

A Guide to Upgrading Your Manufacturing ERP



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Enterprise Resource Planning: An Introduction

An Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system can revolutionize many types of businesses operating within a wealth of verticals. ERP platforms allow different systems to communicate, integrate, and scale as your business grows. There are many providers offering ERP systems and each of them have their benefits and drawbacks. For a quick understanding of the benefits you may be able to realize with an ERP implementation, take a look at our Manufacturing ERP Guide.

While this guide focuses on the direct uses for the Manufacturing industry, many other types of businesses can and do benefit from ERP system implementation. These companies include, but are not limited to retailers, third-party logistics providers, healthcare, professional services, distribution, non-profits, and construction companies. With the expansion of the internet, cloud computing, machine learning, the Internet of Things and so much more happening with tech as we push into the 21st century, the access to these advanced ERP systems has become much easier to acquire.

You may be intrigued by the information above, but it is important to nail down exactly what an ERP system can provide for you and your business. An ERP system can manage the following and more:

- Inventory Management
- Order Management
- Accounting • Human Resources
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)



Once we drill down into the Manufacturing vertical the list becomes a little more clear. With an integrated ERP system, your manufacturing company can benefit from increased efficiency in shop floor operations, API Integration, which links your various systems together so they all talk to one another, and detailed reporting. This eliminates multiple passes over the same task and ensures efficiency and accuracy in the task at hand and allows inefficiencies to be identified and explored quickly.

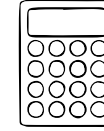
ERP Implementation: Where to Start

There are two options for initiating an ERP implementation. Either you or your company are starting from scratch and are looking for an excellent partner to create and manage your ERP system with a ground-up build, or you have an existing ERP system you feel is dated, the functionality is lacking, or the systems are not integrating properly. We have worked with each of the above examples as well as many others to ensure their ERP implementation goes as smoothly as possible. Our business transformation team has worked through many cases and built custom implementation strategies with great success. We start with 20 questions which will allow us to better understand your business strategy and create an implementation strategy around these processes.

Some questions we ask include:

- What are the top 5 key performance indicators you need to measure to drive growth?
- Which business areas must the new ERP system be able to manage?
- What processes do you hope to eliminate?
- What processes do you hope to automate?

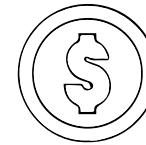
As you can see in the questions above, these implementations are designed to save you time and effort by automating certain processes and eliminating others. Here is a breakdown of a few of the use cases for an ERP implementation. While these are 3 areas we found can have the greatest and most visible impact, ERP solutions can revolutionize many other areas of your business as well.



Accounting

Problem: Many different systems don't integrate well requiring more work

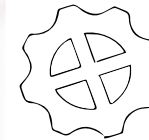
Solution: A custom ERP seamlessly integrating each of your accounting systems.



Sales

Problem: Lack of intuitive tracking leading to confusion in order status

Solution: A custom ERP can manage customer requests real-time and reports quickly & accurately



Logistics

Problem: Not knowing the status of an order until it hits the loading dock

Solution: A custom ERP can give you real-time updates on order status and update necessary parties instantly

How is Microsoft's ERP System Different?

How is Microsoft's ERP System Different?

Microsoft has developed a powerhouse system in the form of Microsoft Dynamics 365 (D365) for Finance and Operations. If you'd like to learn about the functionality from more of a top level view in comparison to other ERP solutions, take a look at our comparison guide. In this section, we will take a deeper dive into D365 and take a look at why you should consider this platform over others when looking to implement an ERP system.

As manufacturing automation becomes more and more prevalent in its respective industry, it is becoming increasingly important to have software solutions to match this automation. "Smart Factory" is not just a pie in the sky idea any longer. With the integration of IoT, Machine Learning, and more data than ever to consider, the proper system integration can give you enterprise visibility and be the difference between success and failure. A company's ability to develop and implement these new technologies will directly determine the potential these companies have for success down the road.

Tools like Power BI, and other data analytics software, allow unified information to be processed simultaneously. This creates easier collaboration between teams when issues arise. These data analyzers paired with cloud computing allow for information to be passed seamlessly across many locations. There is no need to update the server and pull down the latest data pack, it is all already there for users to access in an instant. The Microsoft solution stack integrates with all forms of data, allowing your solution to be far different from your neighbors. This customization is much of the reason D365 continues to have a foothold in the ERP and CRM space.



