



Grow Your
Business with
Confidence




Ready, Set, Grow Your Business

No matter what type of business you own, your business depends on the people who run it. Equip them with the information and tools they need to work efficiently and watch your business thrive.

Every growing organization reaches a tipping point where the very tools that supported their initial growth begin to hinder their ability to act with agility and insight. Is your business at that point?

Evaluating new business management solutions may seem daunting. But the options and resources available for small to mid-sized businesses have never been better—or more affordable.

Use this guide and supporting resources to:

-  Identify the signs your business is ready for a new business management solution.
-  Understand the questions you should ask during the evaluation process.
-  Learn how a business solution from Microsoft can help you grow your business with confidence.

Signs Your Stand-Alone Accounting System Can No Longer Stand Alone

You can apply workarounds in the short-term, but the longer you wait, the more your business is at risk. If you identify with any of these scenarios, it's time to replace your existing system.

You can't keep up with demand even as you add headcount. As you expand product lines and enter new markets, your business processes become more complex. Growth requires more productivity and collaboration across business functions. You need business process automation to handle growth without adding to your payroll.

You can't wrap your arms (or your head) around the business anymore. There used to be a one-to-one correspondence between your employees and the business functions they managed. Now it takes a village. Data moves from desk to desk, and you don't have the controls in place to ensure a detailed and accurate audit trail. It's a risk you can no longer afford to take. A growing business needs well-defined roles and processes, supported and enforced by technology systems, that enable tighter control over payment, shipping, vendor and hiring choices, and more.

You are reactive when you need to be proactive. Sure you know your sales performance, but do you know who your most profitable customers are or which products produce the highest margins? With a view only into past performance, you may be missing the insight to move your business forward. To beat the competition you need full visibility into what drives your profitability and the ability to turn those profits into the cash flow that will support your future growth.

You can't keep up with customer expectations. If you don't have the right systems in place to track customer interactions and forecast demand, and those systems don't talk to each other, you may find yourself unable to meet customer expectations. To compete in an increasingly competitive global economy, you need a well-tuned supply chain and the ability to manage customer and vendor requirements.

Is your business ready?

Read the following white paper from Focus Research to understand the benefits of Enterprise Resource Management (ERP), evaluate if your business is ready for ERP, and learn how you can improve business performance by deploying the right solution.

Download now 



The Signs Are Clear, Now What?

Evaluate Your Options

As you begin your research process, you'll find there are many Enterprise Resource Management (ERP) or *business management* systems to consider. In fact, from a functionality perspective it may even be hard to tell many of them apart.

Most solutions offer financial management and reporting, supply chain management, and some level of project, service, and customer relationship management capabilities. Some vendors also offer advanced analytic capabilities and functionality targeted for specific vertical industries.

You'll need to determine the basic functionality you require. But if 90% of functionality is consistent across vendor systems, you also need to think *beyond the basics*. Consider key differentiators like the user experience, collaborative capabilities, deployment options, and, of course, whether the solution is at a price point that your business can afford.



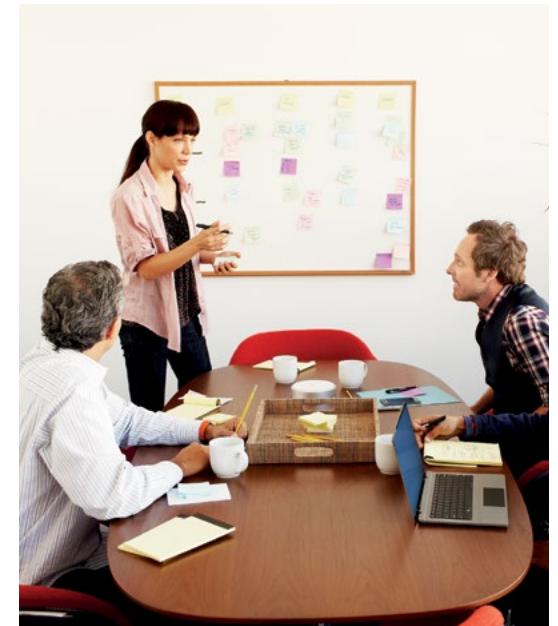
Questions to Ask During the Evaluation Process

Here are five questions you can ask to push past the basics.

1 How easy is the system to learn and use?

When was the last time you consulted a training manual to use Facebook? Every application should be so intuitive. When learning curves go down so do training costs, and time-to-value goes up. Make sure you select a vendor who offers a solution with:

- **A simple, intuitive user experience.** Nothing increases user productivity more than a role specific interface, personalized dashboards, and clear workflows.
- **Built-in productivity tools.** If it's familiar, it's easy. The best systems are *fully interoperable* with your Microsoft Office applications like Word, Excel, Outlook and Lync, and with other collaboration and analytics tools like Microsoft SharePoint and SQL Server.





