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REAL-TIME SOLUTIONS

Evaluating ERP Systems

There are a lot of options out there when you are searching for an ERP system, and it's hard to determine which one you should choose. Even starting the evaluation process can be overwhelming. How do you tell where to begin?

Assemble a team that will work together to evaluate the possible ERP systems and vendors. This team should be composed of both IT personnel and people who are very familiar with your business processes, functions and goals, allowing all aspects of your business to weigh in with their opinions. Consider hiring a consultant who is an expert in your industry to assist your team in making their determination.

Identify the business processes and requirements that will be handled by the new ERP software system and then rank them in order of importance. It's very unlikely that you are going to find an out of the box solution for every business process that you have, so you need to know which processes are the most important. You'll also need to consider whether you are willing to change your business process to match that of the new ERP system. If not, you'll need to be open to custom options.

Compile a list of the available ERP packages, both industry specific and general. You'll want to choose an ERP package that is based on industry standards.

Compare the list of features for the ERP packages to your list of business processes and requirements, keeping in mind the importance rating that you assigned. There will almost always be a gap between the ERP package's functionality and your requirements. If it's a large gap, cross the package off your list. You should be able to remove a large chunk of your options this way, reducing your list to a more manageable size.

Once you've got your shortlist of vendors and ERP packages, create demo scripts for your vendors that cover the business processes that are important to your company. Ask the users that are familiar with the business process to sit in on the demonstration and complete evaluations on how well each vendor's product meets the business needs.

Once you've considered the product, analyze the vendor. Consider the vendor's stability, upgrade cycles, and customization options. You're looking for a long lasting vendor with defined upgrade cycles and with customization options that will cover the business processes that are not met by the standard ERP package. You'll also want to consider the ease of migrating the existing data to the new system.

Finally, consider the cost. Along with the cost of purchasing the ERP software package, you need to consider infrastructure costs, maintenance costs, customization costs, and support costs. In addition, consider scalability. You don't want to purchase and implement an ERP software package now that won't grow with you over the next ten years.

Come see how NDS Systems ERP Solutions meets your business needs at our website: www.ndsapps.com.