The Microsoft system is lean and easily configured as well. Should you expand into a completely new area of business, your software can be quickly enabled for integration and automation for new business initiatives.

Microsoft has developed a targeted product line intended to function across the board quickly and efficiently. When you integrate Dynamics 365 you get deep integration with Office 365 (calendars, client requests), LinkedIn, Power BI and many other data sources. This allows you to have one single view of your processes, relationships, and data. Microsoft has the tools to pull together your factory and field service to ensure your processes are working as smoothly as possible.

Are You Ready for an Upgrade?

Auditing readiness for an ERP upgrade can seem like a daunting task. If you feel like you're caught in the technological dark ages, you're not alone. Many companies make the assumption that an upgrade in technology is overwhelming and expensive, so they put off a technological overhaul that could change the future of their company. Many software companies, including Microsoft, continue to invest heavily in easy-to-use, innovative offerings which capitalize on digital transformation trends like SaaS and cloud computing. If you're wondering if you're ready for an ERP upgrade, take a look at our ERP Upgrade Readiness A

Replace or Upgrade Your Software

Some CFOs can understand operational inefficiencies within their company, and have the knowledge and network to make an informed decision on how to move forward with a technology overhaul, but these are few and far between. As you search for an ERP provider, it is worth taking a few preliminary steps to see what the best course of action is for your specific situation. It may be wise to contact similar companies as yours to discuss their implementations. You may find many folks in the space are using outdated systems and are facing the same issues as you. You may also find a similar company is in the middle of, or has just finished, an ERP implementation. The more information you can collect on their process and experience, the better prepared you will be for your implementation and your chances for success will heighten.



Requirements and Inefficiencies

Auditing and understanding the areas which may complicate an ERP implementation can help things run more smoothly once you move to implement.

Upgrade Obstacles

If the data in your current reports is not lining up with reports for another team, it is worth it to fix these problems upon implementation. Viewing cost restrictions, resource implementation, and risks as an opportunity to improve can change your approach to the project all the way around. These direct changes can have an immediate positive impact on your bottom line.

Determining What is in Use

As you look to implement an upgraded ERP system, it is a good time to take a hard look at your current licenses and compare that with the ERP modules which are currently in use. Understanding the functionality and potential for each module can lead to not only success in implementation, but to a comprehensive understanding of the intended functionality of your software.

Business Processes & Functionality

Companies change over time. Maybe you offer twice as many products as you did when you originally implemented your (now outdated) ERP system. Maybe you've expanded to a new location requiring a different set of parameters. Maybe you are looking to expand into a new vertical in coming months or years. All of these factors should be considered in an ERP implementation. Taking a moment to look from a top level perspective can shed some further light on the needs for your software system.

Policies, Procedures, & Documentation

Creating and implementing procedures related to company changes can help your software evolve as you do. Writing out and keeping track of business processes allows you to quickly implement changes without having to wait for other teams to catch up, or keeps you from dropping the ball altogether.

Workflow Analyzation

As with the business processes and procedural sections above, this is a great opportunity to audit operational efficiencies and inefficiencies in the form of work-flow analysis. There is a good chance there are many processes which haven't been audited in quite some time. Stepping back to understand where things can be improved will not only help your ERP implementation, but your overall business processes as well.

Choosing the Right Partner

Choosing the right manufacturing ERP partner can be the difference between a smooth, functional process and a downright tedious process. We have put together a handy checklist for selecting an ERP partner for you to peruse and help make a selection. A few questions to consider:

- Who will be working on your project?
- Besides implementation, what other services does this partner offer?
- Does this partner have a good reputation?
- Will this partner proactively give guidance and strategy recommendations?
- Does their culture align with your company culture?
- Do you understand all the time and resources required?
- Can we trust this partner?

Trust is a critical element of any professional services business, and software consulting is no exception. Mistakes happen. Personalities sometimes collide. But by carefully selecting the right ERP partner for your project before it begins, you can maximize your chances of a successful software implementation.

