

WHITEPAPER

5 CHALLENGES ABOUT GETTING STARTED WITH INFOR ERP AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM TO RAISE ROI

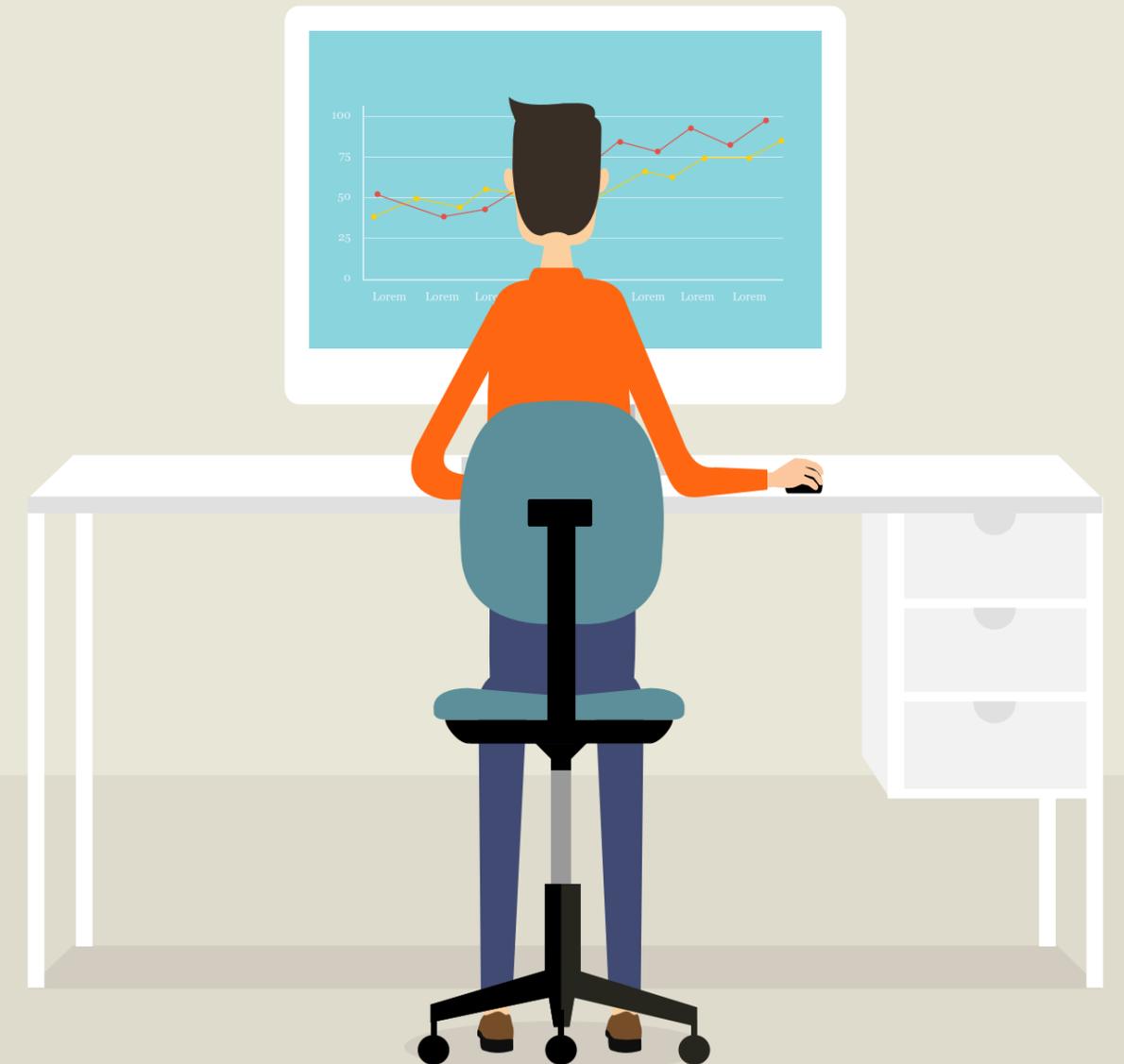


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INFOR ERP: CLOUDSUITE, GROWTH AND VALUE DELIVERED TO BUSINESSES

Even though the ERP landscape is growing more fragmented every day, a couple of industry leaders continue to increase their market and revenue streams with tenacity. One such player is the US-based company Infor. Established in 2002, Infor nets \$3 billion in revenue annually and serves 70,000 customers in more than 194 countries.

