for organizational success. We take pride in being your partner every step of the way, helping you choose the best ERP company through a careful selection process. From there, we'll help you follow their guidance to ensure a smooth transition for your staff and your customers.

UN KNOWN

NEXT STEPS

Switching your company over to an ERP system is a big decision, but it does not have to be overly complicated or daunting. The actual decision-making might be the most challenging part. Once you have decided to invest, it's simply a matter of choosing the best ERP platform for your company and then making the transition.

We know that you will quickly see the benefits of an ERP platform at work in your business. ERPs have great potential for providing excellent returns on investment. And having an excellent professional partner makes the process that much easier.

PARTNERS



Catalyst Connection is a southwestern Pennsylvania economic development organization dedicated to serving manufacturers. For more than 30 years, Catalyst has operated with a focus on powering potential through delivering technical assistance and management consulting services and developing long-standing partnerships across the region. Catalyst maintains a deeply held commitment to modernizing manufacturing and enabling opportunity across business enterprises, individuals, and throughout communities.

Catalyst Connection is supported, in part, by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development, and by the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnerships.



Decision Resources, Inc. (DRI) is a leading provider of enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions for manufacturers. The company was founded in 1978 and has completed over 300 ERP implementations. DRI's manufacturing expertise encompasses a variety of industries, including equipment manufacturing, food processing, electronics manufacturing, aerospace and defense, oil and gas, metal fabrication, foundries and forging, and more. DRI is an Infor Gold Channel Partner and supports the most ERP customers of any Infor partner. In 2020, DRI was recognized as Infor partner of the year for its commitment to modernizing customers' businesses by moving them from on-premises to cloud solutions. DRI is headquartered in Pittsburgh with satellite offices in Chicago, Wichita, and Austin, in addition to a remote workforce throughout the entire U.S.



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