Typical Red Flags & Qualifications

Here are a few red flags we have experienced with users coming over to us for implementation in the past:

Not Sticking to a Strict Implementation

Schedule Timeliness and accuracy are two items which should not be discounted in choosing an ERP partner. If you are seeing reviews discussing a lack of timeliness, the first red flag is raised. The importance placed on timeliness lies in developing a road map and sticking to it. If your ERP provider is unable to meet specific deadlines, they are probably missing a few details through the process as well. This oversight can cause considerable issues in the future as you look to upgrade or customize your ERP implementation further.



Typical Red Flags & Qualifications

Lacking Communication

If through the discovery process, your potential provider goes dark for periods of time, this is a massive red flag. If an ERP provider doesn't give you the time you deserve to implement your project, they may be stretched too thin. You need a team devoted to your implementation so as needs arise, they can quickly be fixed.

Software Restrictions

Some ERP providers are still implementing legacy systems which do not grow well with technology. Finding a partner who implements the latest in ERP technology can ensure your systems remain lean and customizable moving into the future. Take the necessary time to understand and educate your team on the potential your software provides for improvement to efficiency and workflow.

Expertise

Choosing a provider with expertise not only in ERP systems overall, but expertise in your specific industry can ensure the proper modules are setup and the functionality works properly. Working through a manufacturing ERP implementation with someone who has implemented manufacturing ERP systems in the past helps to solve problems ahead of time instead of exploring them and patching things down the road.

Demos

Most, if not all, ERP providers should be able to provide you with a demonstration of their software and the functionality. If a company is unable to produce a customized demo tailored to your business, this is a huge red flag from the start. In the demos you should watch for ease of use, specific functionality, potential functionality, and integration with specific systems. If certain integrations are "coming soon" or something similar, this is another red flag.

Readiness

An accurate readiness audit sets your manufacturing ERP implementation up for success from the start. Having an expert audit the readiness of your systems allows you to make certain changes and develop fixes before beginning an ERP implementation. We have seen a few projects in the past where an ERP system was implemented for a company whose processes were not ready to be developed and reported on in the ERP system. This causes an even bigger headache than you had before deciding to upgrade or implement your ERP system.

Unique Aspects of ERP Solutions for the Manufacturing Industry

Microsoft's ERP solution can be customized to manage many types of business processes. Building a custom system form fit to the manufacturing industry, then customizing for your direct needs, ensures your software and systems stay lean and scalable into the future. Dynamics 365 for Manufacturers improves execution with inventory management and traceability. The system also provides supply chain improvements with warehouse management and a bill of materials accuracy. All of this is encompassed by improvements to project life-cycle, letting you see top level and more granular views of the project with a few clicks.

Manufacturing Execution Solutions

The Dynamics 365 system can greatly improve execution in your manufacturing processes through inventory management and traceability down the line. You will be able to easily spot inefficiencies and seamlessly provide solutions to those inefficiencies with an all encompassing inventory management system. Imagine having the ability to see the status of a project without requesting specific information from end-users and having a comprehensive understanding with reportable data at a moment's notice. This provides a massive benefit not only for your internal tracking and processes, but for requests from the client as well.

Supply Chain Management

Dynamics 365 can help manufacturing supply chains through warehouse management data and seamless creation of bill of materials. Here at MCA Connect, we know one of the hardest aspects of a manufacturing process to manage is the constant changes and updates to the system. Having one place to go to see a quick update on order status can keep you out of the weeds, while still remaining entrenched in the overall process. Dynamics 365 for Manufacturers also makes producing a bill of materials easy. When you are looking to build out the finer details and materials needed for manufacturing, the easier this process can be, the better. Imagine a system that streamlines these processes, rather than trying to squeeze your processes into a system that doesn't function as well as it should. Your solution is Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations.



Unique Aspects of ERP Solutions for the Manufacturing Industry

Project Lifecycle Management

Project lifecycle covers the processes and intricacies of a project, in this case a manufacturing project, from top to bottom. From the original inception to the completion of the project, lifecycle management is something all manufacturing companies should be focused on. Having a detailed report generated, giving you the ability to quickly spot areas for improvement, will greatly improve productivity over time. Our experts know the possible benefits to these systems and can customize your processes to fit within the system. Utilizing a top ERP provider ensures your project functions the way it needs to, includes the functionality it should, and removes any bloat from your software to give you polished, professional software designed to help you improve over time.