It offers a range of enterprise solutions including, but not restricted to, asset management, financial systems, capital and talent management and resource planning, which happens to be the flagship domain of the company. Most significantly, in keeping with the rising popularity of the SaaS model and cloud-based software, Infor has enabled the delivery and deployment of five of its most advanced and comprehensive ERP suites through its cloud platform the Infor CloudSuite, to the benefits of this include extending the customizability, the flexibility and the intuitiveness of its popular ERP solutions to SaaS subscribers.

According to the 2014 report titled 'Market Share Analysis: ERP Software, Worldwide, 2013', Infor is the fourth largest ERP contender in the market in terms of revenue. It rakes in close to \$1.5 billion in sales and its worth in the resource planning domain has been increasing steadily. Thanks to the launch of CloudSuite, Infor has



created a lot of hype around its modular, customizable ERPs which add value to businesses by overseeing the management of both mission critical and everyday operations.

SaaS Infor ERP solutions:

- **Are industry-specific** - Infor has a mind boggling array of modules to choose from and because of the fact that it continuously consults with domain experts to develop products and tweak features; it is capable of bringing to the market spot on solutions for micro-verticals and niches.
- **Are built on open standards** – In the ecosystem of social interactions and unified enterprise platforms, Infor ERP products integrate with a host of 3rd party applications (like Salesforce) to consolidate data from all possible touch points of the business and facilitate sharper, more accurate decisions. It uses ION, its middleware solution to accomplish this.
- **Have intuitive and simple interfaces** – Since the solutions are compatible with most browsers and devices, the interface and dashboard are largely uncluttered and the workflows are largely intuitive. Employees generally do not suffer from information

overwhelm and can navigate the software if given adequate onscreen guidance.

- **Are extremely powerful** – By leveraging the unlimited capability of Amazon Web Services (AWS) to crunch data and invest in its servers, Infor ensures that its subscribers can enjoy the benefits of an infrastructure that is not offered by any other SaaS vendor. AWS stands for 99.9% up-time of the ERP solutions, faster loading and processing of information and immense credibility.

Infor's foray into CMM or customer Marketing Management and seamless integration is best represented by Inforce. It allows Infor ERP solutions to join hands with the SaaS CRM Salesforce for a unified enterprise experience for its subscribers.

TOP 5 CHALLENGES: IMPLEMENTING, BOOSTING ADOPTION AND ROI OF INFOR CLOUD ERP

Like most established vendors, Infor offers more than 65 on-premise products and several iterations of the same to cater to different niches. However where the SaaS model is concerned, it has shifted five popular ERP solutions to the Cloud:

- **Infor LN delivered through CloudSuite** – LN presents, in an easy to use package, all the modules required for the hassle-free operation of product manufacturing businesses.
- **Infor SyteLine delivered through CloudSuite** – A core Infor offering, SyteLine also focuses of manufacturers but specializes in agile response to changing market conditions.
- **Infor M3 delivered through CloudSuite** – A multi-country, multi-company, multi-site ERP solution, the M3 is built to provide flexibility and the ability to scale to mixed mode manufacturing ventures.
- **Infor EAM delivered through CloudSuite** – EAM is an enterprise grade asset management platform that helps users monitor and optimize capital assets for record-breaking ROI.
- **Infor Lawson delivered through CloudSuite** – Lawson is an ERP

that is finance-centric. It extends services like invoice automation, cash management and account reconciliation to streamline business activities.