Read the Microsoft Dynamics ERP Deployment Guide to learn which deployment options would best fit your business.

Download now 

2 Does the solution support the new ways people want to work?

The consumerization of technology has blurred the line between personal and work computing. Users expect that the software they use, whether designed for business or for fun, will be intuitive, accessible from any type of device, and always available.

Inventory the devices—laptops, notepads, smart phones—in your environment, and then assess how well each vendor solution can support those devices and the key applications used by your employees. A best in class solution will provide your team with access on the devices that make them the most productive whether they're in the office, at home, or working from a remote location.

3 Does the vendor offer deployment options that fit my business?

As you evaluate a new business management solution you may also want to evaluate the IT model needed to support it. If you're running an online version of an entry-level accounting solution, do you plan to invest in the infrastructure to maintain your new solution in-house? Or do you want to maintain a cloud-based solution? If you are using an outdated legacy system do you want to move to an outsourced or cloud-based deployment?

The best vendors offer the option of a cloud-based or partner-hosted deployment, in addition to the standard on-premises options. There are advantages to each option. Cloud-based solutions, for example, can eliminate the large upfront hardware needs, while you have more immediate control over an onsite deployment.

Look for a vendor who offers choice and flexibility to support the model that's best for you.

4 What is the vendor's service model after the sale?

Most organizations don't go solo when deploying an ERP system. To ensure the consistency and predictability of your operations, you may require implementation assistance, system integration, or ongoing support. Does the vendor have a service and implementation ecosystem with providers in your local area?

And will the vendor provide innovative solutions to help you adapt to new market complexities? As a business owner, you know better than most how important it is to deliver value to your customers. Does the vendor demonstrate an ongoing commitment to technology advancement?

Finally, don't forget about pricing fluctuations beyond the first year. Providers can offer low monthly payments that dramatically increase after your first contract expires. If they are holding your data, that can leave you at risk.

5 Does the vendor understand and focus on the needs of small and mid-sized businesses?

Ideally, when you deploy a business management system, you'll achieve benefits that go beyond mere automation of manual processes. New business management software can help an organization:

- Increase sales with fewer sales discounts
- Improve sales force effectiveness and the average order size
- Increase inventory turns while reducing stock-outs
- Reduce production costs

As you evaluate vendors, consider their track record for helping businesses like yours achieve the results you want. Ask for customer case studies and be sure to call references. It's a big decision. Do your homework.

More than three million users from a wide range of industries count on Microsoft Dynamics to drive their business forward. Read a collection of case studies to the right, and learn how Microsoft Dynamics is helping these small and mid-sized businesses gain greater control, drive bottom line results, and stay ahead of the competition.

Microsoft Dynamics Customer Stories

- **Historic Manufacturer**
Revitalizes Operations and Expands Sales with Cloud-Based Business Solution
- **Mobile Solution Provider**
Streamlines and Connects Business Processes to Save Four Days of Work Per Month
- **Semiconductor Maker**
Implements ERP Solution in Six Weeks, Gains a Firm Grasp on Its Business
- **Healthcare Software Provider**
Gets Control over Costs and Full View of Financial Information for Rapid Growth
- **Printer Parts Distributor**
Increases Cash Flow and Margins with Microsoft

Read the
top reasons
to purchase
a business
solution from
Microsoft

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Grow without Growing Pains with a Business Solution from Microsoft

The best solutions for business are simple, usable, and flexible—and they're also from Microsoft. Microsoft Dynamics gives small and mid-sized businesses like yours complete control over your core business processes. Our business management solutions are easy to use and easy to deploy, so you can quickly, simply, and finally transcend the limits of your overworked and undersized accounting software.

- **People get it.** Microsoft Dynamics solutions look and work like Microsoft Office. That means everyone can jump right in and get to work.
- **It works the way you do.** Because it's role-tailored to give your people relevant insights for their day-to-day work, and with the right information at their fingertips, they can not only solve today's problems, but also plan for tomorrow.
- **It's on your terms.** With Microsoft Dynamics, your team can work when and where it works best—at the office, at home, or on the road. Cloud and on-premises deployments give you the flexibility to choose what's best for your business.
- **It reduces your risk.** After decades of experience and thousands of successful projects, our local implementation partners are there with you every step of the way. With RapidStart Services, implementations can take less time and less money than going through a manual setup. And you can import data from your legacy accounting system, so you can be up and running in fewer hours and with less risk.

Get Started with Microsoft Dynamics

Visit us to chat online with a Microsoft representative, take a product test drive, or learn more about our solutions and pricing packages for small and mid-sized businesses.

Call 1-888-477-7989 to speak directly to a Microsoft Representative.

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