One Connected Operation

A proper ERP implementation takes all of the facets of your operations, from sales to shipping, and unifies it into something manageable and easily reported on. With massive improvements to your internal systems, you prepare yourself for growth over time. These connections keep downtime to a minimum while increasing work efficiency and quickly fills holes in your supply chain. Not only can your shop-floor worker's performance be readily tracked, but reports can be pulled instantly by higher level users in the system. This provides a layer of security and responsibility for each aspect of your processes, unmatched by other systems.

Minimize Business Disruption

Business disruptors directly impact your bottom line and if left unchecked, can cost millions of dollars and lead to extremely unhappy clients. Utilizing systems intended to minimize business disruptions can be a solution you didn't know you needed until it is implemented. Having flexible and functional software implemented allows you to grow and scale your systems, train your users, and minimize downtime.



Developing an Upgrade Strategy

Developing an upgrade strategy takes knowledge, time, and resources within your company and externally. Creating and sticking to a road map ensures your manufacturing ERP implementation goes as smoothly as possible. Most of this implementation strategy falls to understanding the nature of an ERP system and the solutions it can provide for a company.

Stakeholders

ERP systems and their implementations are a little more advanced and comprehensive than many other types of infrastructure system implementations. From an organizational point of view, an ERP system can touch all of the various aspects of your company from production to sales, and everything in between. Each implementation project has internal and external stakeholders. If you have full buy-in from top to bottom, your project is sure to run much more smoothly. Some specific internal stakeholders may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- CEO/Owner of the company
- CFO/ Chief Accountant
- Project Manager
- CIO/IT Manager
- Sales/Marketing
- System Users

Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders are the folks within your company who will be working on or monitoring the project in any capacity. This typically includes project managers, project teams, functional managers, and directors at the very minimum. We typically see better success when executives are brought into the process as well. Each internal stakeholder should feel some ownership of the implementation and be readily communicative throughout the entire process. Internal stakeholders are a team of individuals or groups of people who are fully devoted to launching and utilizing this technological upgrade to the fullest extent. If possible, it is best to have these stakeholders only focused on the ERP implementation throughout the process. Sometimes this is impossible as business must go on and having someone drop everything to devote the fullest extent of their time to an IT project can be challenging, but it is recommended to have full devotion.

External Stakeholders

Vendors, consultants, and third party support providers are all covered under the umbrella of external stakeholders. These are folks who are not formal members of the project as they relate to the implementation, but are still vital to the success overall. Quality vendors and consultants are both critical components of a successful manufacturing ERP implementation. External stakeholders are those who have the critical knowledge to ensure success with your implementation and should be collaborated with throughout the entire process. External stakeholders are expected to provide suggestions designed to increase the effectiveness and functionality of your ERP system. Auditing information systems, performing data analysis, recommending hardware and software, implementing hardware and software and training end users, are all duties of external stakeholders.

Roadmap

Creating a road map in the initial stages of implementation planning allows a clear picture to be painted, and milestones to be established. Creating milestones for an ERP implementation makes it easy to find where the implementation is sitting in the process, identify shortfalls, and can be monitored for accuracy as you move through the process. This road map serves as an accountability factor for both internal stakeholders and external. Many folks in the industry remember the days of “waterfall” implementation of IT systems. Specifications were set, duties were assigned, and the project was given a large timeline for implementation without checks and balances along the way. This led to poor implementations and consistent frustration with “improved” technology systems. An accurate and thorough road map keeps all of these problems from arising by having a ready and consistent updated source for anyone who feels the need to be able to take a look and see what’s been done and how far the project has to go.

Common ERP Implementation Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Utilizing all of the sections above to create a comprehensive upgrade/implementation strategy helps things run smoothly, but there are some major risk factors to stay away from when you are looking to implement an ERP system.

Not Fully Exploring Requirements of ERP System

Exploring all of the requirements you desire for your ERP system from the start can help you and your company get through the implementation with ease. Neglecting a full audit of the potential ERP, can remove critical pieces of your business process from integration with an ERP system. As advanced as the systems and functionality have become, the possibilities for implementation are nearly endless. Be sure to communicate with your providers and consultants on the potential build out as well as the areas you desire integration. There is potential that your provider or consultant has come across the same problem in the past and understands how to properly implement your request.