Each platform is characterized by choice and relative simplicity – the two tenets governing Infor’s policies and R&D efforts. Despite a great attention to detail, companies planning to implement Infor products do face a number of challenges which need to be tackled in order to ensure excellent return-on-investment through mass adoption of cutting edge features.

#1: Resistance to the concept of SaaS ERP – SaaS applications have been holding sway for almost half a decade now. But ERP is fundamental to the strategic planning and ultimate goal achievement of an enterprise. And thus is considered mission-critical. As a result, moving to the cloud with sensitive company data and relying on the infrastructure of the vendor to ensure smooth operations is a risk many ventures are wary of taking. To complicate matters, there has been a lot of criticism by conventional SaaS ERP players like NetSuite of Infor’s decision to use AWS to deliver its CloudSuite components. This has added the apprehensions of top managements around the world and even though Infor SaaS solutions are likely to benefit tremendously from the incorporation of Amazon servers, CIOs and

Enterprise Resource Managers face an uphill task when it comes to convincing the decision makers of the aptness of cloud-based Infor products.

Real life example: Ferrari recently expanded into the new markets of China and Middle East and required a way to manage costs and maintain control over fledgling new operations. It chose Infor's LN to make this possible and has enjoyed high return-on-investment. However, the negotiation period was protracted and there was much back and forth in the enterprise regarding the decision to shift to the cloud and the 'supposed' issues with CloudSuite's infrastructure.

#2: Analysis Paralysis – This challenge to some extent is unique to Infor prospects. The company boasts a stunning array of modules for each ERP product with the option to leverage Mongoose (running on AWS) to create custom features for a tailored-to-fit experience. However, this free will and preponderance of choices sometimes act as a roadblock to Infor SaaS ERP adoption. Since SaaS deployments take nowhere near as much time and resource as an on-premise installation and the up-front cost investment is considerably lower, businesses end up considering all the options on the table and become confused and distracted. This inability to reach a consensus around the modules and features required is a top challenge faced by enterprises looking to buy Infor's solutions to improve operations all across the board instead of targeting specific problem areas.

Recently NetSuite's CEO quoted, 'From a service standpoint, if AWS goes down, what is the first set of servers they're going to bring up? I don't think they're Infor's. It might be Netflix.'
Even though this statement was panned as being 'incorrect', it reflects the kind of misinformation in the market around the feasibility of Infor's CloudSuite products.



Real life example: Office furniture giant Herman Miller has been using Infor's SyteLine for two years now and has managed to reduce US based inventory by \$1.2 million. However, SyteLine comes packed with the option to activate 12 core modules and with top of the line features. After much deliberation and a couple of false starts, Herman Miller decided to focus on the capabilities of customizing orders, pulling electronic invoices, improving the just-in-time supply chain and facilitation of product identification and shipping by logistics to enhance customer experience and realize significant savings in the process.

#3: Big Data and its hassles: Many companies do not include user adoption as a part of the 'deployment' and implementation of an enterprise solution. This is a grave mistake. Ventures that go with Infor's CloudSuite ERP products are given the ability to integrate with non-Infor third party applications through the ION middleware platform. This in theory should provide an extremely rewarding unified experience for businesses but the truth presents a different scenario. Businesses that do avail of the convenience of ION fail to anticipate the magnitude of Big Data generated through the integrated system. This complicates the core ERP solution and stands in the way of enthusiastic

user adoption. The employees find it difficult to drill down into reports or access specific information. The frustration builds up especially if there is no provision of continued education and training for the ease of use of the system. Sometimes this issue forces businesses to look into Infor Analytics to make sense of the incoming data. Ultimately if not handled right, the Business Intelligence (BI) component simply muddles users further.

