

Overcome the barriers and embrace
your 'SupERPowers'

Resistance of Change

k3 syspro³

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Overcome the barriers and embrace your 'SupERPowers'

It is not necessarily the strongest, or the most intelligent, who are most likely to survive, but those who are most responsive to change.

This is a theory attributed not to Henry Ford, or any industrial analyst, but to Charles Darwin. That said, an inability to handle change signposts a far swifter route to extinction in the commercial world than it does in the natural one. The once-dominant, high street retailing giants can testify to that, as they have struggled first with retail parks and now with internet shopping trends.

For manufacturers, implementing ERP is probably the most significant voluntary change they can undertake right now. It is also just about the most challenging. Nevertheless, the rewards are immense for companies that get it right, which is why we like the expression 'embracing supERPowers' – we are talking about a radical transformation of business operations to exploit the powerful advantages of ERP.

Far from being a superficial add-on, ERP demands deep-rooted, systematic change within an organisation. Given the complexities of selecting ERP systems, seeing the implementation through and even setting goals as a first step, it is hardly surprising when projects fall short of their potential. Knowing the likely problems and planning to avoid them is crucial.

Barriers to ERP Change

There are several barriers to change that need to be overcome in the case of ERP, but it doesn't have to be a highly stressful process and success is perfectly available, when the barriers are correctly addressed. These include:

- Resistance to change by people
- A lack of relevant skills in the company
- Inadequate project management
- Overemphasis on one aspect of the business.

Besides these specific barriers, lesser obstacles can throw a project off course:

- Moving goal posts (changing objectives)
- Insufficient internal communication of developments
- Inconsistent drive or failing momentum behind the project

Resistance to Change

Generally, people don't like change so it's normal to encounter resistance within some, if not all, departments. However, by tackling each of the other hindrances and then training, involving and communicating with them appropriately, individuals and departments can be reassured that change is not only beneficial, but necessary to keep the business competitive.

We recently visited a chemicals company to discuss how ERP solutions might boost performance. On the face of it, this is a model global business. It manufactures in India, sources its raw materials in China and has its main warehouse in Holland. Yet on closer inspection, it was not hard to see that the company is creaking at the seams.

A lack of investment has left the business in a difficult place, with staff working with an unsupported IT system, leading to wasted time duplicating data input and a reliance on fax machines to send and receive orders. Not only is this time-consuming, but it also opens up opportunity for errors to creep into the processes.

As is often the case, key employees in the business hold deeply entrenched views about how best to do their job. They are suspicious of technology and fearful of automation. They still use a fax machine to send and receive orders and the inadequacy of technology means the company's systems are at breaking point.

These systems have been put under further pressure since manufacturing was moved to Asia. Different divisions are unable to share and access centralised data, which is having a negative impact on productivity, efficiency and ultimately, customer satisfaction.

People Power

The way to tackle the problems this company faces is not just about parachuting-in a new technology solution but also about forging a common 'will' to make it happen successfully. Understanding existing points of view and how individuals currently relate to each other in their roles is essential. This is the first step in the vital process of informing and reassuring people about ERP and how it will change their working life for the better.

Departmental self-interests and the personalities driving them are always going to vary, so it's difficult to cover all angles and anticipate any given situation. There are key people in every business department who could play an important part in ERP implementation but let's spotlight a few of the cast in our chemicals company example.



Tina in IT...

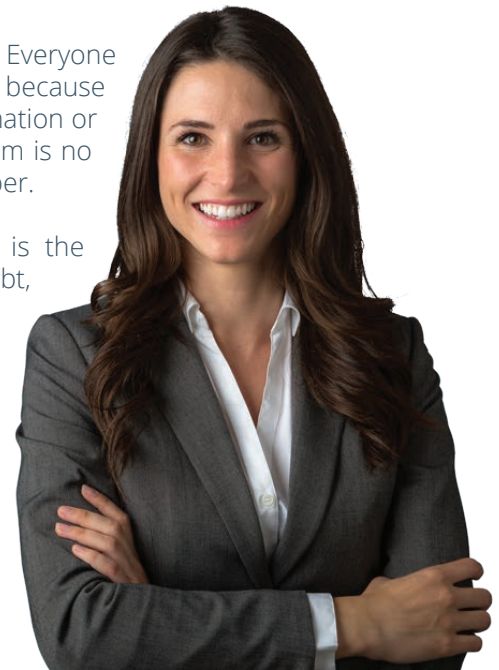
Will I lose my job thanks to automation?