Not Including Users in Decision Making Process

End-users are those who will be using the system on a day to day basis. Keeping these folks in the loop throughout the implementation process provides a fresh perspective on the implementation. The specific struggles faced as a CIO are far different than those working on the shop floor. Including end-users in the process allows them to feel some ownership of the project as well. If end-users are handed a finished product after having limited or no influence on the project, it can lead to frustrations and poor implementations.



Common ERP Implementation Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Underestimating Budget

ERP systems are created to make your business processes more efficient and save you money in the long run, but the initial investment can be surprising to some. If that initial budget starts to increase, the sky's the limit. Ensuring you have a measurable and accurate road map to stick to can ensure you are both hitting timeline goals and staying within budget. A few items which can unexpectedly increase budget include the following:

- Deployment - Who, when, where?
- Software Licensing - You will have to license the product itself.
- User base - How many users will your implementation need to include?
- Infrastructure investments - Hardware and software.
- Integrations and third-party tools - Which third party tools and integrations will you use?
- Customizations and development
 - Will customizations be handled internally or externally?
- Training - In house or third-party?
- Ongoing support and maintenance - Who helps when things break?
- Scalability - Is your system built to scale, or is it limited by certain factors?

Understanding Cloud vs. On Premises ERP Systems

Cloud based ERP systems are stored on servers to readily display information no matter which network you are connected to. While On Premise solutions require a dedicated, on-site server to handle the passing of information. There are pros and cons to each implementation and these should be examined before moving towards implementing an ERP system. If you choose an on-premise option, you will rely on your internal IT department to set up, manage, and integrate changes to the system. If you choose a cloud based solution you push the hosting and maintenance off onto your ERP provider. Implementing a cloud based ERP system can free up otherwise useful time in your IT department, but leaves you at the mercy of your provider should you ever need anything related to the software.

Irregular Communication

Communication is vital through the process of an ERP implementation. As long as each team (consultants, providers, internal teams) stay communicative, the process for implementation can run smoothly. If you find yourself wondering what your provider is doing, or communication seems sporadic in the early stages, it may be time to look elsewhere.

Testing Environment

Implementing a "sandbox" or test environment which runs parallel to your live software gives you an environment to test new features. If you are not sure how a new data source will talk with your systems, you can test things out in your testing environment. While everyone can benefit from a testing environment, this process is especially useful for large businesses, new clients, and any creative ideas.

Not Taking Advantage of Features

As technology expands, so do the available features of an ERP system. Fully exploring the functionality and potential features to implement can keep your software implementation on the cutting edge of tech. It is up to you to discuss the areas you think your ERP implementation can impact your business. Then it is up to the provider and consultants to take a look at those potentials and give you a good idea of what the implementation would look like. On the same hand, we see folks who implement bloated systems with too much functionality, end up frustrated. Take a hard look at the items you want to implement and how they will be used. The last thing you want in an ERP implementation is to have functionality underutilized.

Common ERP Implementation Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Not Investing in Training and Change Management

Training and change management are vital aspects to any ERP implementation. As we have discussed previously, end-user knowledge of your software is extremely important in an implementation. While gaining critical input through the development process helps your efforts, training those end-users is going to determine the amount of success you see initially and down the road. An ERP system is designed to improve productivity and performance for the vital areas of your business and having properly trained end users sets up that improvement as soon as you push your systems live. Empowering your end users with the knowledge to fully understand your ERP system leads them to be more receptive of changes down the road. Which leads us to change management. Most change management plans start with the planning phase. A written plan should be established and confirmed by both the internal project team and ERP vendor. Time-lines, responsibilities, communication, training, and support should all be included in your change management plan. Creating a comprehensive plan can ensure roadblocks are cleared quickly and keeps those who are not integral, out of the weeds. Ongoing training and support is just as important, if not more, than the implementation itself. As needs arise you and your team will need experts to lean on. These areas are designed to create an engaging and desirable outcome for your implementation for its users across the board.

Not Performing a Mock Go-Live

Similar to the development environment above, it is important to have a mock go-live for your systems before the full go live, so you can explore problems from a tech standpoint all the way to end-user errors and everything in between. This phase is vital to see how the specific software will integrate with your systems. The majority of edge case problems are found in this mock go-live.

Not Addressing Security and Archiving

ERP systems are data hounds and without the proper technological infrastructure, you run the risk of security vulnerabilities and run through data storage rather quickly. Implementing the proper data warehousing solutions can save a lot of data hassles down the road.