Practical use-case: Peters Ice-Cream is a prize customer of Infor M3 and it implemented its system in a record seven and a half months. Peters leveraged the Implementation Accelerator and used pre-configured Food & Beverage industry settings to get up and running. However, if under the circumstances, it had chosen to deploy a number of custom integrations as well, complicating the sleek interface and features roster, the employees would not have been able to handle the Big Data overload and would have refrained from embracing the system preferring to go with cobbled together, in-house solutions.

It is not that integrations do not have their up-side! The keyword here is discernment. Using ION just because it is available and affordable is not a wise decision! Each

According to Forrester Research, most companies end up analyzing only 12% of the data they generate because of lack of robust BI strategies, the inability of employees to cope with Big Data and the tendency to rely on data silos instead of databases.

business is unique and the call to go with a unified system should be dictated by the requirements of the company and long term value considerations.

#4: Costly training and steep learning curve: Infor ERP solutions are flexible and versatile. But apart from Infor Visual, which is not a part of the CloudSuite components line-up, the rest of the solutions do require training to master it. They have a steep learning curve because of the abundance of modules, features and integrations and employing full time instructors is not an inexpensive proposition. For many businesses, especially ventures bootstrapping to get by, this extra investment is often a deal-breaker, pushing the SMB market towards smaller vendors with extremely simple and intuitive interfaces, even at the cost of reduced power and ROI.

Real life example: The city of Des Moines has realized a \$250,000 saving in annual energy costs by using Infor EAM to manage its facilities and its energy consumption. But its employees have had to put in a lot of time and effort to master the system and purportedly substantial investments were made in training sessions and educational material.

#5: Increased maintenance costs: One of the primary allures of the SaaS model is the ability to operate without an in-house IT team to supervise functions. Since the infrastructure resides with the vendor, the clients can rely on their team to provide regular tune-ups

and take care of upgrades and maintenance. The same holds true for an Infor ERP but customers do find that the overall investment in ensuring smooth functioning is a touch higher than for other vendors of the same calibre. This is because Infor adapts to the standardized workflows and practices of a business and becomes a part of the organization. Thus it is intimately connected to many key assets of a company including the central communication system and the CRM platform. Upgrades to the essential ERP modules bleed inconsistencies into the heart of the enterprise and require the attention of IT professionals who know the customized set-up inside out and can run diagnostic tests to ensure smooth operations.

Real life example: The Community Unit School District uses Infor Lawson to better connect its 27 schools and employees for a more collaborative experience. Even though the platform delivers what it promises, maintenance costs are considerable, especially for the mobile applications which put staff members on the same page and keep everyone updated.

7 PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO INFOR ERP IMPLEMENTATION AND ADOPTION CHALLENGES

Even though the obstacles in the path of smooth Infor ERP implementation are real and pressing, the solutions are practical and can be easily incorporated into the deployment and post deployment strategies of most business ventures. The key to solving the problems is to focus on employee engagement, knowledge retention and performance support.

1. Ongoing education for critical momentum – Infor ERP applications at the end of the day come with challenges and benefits similar to most of their SaaS counterparts. Since they are feature rich, flexible, extensible and scalable, huge ROI can be realized from their enterprise wide adoption. The primary roadblock in case of most ventures is resistance. ERP is the back-bone of an organization and the management as well as the employees suffer from psychological blocks around the concept of entrusting a vendor with sensitive data and insider's knowledge about business processes. In order to eliminate doubts and fears and to equip users with the confidence that they can in fact manipulate the

features and plug-ins to serve their needs and tackle small glitches by themselves, ongoing education is imperative. Not only does this provision reduce the overwhelm which results from long drawn out training sessions with low knowledge retention rates, it is also less expensive and fits easily into the budget of start-ups and Fortune 1000 companies alike. In fact platforms like EPAK allow companies to create training material, documentation and support files for users in-house, cutting down on training costs and allowing the value realization to be much more permanent.