Tina in IT

Extreme frustration sums up Tina's day-to-day experience at work. Everyone points the finger at the company's IT systems when things go wrong - because they have failed, are too slow, or don't provide enough useful information or functionality. The problem is all the worse because the legacy system is no longer supported, either by a vendor, or its original in-house developer.

In Tina's case she knows that a fully implemented ERP system is the answer but has to keep an outdated system together. Without doubt, as an enthusiast for numbers and data management, and with an appreciation of ERP and the current system's shortcomings, she would be an essential candidate for the ERP project team.

The IT department, though heavily occupied in collating and transferring data to the new system, would be fully supported by the ERP company and ultimately benefit immensely from the efficiency and wide-ranging capability of the system when implemented. Tina could spend less time fire-fighting and more time fine tuning, while other sections of the business access the data they need quickly and independently.



Tom the Ordering and Stock Manager

As a long-standing employee Tom has an established, spreadsheet system that he understands and trusts. The inventory system has limitations and it's laborious but it works. Despite the many challenges of the job, he makes sure that stock gets replenished and production is rarely held up for want of parts and materials. One of the challenges he faces is predicting the future - How is he expected to know, for certain, which customer will be next to place an order and for what products?

Although Tom is suspicious of technology that he considers might replace him, he realises that his job is becoming more difficult and complex as the business grows. Besides this he is coming under more pressure to minimise stock levels. Rather than just keeping pace, in reality, Tom would be able focus on stock control activities that would make a genuine difference to the performance of the business in terms of efficiency, costs and cash flow, given the implementation of ERP. In fact, automated ERP and inventory control management should be prioritised by every growing manufacturer. It can pull in useful data from every digitised part of the supply chain, giving as true an account of the stock position as possible, so that the most cost effective buying decisions can be made.



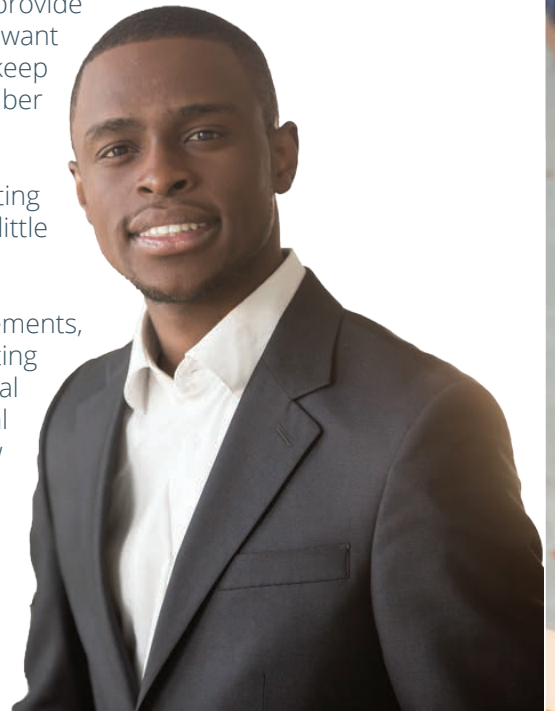
Phil the Finance Director

One of Phil's bugbears is the diversification caused by spreading company operations across the world. The satellite organisations not only provide financial information in different formats but the directors also want financial reports presented differently. His finance team struggle to keep up with the demands of company expansion and the increasing number of governmental rules and taxation peculiarities they encounter.

Even without the overseas issues, forecasting and regular reporting has always been unnecessarily complicated for Phil, as there is very little cohesion in the way the various business departments record data.