Develop and Execute an Implementation Plan

Gaining internal buy-in from the implementers as well as your executive team is a linchpin when implementing a manufacturing ERP system. We have put together a handy guide for a successful ERP implementation which walks you through many of the steps we recommend to gain this buy-in.

Assemble Your Team

Internal Team

Gaining interest and buy-in from a few areas of your business is key to a successful ERP implementation. Each implementation strategy starts with aligning business goals and vision with the senior management team. Getting these executives on-board can ensure you have adequate resources and attention to the project. ERP implementations without the good graces of an executive team become much more of a struggle. Once you have the buy-in of your executive team, you should bring the folks who will be directly impacted by the updated technology up-to-speed on what you are looking to do. These include engineers and shop floor workers, your sales team, and your warehouse staff (if applicable). These are the people who will be able to point out further inefficiencies and possible implementation solutions for your ERP. Getting them involved early in the process prevents roadblocks from popping up as you work through your implementation road map.

External Team

Just as important, if not more, is the onboarding of your external team. These are the experts in the field and can translate the desires of your team into a functional solution within your ERP system. These folks include your ERP provider (if you've chosen one) and any consultants you will be collaborating with on the implementation. Creating actionable and implementable solutions to your ERP system is key to full functionality containing all the bells and whistles you are looking for, without extra pieces you won't use or don't need. Your external team has a wealth of knowledge when it comes to a manufacturing ERP implementation, be sure to utilize this resource to the fullest extent.

Create a Change Management Plan

Along with an ERP implementation comes some pretty heavy changes in your organization. Having a plan for training and informing the users of your implementation, creates a smooth implementation from start to finish. Change management is the people part of your ERP project and sending out a few internal newsletters and sending the users to training will not suffice for a proper manufacturing ERP implementation.

Estimating Budget for Implementation

A manufacturing ERP implementation has many moving parts and can affect each aspect of your business in some manner. Properly estimating expectations and budget keeps things from getting out of hand, and sets the stage for the solutions you are looking to implement. Understanding the pieces of your business you are looking to revolutionize, should be done from the start. As new ideas and solutions pop up, your budget can skyrocket. Having a good idea of what you are looking for after you've discussed with your provider and consultants, keeps much of the headache out of the picture as you work through the implementation.

Start Data Migration

Data is the cornerstone of any ERP implementation, but even more so in a manufacturing ERP system. Examining and collecting all of the data currently stored in your systems gives you, your consultant team, and provider, an opportunity to investigate inefficiencies in data structure and develop solutions for these problems within your current system. Many industry operators refer to this as data cleansing. Taking your data and removing the fluff to provide actionable and measurable performance indicators, keeps you from wasting your time and implementing solutions you don't need.

Develop and Execute an Implementation Plan

Train Your Users

Training the folks who will utilize the new software is arguably the most important part of a manufacturing ERP software system. You can have executive buy-in, the most comprehensive change management plan, and each piece of the puzzle put together properly for a smooth implementation, but if you are lacking the necessary training for your users, your system will fall flat on its face. Supplying your users with an in-depth understanding of the solutions the software will provide and its functionality, will help your implementation efforts in every regard.

Monitor Go-Live

Having a team to monitor your software go-live keeps bugs at bay and gives your implementation the attention it deserves. As your systems begin processing and reporting on your data, there are sure to be problems. Your go-live team typically includes both internal and external stakeholders to spot mistakes and quickly develop solutions for the problems which have arisen.

Evaluate Success

ERP implementation success is different for every project and moves in waves. Initially, a big win is proper reporting, while down the road, success may involve having company-wide implementation and proper execution. Developing these milestones for success can ensure you are moving in the right direction and not spinning your wheels. Be sure to include external stakeholders in success discussions as they may have more insight on milestones than you can build yourself.



Training Employees and Gaining Buy In

While we mentioned the importance of training the users who will be utilizing your software, we want to devote a section of this guide to training users properly as this is an item that can derail the entire implementation.

In Person Training

In-person training is a luxury that may not be available across the board for your users as many systems are spread across many states or countries. Grouping a large enough group of users for cost-effective training can be challenging at best, and impossible at worst. There are pros and cons for in-person training and e-learning. In-person training allows instant feedback and communication so you can explore solutions quickly, rather than wait on digital feedback and clarifications. In-person training for your ERP system also allows you to engage in role-based training which is catered to each role in the system, rather than a more general training without the focus of a specified training.