2. Phased rollout for easier implementation and adoption - The big-bang approach to the rollout of an enterprise solution is an antiquated notion. With SaaS models, the phased roll out is an excellent idea. Infor systems are generally flexible and thus end up accepting integrations from different domains of the business. As a result, a phased rollout is the only logical choice to prevent complications from arising simultaneously across the enterprise. In

Education of the vast majority of the employees through documentation, videos, case studies and seminars is known as critical mass education. It is a way to re-invest in the organization and improve its technical competence. It is a must for proper adoption of enterprise software.

this kind of deployment, test servers with some of the most critical configurations, integrations and features of the final system are created in order to check the ability of the set-up to work smoothly. Once the results are positive, small batches of technically savvy and competent users from different departments are shifted to the new system to acclimatize them to the interfaces and workflows. These employees become evangelists of the software. They not only point out user experience bugs and glitches, they also help their peers embrace the platform and achieve increased productivity with its provisions.

3. Leveraging the knowledge and opinion of the whole team for higher adoption – Even before the actual implementation starts, focus groups should be created comprising of key team members from the different groups that will be using the ERP solution. Since choosing modules which will actually boost ROI and keep the interface uncluttered is a major challenge for most businesses, the opinion and inputs of users is important. This is also a great time to discuss integrations and Big Data strategy. If all the employees are well aware of why certain features are included in the ERP package and the connections which they will need to deal with

acceptance of the 'new' and the 'unused' becomes easier. Users can be prepped beforehand and are ready to incorporate the SaaS ERP system into their work life.

4. Continuous performance evaluation and incentives – Despite best efforts by the technical team and the ERP managers to keep users prepped and educated, adoption has to be monitored to be optimized. Companies which boast excellent ROI always evaluate the progress of their employees in terms of getting familiar with and using essential ERP features. It is a good idea to share success stories of competitors who have achieved a lot with venture wide adoption and set a good example with a top-down approach wherein the management actively leverages the ERP and paves the way for employee compliance.

5. Community support and collaboration – The death knell for many on-premise ERP solutions has been the inability to provide collaboration between users. Infor however has an inbuilt collaboration and support platform as a part of the Infor 10X features suite. It is called Ming.le. It works well for social interactions, contextual analytics and improvement of business processes. With Ming.le, employees can

Phased ERP roll-outs provide an 11.6% advantage over big bang implementations for small businesses and 5.56% advantage for medium businesses.

seek assistance from their own peers in making the most of ERP features. Evangelists of the system can also act as 'influencers' sharing new ideas and ways to boost ROI with their 'followers'.

6. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) to the rescue –

Infor 10X also offers extremely robust and easy to mobile applications so that employees can access the system with their phones and tablets. BYOD is revolutionizing work culture, giving users an unprecedented familiarity with enterprise solutions. The more time employees spend manipulating a platform through their own devices, the more accountability they develop for the technology and are willing to take their association beyond adoption to innovation.

7. Onscreen Contextual Guidance –

Visual guidance is a part of the ongoing education discussed above, but is extremely important in its own right. Employees learn how to use a tool approximately 60 times faster if they assimilate images instead of text. Onscreen guidance in the form of personalized demos and interactive tips kick the experience a notch higher. A platform like [WalkMe](#) is capable of providing a permanent repository of demonstrations or Walk-Thrus which address specific queries and

concerns of employees. For example, if a particular Infor feature has been customized to accommodate an existing business workflow, it may no longer be simple and intuitive to use. A Walk-Thru called upon by using Widgets is a life-saver, allowing the user to view a highly tailored demo as many times as is needed to master the customized feature completely.

If followed diligently, these solutions mitigate the abruptness of the changes introduced by the SaaS model making software management easier and more effective.

According to studies carried out by academic bodies, co-operative learning is an active form of learning that boosts both productivity and retention. – Garfield, in Press

According to recent research, haptic and visual guidance can help learners master an action much faster than written instructions. In the virtual world, visual guidance is a proven way to boost retention.