With Phil's crucial input in mapping the company's finance requirements, he could look forward to a smoothly functioning financial accounting system, providing company-wide control and integration of financial information. In his situation, a joined-up, digitised system is essential to strategic decision making. An ERP financial module would allow central tracking of all accounting data, regardless of its international origin, languages and currency differences.

What about fear of change and reluctance to relinquish the current financial software? Phil really has too much to gain to let those concerns stand in the way. An ERP company can provide all the support and expertise he wants to construct the optimum system. The end result will take pressure off his team and give him unprecedented financial visibility, right across the company.



Kirsty in Customer Service

Kirsty feels like she's left in the dark too often and only hopes her customers don't feel the same way. She is all too familiar with the concept of information silos within the various sections of the company. Knowing where to look for the information is no longer enough. Kirsty needs to spend less time digging around for the data she needs to respond to customers efficiently and she knows that without operational information at her fingertips, business sustainability is under threat.

Keen pricing ultimately falls flat when poor quality, or late deliveries have soured the customer relationship. If Kirsty could interact quickly and easily with production planning and monitoring, for example, she could give customers the information they need, from availability and lead time projections through to dispatch and delivery advice. ERP tools such as Manufacturing Execution System (MES), with real time data acquisition, visual scheduling, and real-time production scheduling would make sure Kirsty could help to keep customer orders on track.

Although product warranty issues don't arise in Kirsty's chemicals company, she has to respond quickly to quality problems. Given the all-round visibility of an integrated ERP system, Kirsty could be alert to any quality problems in the materials supply chain, or production in real time, leading the way to a rapid resolution for the customer.



Surish in the Sales Team

Sharing many common issues with Kirsty in customer service, Surish also wishes technology would allow him to market the business more effectively. He cannot track customer feedback as well as he would like and he finds that the current warehouse inventory system can be unreliable. Too often, deliveries fail to meet their target dates.

In terms of marketing and direct customer contact, he frequently worries that he may be focusing effort on the wrong thing at the wrong time. He is also aware that the current IT system does little to record and report the sales KPIs, which could help to increase sales performance and target activity more effectively.

While Surish uses CRM, he knows it lacks integration with the other business processes. With CRM as part of ERP software, the sales team could gather information from home and overseas and run detailed reports, for instance comparing sales orders with invoicing and conversion rates. A clear vision of the whole business, gained particularly by linking financial and CRM software, could allow him to transform the sales operation.

If the ERP system also offered cloud accessibility, the sales team could use their mobile devices to obtain live information on production, stock, sales and invoicing 'on the road'. Pricing confirmation and generating quotes would be so much easier and faster. While greatly improving their customer outreach, this capability would also help them to update their CRM data as it happens, rather than as a discrete reporting session.

Powers of Persuasion

When making the business case for ERP and wider digitisation, business leaders must navigate the minefield of personalities and respect the differing opinions of their staff. Some people are fiercely resistant to adopting new ways of working. Yet scratch beneath the surface and many of those objections are fuelled by misconceptions.

At K3, our job is to communicate the all-embracing benefits of ERP. Providers have traditionally focused on the big picture impacts on the company's bottom line. SupERPowers such as visibility, traceability, speed and joined up working, have demonstrable benefits. For our chemicals company, that means exploiting reliable centralised data, allowing different parts of the business to work in synergy and be robust enough to face challenges, such as Brexit.

Yet that business case then needs to drill down to individual employees. For ordering and stock manager Tom, that might mean demonstrating how our solutions automate mundane tasks, freeing him up to get on with more stimulating work.

For Phil the finance director, our reporting-focused modules would allow him to collate, analyse and disseminate critical data as and when required. Kirsty can provide customers with full visibility of how their order is progressing. Meanwhile, we could show Surish how ERP would give access to every piece of customer information to boost sales opportunities.

Only through that focused approach can true buy-in be achieved. For us, the focus is then on training and ensuring everyone in the business knows how to use it for their own benefit. That's how our solutions realise their potential.



Resistance Factors

ERP technology has created a foundation for smart and connected factories, forming the backbone of business management and security. The technology enables strong supply chain models to function, helping businesses integrate the value chain, better understand customers, enhance automation and become more responsive. Crucially it facilitates the transformation to factories of the future.