E-learning

E-learning is a remote end-user training option which removes the need for each cohort to be conducted in the same location. These options are far easier to organize and execute over their in-person counterparts. As long as you have a cloud based training system, you can literally have your users do the training from anywhere in the world. This is obviously a much less intrusive option on your overall operations. Remote training can take place at the leisure of your users, but it would be wise to set some type of deadline for them. There are third-party training options as well as provider built solutions for training your manufacturing ERP users.

Post Implementation

Your users have gone through an initial rigorous training program, and you feel they are locked in and ready to go, but as your systems scale and new users join the team, you need to revisit your training from time to time. Our MCA Advantage offering gives you managed support throughout the process, as no ERP implementation is ever “finished”. There are 9 main areas you need post-implementation support and all of them are covered fully in our MCA Advantage guide. These nine areas are:

- Environment Updates
- Continuous Updates
- User Support
- Issue & Request Tracking
- Data Security
- Data Management
- Reporting
- Deferred Initiatives
- Process & Performance Improvements

As new solutions and implementations arise, you will find yourself in need of updates to your software environment to make sure you are staying on the cutting edge of your software and fully utilizing all of the features. Continuous updates, user support, issue requests, and tracking, fall in the area of staying lean and functional. Small errors will pop up and having the ability to quickly execute the fixes improves uptime. Data security and management strictly deals with the data within your systems. Having the most advanced security and data management software lets you rest easy that your system’s data is safe and functional. Take a look at the guide mentioned above for more information on these areas of ongoing support.

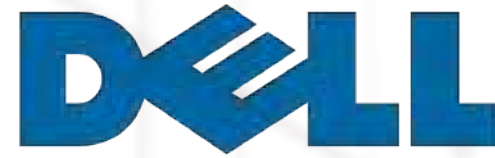
Customer Success



Wenger

Wenger manufacturing offers engineer to order, single-screw extruders, twin-screw extruders, dryers & coolers, flavor coating, enrobing systems, and control systems to their clients. Our case study on Wenger Manufacturing dives deep into the implementation and solutions, but a summarized version is included here for brevity's sake. Wenger's tech department started to notice room for improvement in manufacturing time and came to MCA Connect, for the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations (ERP) and Customer Engagement (CRM). They knew they needed their production time to go down, but had trouble finding actionable solutions for their problem. In their new system, they wanted an intuitive user interface to attract, train, and retain employees in their rural locations.

Most of the project was centered around system consolidation and ended up halving production time once the system was humming. These improvements led to much higher customer satisfaction and efficiencies in production, as well as insight with business intelligence tools. As a result, Wenger Manufacturing expects to be able to add \$3-6 million worth of profit to their books, and continue to have great success post implementation.



DELL

Dell is among the most well-known technology brands in the world. They were one of the first to sell computer products directly to consumers. Dell needed solutions to match their high-volume, high-variability, configure-to-order manufacturing processes and an agile ERP solution was our suggested implementation. The Microsoft Dynamics system we built out is now Dell's core Manufacturing Execution System (MES). This MES uses the Lean, Production, Inventory, Quality, and Trade modules built into Dynamics 365 to manage over one million transactions each day and manages all of Dell's factory operations. "We use Microsoft Dynamics end-to-end. It handles everything from raw materials coming in the front door, to kitting and material handling, all the way to our burn process through to shipping out the back door to our customers" - Matt Griffiths, Executive Director of Manufacturing IT for Dell.

These changes to Dell's core processes dramatically simplified their IT infrastructure and realigned manufacturing processes based on lean principles. All of this was implemented with a focus on maintaining flexible options to meet the ever-changing needs of this powerhouse technology company. Dell continues to realize considerable IT cost savings, while increasing efficiency and boosting agility.

About MCA Connect

Founded in 2002, MCA Connect's history is deeply rooted in manufacturing. We understand the culture and concerns of the manufacturing industry on a deep level and specialize in the optimization of high-complexity, high-variation manufacturing environments through Microsoft Dynamics and our manufacturing solution accelerators. MCA Connect has always been 100% dedicated to the Microsoft solution stack and has grown to cover a wide array of capabilities, including ERP, CRM, Business Analytics, Azure & IoT, and Field Service.

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