



9 Questions to Ask at an ERP Demo

Use these 9 questions to help you make the choice that is right for your business.



1. How long have you been in business?

An experienced company will know and understand your business requirements and how to meet them. You will get more accurate time frame and budget estimates, as well as access to their knowledge and expertise to help you take your business to the next level. **Most importantly you get a track record, and with so many failed implementations in the industry, making sure yours doesn't fail should be a priority.**

2. Are you showing us the exact same version of the software you would implement for us?

Marketing materials are often sent to partners long before the versions they belong to are available. In some cases, the sales team is selling one product, while the implementation team implements the version or package they have the most experience with. It can be very confusing with so many different competing products falling under one brand. **If you are being shown the latest and greatest version, make sure that it is the same version that will be implemented in your business.**

3. Can you drill down into the underlying transactional information?

Make sure the system gives you the power to navigate from a high level down to the lowest level. Each department in your organisation should be able to perform an analysis on where and how their money was spent by drilling down through their daily, weekly or monthly reports. It is no good having a pretty chart or report if you can't determine what makes up the numbers. **Make sure you will be able to drill all the way through to the source document and quickly establish why something doesn't look right.**

4. Are the inventory, warehouse, manufacturing and financial modules all linked?

When different departments work in siloed systems and overlapping databases, duplications increase and tasks take longer to complete. Separate systems working together bring additional challenges to any implementation. These include additional parties, hidden costs, integration complications, usability concerns, and lack of access to real time information about your business. These costs may not be worth it if those features aren't significantly better than the ones in systems that have those features natively. An integrated ERP system means everyone engages with one ERP system in real time that simplifies operations instead

of complicating them. **Make sure you get the entire picture and do what is right for your business.**

5. What need of ours do you think you meet perfectly?

The needs of your business may overlap with others in your industry, but ultimately the specifics are completely unique to you. The ERP vendor will spend a lot of time telling you what their product is capable of doing but you will want to get direct answers about whether it can meet your exact business requirements. **Make sure you will be investing in a product that can simplify, facilitate and streamline processes, not create more obstacles and obstructions.**

6. What need of ours don't you feel you can meet?

There is no such thing as a "one size fits all". Every business has something unique about it. While there is a chance your business can move onto an out-of-the-box ERP system without any tailoring or customisation, it is unlikely. Are they honest and understand your needs well enough to identify any gaps, advise on workarounds and know what the complications will be? Do they have the local expertise to customise easily and cost-effectively? **Make sure your ERP vendor will be delivering an exact fit for your business.**

7. What is a realistic time frame to implement this project?

Will they give you an honest, and well considered estimate? What is their track record for on-time, in-budget implementations? Fortunately, there are many reports online giving details on ERP implementation times and success rates. **Do the research beforehand and compare their estimate.**

8. When a support call is placed, who is the first person we talk to and what is their background and experience with the software?

It is important to understand the level of support available. Will you have access to experts who can resolve your issue quickly? Or are you getting bounced around and being left frustrated. Ask for references, speak to some of their existing clients about the service and support they have received from the vendor. **You want to make sure that they are there when you need them.**

9. What implementation problems have you faced with similar companies?

It is important to establish the types of problems that could be faced upfront. This is also a good question to gauge the reseller's experience in your industry as well as their honesty. There will be problems with your implementation, but an experienced team will pre-empt and help you mitigate some of the bigger ones. **Make sure your bases are covered by selecting a team who have seen it all before.**

When you ask these questions, don't just evaluate the quality of the answers. Pay as much attention to how willing a vendor is to be open, honest, accurate, and helpful throughout. An ERP demo is a valuable way to vet not only the product, but the provider as well.