Although there are clear advantages of revolutionising a company through ERP, one or more key factors can derail an implementation project, even before it gets beyond an initial idea.

Automation

There are certainly grounds for apprehension about artificial intelligence in manufacturing businesses. 'I'll lose my job through automation' is a common fear expressed in the workplace.

Self-learning computer technology in the Industry 4.0 era means that machines will be capable of controlling their own production and logistics. They will connect with the Internet and interact with their environment, adjusting their operation to suit prevailing situations. As a consequence, production will be in real time, decentralised and individualised – down to batches of a unique item. Decision making will be done without human intervention, optimising production and managing all of the supply chain logistics.

Automation and the use of production robots generate considerable savings in the cost of labour and products. Once the preserve of the motor industry, robotic machines are beginning to be implemented in shop floors across the UK. At face value, the argument for robotics and automation is a strong one; they do not require annual salaries, they don't need leave or sickness days, and they can start up immediately, on demand. In many cases, manufacturing plants already have robots on the shop floor connected to their ERP systems, enabling them to begin production the moment a sales order is finalised, in order to deliver instant service to the customer.



Adam Baker @ BKW...

Customers have high expectations on delivery times, it's important for companies like us to keep pace

Robotics should be there to solve a problem in the business, often a manual, admin-heavy task; robots should not end up being supplemented by more manual work. In this regard, we can begin to create smarter factories where people collaborate with robots, tedious business processes are automated and people are being empowered by machines to make better decisions.

Obvious amongst the downsides of robotisation is the impact on jobs, education and skillset requirements and social change. There is a huge task in managing the necessary change, with potential for loss of workforce morale, disengagement and labour relations issues.

However, robots and automation can create jobs. This may seem counter intuitive but robots improve productivity, which boosts competitiveness, improves revenues, generates economies of scale, and therefore improves overall margins. This creates demand for more design and engineering jobs to innovate and create new products and services.

Instrumentation supplier, manufacturer and distributor, BKW Instruments, has acted to future-proof its business and sees technology as the key to continuing this. BKW began using K3 Syspro over seven years ago to improve its manufacturing and delivery processes. Since then, with the help of K3 experts it has adapted and developed its SYSPRO ERP system to make it work across the whole range of business processes.

SYSPRO allows for goods to be tracked through the system from the minute they arrive. When a Goods Received Note is put on the product, ERP allows everyone in the business, from customer services to logistics and despatch to track and trace. Moving from manual to automated processing systems prompted BKW to look at its whole logistics operation and how it could be streamlined by technology and automation. They implemented a carousel system, where stock is stored in bins and barcoded. The code pinpoints the precise item position in the shelving system.

But barcoding is only a part of the fully integrated system at BKW giving a competitive advantage. IT manager, Adam Baker, offered another example: *"The system has been built to be bespoke to BKW. It now allows us to produce quotes at the touch of a button, which means we have been able to generate twice as many quotes in a day as in the past. In a rapidly changing marketplace, where customers have high expectations on delivery times (driven by the likes of Amazon), it's important for companies like ours to be able to keep pace."*

Political and Economic Uncertainty

Hard Brexit, soft Brexit, no deal, no Brexit, transition negotiations, even a second referendum – however likely or unlikely the possible outcomes may be as we leave the EU, the UK faces years of uncertainty. Manufacturers large and small are still in the dark concerning future trade agreements, border control and customs issues, the costs of importing and exporting, labour and the extent of supply chain disruption.



Investment Downturn

A manufacturing investment slowdown has been [reported in a survey of 328 companies by EEF and Santander](#). In the past two years manufacturers invested 6.5% of turnover in new plant and machinery, down from 7.5% last year. A third of companies stated that Brexit has not affected their investment plans. Another third are investing to satisfy current plans but waiting for Brexit clarity before investing further, while thirteen per cent of companies are postponing investment altogether until details of our exit from the EU are fully evident. The outlook for investment by manufacturers is finely balanced with only a narrow majority expecting to be investing more on new equipment in the next two years. The survey examined investment in automation, showing that industry is progressing only slowly in automating processes. Reticence is due not just to caution but also to challenges from technology cost, ROI uncertainty and questions over capability to implement change successfully.

By implementing SYSPRO, Boss Design, a manufacturer of seating, totally transformed its operations. It enabled them to introduce a lean manufacturing environment and a payback on its investment many times over. When Boss brought in SYSPRO they were essentially starting with a clean sheet in many areas. But they also opted to start afresh in departments where they already had some controls. They transferred nothing

from the old accounts systems to the new ERP, for instance.

With such wide sweeping changes, SYSPRO's implementation was far more than just the introduction of a new IT package but the development of a new way of working. As a result there were many 'not done it this way before' issues. However, Boss took care to match the introduction with ample training and communication. In fact they took around 12 months to set up the system and processes and to prepare everyone, while K3 Syspro provided guidance and progress checks. The approach quickly paid off, as, within a few months of 'going live', everyone in the organisation was very comfortable with the changes and 'loving the system' as Virginia Seaward, the group's Head of Operations remarked.



Virginia Seaward @ Boss...

Within a few months of going live everyone in the organisation was very comfortable with the changes and loving the system

ERP in Support

So what influence should the current political and economic uncertainty have on the approach to ERP solutions?

It is important to consider that modern ERP systems are designed to allow companies to remodel and adjust to change with minimal disruption. Forecasting software allows businesses to explore different supply chain scenarios, allowing them to plan ahead and cope more fluidly when changes take place. With a strong supply chain framework in place there is a sharing of data, both upstream (with customers) and downstream (with suppliers) and supported by good ERP technology this renders companies resilient to change in the supply chain. This contributes to overall organisational resilience, which is vital in the unpredictable economic conditions we currently face.

ERP systems will deliver huge advantages over legacy data recording and management systems, due to the flexibility of ERP software to handle the changes in regulations, taxation, tariffs and documentation in a new international trade landscape.

Clinging to Legacy Technology

'Our systems work for us and they haven't failed yet' – this is a very common line of resistance to change and a difficult position to dislodge. Some companies have even developed their own bespoke software systems over the years and are particularly reluctant to move away from them. Yet technological evolution races ahead and will always be used by competitors to gain commercial advantage.

Although they may be doing the job for which they were designed, today's familiar technologies are on the path to obsolescence and the opportunity to improve on existing systems should always be explored. When looking at the cost of introducing ERP, it is equally important to question what is the cost of sticking with legacy systems instead?

One certainty is that the costs of maintaining legacy systems will only continue to rise. Failure rates will increase with aging software, as will vulnerability to security breaches. Vendors look to counteract security risk by producing security patches and updates for the at-risk software but only for as long as they continue to support the software. Ultimately the manufacturing company operating legacy technology can be dangerously exposed to security attack, unplanned downtime and serious loss of data.

In terms of future response to change, clinging to old systems is likely to be a highly restrictive option. As younger generations enter the workforce, a certain level of technology will be expected. At some point it will be extremely frustrating if they cannot interact with new technologies in the manufacturing environment. Legacy systems will have little chance of integrating with supply chain partners, limiting the speed and extent of information availability and throttling back performance.

Similarly mobility is often compromised by retaining legacy systems. It is becoming ever more important that management and personnel in the field can remotely access production, inventory and management software, using mobile devices that communicate correctly with the central system, or cloud hosted solution.



Resistance to new technology...

Our systems work for us and they haven't failed yet

Operational Disruption When Starting ERP

Whether ERP is implemented in a sequence of modules, or en bloc, a manufacturing site or warehouse operation will encounter disruption as the software goes live and people begin to use the new system day-to-day.

However, disruption may also derive from broader aspects of the changeover. For an ERP system to fulfil its project goals a company will typically make serious changes to its accustomed business model and operational practices. Restructuring, redefinition of job responsibilities and re-engineering of operations are usually necessary and these changes can be extended and further complicated in the case of multinational businesses.

Clearly, disruption on implementing ERP introduces resistance at the point of implementation, as well as presenting stakeholders with a reason to avoid the process altogether. The duration of any disruption naturally varies according to whether ERP modules are phased-in individually or in multiple and of course, on how many functions within the organisation are involved – production planning, distribution, finance etc. But good planning, preparation and training are key to minimising this period in which any problems are smoothed out.

Avoiding the following main pitfalls will limit any disruption at the implementation stage:

- **Insufficient Project Ownership**

If the ERP project is not driven by the business strategy, or vision, it is unlikely to add real value. Those at the top of the organisation must take a leading role in bringing others along with the corporate vision. An ERP vendor will have a team of skilled and experienced project managers, business consultants and technical consultants to assist with implementation but the crux is that the company itself needs to be committed to clear, achievable goals.

- **Rushed Implementation**

Meticulous planning should be followed by an adequate amount of time to go live. Implementing ERP should only take place when every member of the implementation team is comfortable with their role and the new systems have been thoroughly tested with mapped and cleansed data.

- **No Scope of Delivery**

The true scale of the project must be understood. Only then can a realistic scope and timescale be assigned. Dividing the scope into manageable, value-adding phases often helps to balance project momentum and complexity.

- **Understanding the Preliminary Work**

Inputting the right data is vital for a new ERP system. If data is being extracted from several disparate sources such as Excel, accounting software and CRM software, the data needs to be found before it can be extracted and inputted to the new system. These disparate systems will most likely create files in different formats which will need to be converted for the ERP, or entered manually. Either way, this is a mammoth task that requires a lot of time and effort. Fortunately, DataSwith from K3 Syspro can help with this process, cutting down the time needed.

- **ERP is Treated as an IT or Finance Project**

ERP is an IT phenomenon, but the chances are that every department in the business will have some contact with the new software, so it's in their interest to be part of the implementation – not just the IT department.

- **Lack of Planning and Resource Management**

Resource management is key to a successful implementation. Many people dramatically underestimate the level of commitment needed from all levels of staff to implement ERP successfully. For every one day the vendor spends on the implementation, there should be three days from the customer. This is only a guide but does accurately put into perspective the resources needed to implement successfully.



Missed opportunities...

When looking at the cost of introducing ERP, it is equally important to question what is the cost of sticking with legacy systems

Personality Profiles

The selection of skills and personality types should be a major consideration when putting together any team, whether that's in sports, or in the context of ERP implementation. Not only that, but within an ERP team there should be representation for all the key business functions that will ultimately engage with the software. From the top tier to the bottom, diverse interests will be voiced, according to department and role, often driven by widely different concerns.

The CEO or MD

At the most senior management level, initial interest in new ERP systems is usually stirred by a strategic vision for the company. Every business leader wants fast, easy access to information across all the key functions and they should endeavour to streamline operations. A carefully executed ERP project will deliver those advantages and give the manufacturer a stable platform for future development in the Industry 4.0 and Smart Factories era.

Counter to that motivation is the ultimate responsibility for financial control and the desire to minimise disruption to core activities. For a company leader the real cost of implementing ERP, in terms of committing resources, time and effort of the project team, in addition to the software price tag, must be balanced against the benefits and return on investment.

A clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the incumbent data systems and a realistic concept of the achievable goals (through consultation and benchmarking) are prerequisite in the process. The CEO, or MD's role is then to get all the key stakeholders on board with a clear vision, i.e. senior executives, IT, production – virtually the entire organisation. Without this full engagement, the project will be vulnerable to the fear of change, resistance to jettisoning the old technology and technical issues that the project team might not resolve successfully.

When implementation begins, ongoing involvement is essential to ensure the plan stays on track and on budget.

IT Manager

The IT department must always be part of the implementation project. One of the reasons for replacing a legacy system in the first place might relate to the technology already under IT's control. If replacement hardware is no longer available, security updates are discontinued and system downtime is increasing, the IT manager will be fully aware and very unlikely to present resistance to change.

There may already be underlying knowledge in IT about modern ERP capability and how it might be applied in various aspects of the manufacturing organisation. Along with an awareness of digital networking possibilities and cloud computing, the IT Manager can bring real impetus to the project along with some expertise to assess new ERP options and their suitability.

As we mentioned in the section on implementation disruption, the extraction and transfer of data to a new system can be problematic and can cause glitches at the testing phase. The IT department should be the most skilled in sorting out those data integration issues.

Customer Services

Operating at the customer interface generates extremely important information about customer expectations and satisfaction. An ERP system, sitting across the centre of the organisation, accessing critical data from many silos, offers the digital link between the whole supply chain and the customer. Given this capability, going far beyond the simple recording of customer data, it is absolutely in the interest of information-hungry customer service management that modern ERP is implemented to the fullest extent

Faster customer handling and better service order management efficiency are two areas where ERP systems can improve customer service processes. With a centralised system, it becomes simple for customer services to find and interpret accurate information from production or warehouse sources, for example. Similarly, data interaction with inventory management and resource planning links through to a better customer experience.



G&B Electronics..

Key figures within the company are able to devote far more time to growing the business.

Manufacturing Operatives

Workers on the shop floor and in back office roles are probably the most likely to strongly resist planned changes. The systems they are accustomed to using day in, day out are familiar and normally functioning well in enabling them to do the job.

The introduction of a new ERP system, while revolutionising data handling in the company, might be seen as part of a technological revolution that could threaten their jobs. In fact, modern ERP facilitates automation of some job functions but this can free up employees to upskill for more satisfying work within the organisation.

G&B Electronics

G&B Electronics is a company whose investment in ERP drastically reduced time spent on administration tasks and freed it to adopt a new business model. The contract electronics manufacturer implemented SYSPRO with **Advanced Planning and Scheduling** and integrated its financial package into its manufacturing execution system. G&B uses SYSPRO's standard processes for creating part numbers, accelerating this by integrating the ERP solution with **DataSwitch**, K3 Syspro's data manipulation and integration tool. The creation of part numbers, which used to take up to 10 days at a time, can now be done in hours.

Because the process is automated, the business also benefits from more accurate data and a reduction in risk from human error. Key figures within the company are able to devote far more time to growing the business and considering the effectiveness of the overall business model. By demonstrating effective management control throughout the supply chain, G&B is fully positioned to pursue high-level manufacturing contracts.

Sales

The concerns of the sales team are closely allied to those of customer services. ERP improves outreach agility and keeping customers happy in a timely fashion now calls on the same accessibility to centralised data, on stock levels, lead times and more.

Information may need to be accessed from any part of the world at any time, particularly in the case of Cloud ERP. When quotations and orders need to be produced, ERP will streamline the process, retrieving all the appropriate data as rapidly as possible.

An integrated CRM system can track all of the customer information available, also helping sales maintain open lines of enquiry and communication with customers.

Decision Making Basics

Regardless of position and role within the company, all members of an ERP implementation team should ask themselves the same questions and be able to discuss them:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- What are our short term and long term objectives?
- How do we intend to satisfy these objectives?
- How relevant is our current business software to our business strategy?
- What do we need from software to get to where we want to be?
- What challenges does our current system pose right now?
- What are the strengths of our current system?
- What are our expectations from the software and how is our current system fulfilling their needs?



Be agile...

ERP improves outreach agility and keeping customers happy.

First Steps to Superpowers

The UK manufacturing industry is currently in a high degree of limbo, waiting on the outcome of Brexit talks. Some companies plan to invest in replacing aging equipment and systems but it appears investment in new technology and automation is suffering in this period of uncertainty.

Other barriers to implementing modern ERP are less circumstantial and more approachable. Resistance to change, for example, can be overcome by promoting a better understanding of the issues by each stakeholder group. We have looked at some of the sources of resistance to change, the people who may harbour that resistance and arguments to dissipate a negative approach.

K3 Syspro is deeply experienced in working closely with companies to bring everyone on board but there are some fundamental steps you need to take to move forward. First and foremost, you need to truly understand your business processes. This means assessing the systems you have, extracting hard, accurate facts about each key function.

You might feel able to undertake this process internally, but at K3 Syspro we regularly meet prospective customers who are so caught up in trying to manage their rapid growth that they recognise bringing in external consultants is the most logical and sometimes the only option. Having someone external to the business to guide you through the process, undertake a gap analysis and advise you on what steps to take to move the business forward should definitely be considered if you don't have the time or resource to manage this process internally.

As we see it, the goals you should look to will deliver:

- Speed
- Traceability
- Visibility
- Joined up Working
- Sharing Knowledge
- Intelligence and Foresight
- Efficiency and Productivity
- Streamlining
- Profits and Financial Gain
- Resilience

The team that supports the process of defining and implementing ERP at K3 Syspro includes our sales team, technicians, account manager, project manager and customer relationship manager as well as the MD. All of these people are there from the start. If you have a problem, you can continue to escalate it until it gets to the MD. No-one is off limits in order to help customers get what they need.

Our core systems, SYSPRO ERP, can digitise, automate and simplify inventory and order management, pulling reports from across a range of areas of the business. But we also have wider resources available through partner products, which integrate with SYSPRO ERP.

For example, Equator provides companies with a fully integrated human resources software solution encompassing payroll, time and attendance, access control, shopfloor data collection and personnel management. Either in discrete modules, or in a fully software suite, it can integrate with most desktop, ERP and back office systems. Available as an On Premise, Cloud, software-as-a-service, or bureaux service, it captures data electronically, in real time, using device barcodes, proximity tags, biometric readers and touch screen technology, including iPhones and android devices.

The flow of data in a business can be transformed using **DataSwitch**. This is a purpose-built software solution developed by K3 to help businesses communicate and integrate with various systems and enable them to set up multiple work-streams from one single input source.

As a fully autonomous integration tool, **DataSwitch** links the ERP solution with multiple end-points, ensuring information can automatically pass back and forth, making data import / export jobs hassle free. The **DataSwitch** product suite offers all of the tools that modern systems require in order to build and establish seamless data integration . K3 Syspro is also partnered with Anota, the UK consultancy behind the Docuware document management platform. DocuWare handles the whole purchase-to-pay (P2P) documentation process, from printing and scanning to threading and archiving. The result of the partnership is a fully end-to-end system, in which data moves efficiently between documentation and ERP systems. For example, invoicing data generated though DocuWare can easily be extracted and assimilated into SYSPRO via **DataSwitch**.

Similarly, AutoMail uses a simple text script, or PDF report, to send emails with sophisticated PDF attachments to every customer in a company's database, enabling rapid deployment of email facilities for SYSPRO. It includes a report service, which monitors a directory for PDF reports, such as file invoices, enabling, for example, individual invoices contained in a file to be emailed to a selected customer.

In Conclusion

While adaptation to changes in technology, shifting markets and higher customer expectations is vital to the long term survival of a manufacturing business, there are forces in the system constantly resisting change. Above all, resistance to change by established members of the company is potentially a threat to one of the most progressive steps a manufacturer can make – the implementation of an ERP system.

Personality traits and job-specific concerns influence the degree of resistance that senior management may encounter when looking to an ERP solution. A key task is to find out the nature of the concerns and where the worries exist, so that the benefits of a modern ERP system can be fully explained to best advantage. Once properly informed and reassured, those initially unsure about a new centralised data system, can bring valuable knowledge and experience to bear in making the implementation succeed.

Some key employees, from the outset, welcome the move to a new ERP system. They may be very familiar with the frustrations of antiquated systems, or legacy ERP and could make excellent ambassadors on the project implementation team. The IT manager, for example, should always be fully engaged in introducing ERP.

Even so, it is very unlikely that throughout a manufacturing company, no-one is without at least some reservations about moving away from established ways of working. It is a tall order to try to allay fears and resistance factors entirely in-house and an ERP partner should be ideally positioned to instil confidence and motivation in your implementation team.

In K3's experience we have met with just about every resistance factor, when it comes to making a change of this magnitude. Our advice, if you are considering a move to ERP, is just to get in touch and start the discussion. Our K3syspro.com website also contains many case studies and features an ERP Advice Centre. This is geared to preparing companies with a knowledge of the benefits –and challenges – of developing a new ERP solution.



ERP for Manufacturing and Distribution

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