A CHECKLIST OF FACTORS ENSURING INFOR ERP IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS

- ✓ Strategic planning before deployment – Infor SaaS ERP solutions delivered through CloudSuite serve myriad industries. This is why they boast a mind boggling array of features and modules. Once the objectives the ERP is to fulfil have been finalized, it is important to draw up a strategic plan as to how the features can benefit business operations within the particular industry. This will also assist in ensuring that only essential core modules are chosen for the deployment making the whole process a lot simpler. For example, SyteLine alone serves the automobile, the aerospace, high technology and the manufacturing industries. Thus it needs brainstorming to orient it to shoulder the needs of a particular domain.
- ✓ Proper data clean-up for migration – An ERP system is highly data driven! So the ROI is bound to be only as good as the original data fed into the system. For buyers shifting from an on-premise solution to a SaaS subscription model, the existing assets may be full of redundancies and repetitions. It is imperative that companies invest time and money in consolidating and cleaning up this data with the help of services like DataXstream so that Infor 10X Business Intelligence and Analytics modules can work their magic with predictive and prescriptive insights.
- ✓ Cultivating a champion in the leadership – Infor is capable of providing high return-on-investment to companies. Thus through good pitching it can become a hot favourite of the top management. Once a company leader starts taking an interest in the ERP, it is easy to convince employees to follow suite and adopt the platform without qualms. Users turning advocates is good, decision makers who turn evangelists are great!
- ✓ The right value proposition – The secret to a successful ERP implementation lies in positioning the solution right. If it is envisioned as a tool to boost ROI and is presented as such, the management might be excited but the employees will not be overly enthusiastic. Infor regularly invests in its UX (user experience) and believes in the motto of ‘beauty as a competence’. Thus its products do add genuine value to the lives of employees, making them more productive and eventually freeing up time they can spend with their families. When these benefits are highlighted, adoption is a given!
- ✓ Project organization and plan – Creation of a project plan and its meticulous execution go hand in hand with the development

of an operations strategy. Even though SaaS based ERPs are nowhere near as tricky as on-premise solutions, they still require discipline on part of both the management and the vendor for the installation to proceed without glitches and without hampering the productivity of employees during the initial phase.

- ✓ Technical evaluation – Last but not the least, technical evaluation is an important aspect to keep in mind for successful Infor SaaS ERP implementation. As iterated throughout the paper, Infor by the very nature of its features and provisions is an open platform that can integrate seamlessly with third party vendor applications. As a result before migrating to the cloud and setting up a unified system, businesses must take stock of their present infrastructure and technical abilities to ensure that the upgrades and technologies subscribed to are well supported.

Infor solutions delivered through the CloudSuite platform are tailored to work as ideal SaaS products. They can pose a few challenges which need to be worked around but the solutions are simple and practical. Keeping in mind the fact that employees lay the foundation of successful ERP implementations and support from the management is non-negotiable, can facilitate the quick realization of ROI.



ABOUT WALKME

[WalkMe](#) provides a cloud-based platform designed to help managers guide and engage employees through any online experience. WalkMe simplifies usage of any cloud-based Infor application, in providing direct step-by-step guidance at the moment of need, so that users can work efficiently and successfully. WalkMe removes the barriers of entry from other systems, and increases user productivity while lowering helpdesk requests, and reducing onboarding and training time and costs.

WalkMe is able to transform any Infor implementation process into a smooth and burden-free experience. It helps to streamline Infor software changes and updates in a way that is smooth and easy, without the need for new training, user mistakes or more support requests.

Through a series of interactive tip balloons overlaid on the screen, tasks are broken down into short, step-by-step guided instructions, which help users act, react and progress during their software usage.

As a result, both during the initial training orientation process and beyond, managers can empower their users so they no longer need to focus on the technical aspects of operating the software, freeing them to become more productive and avoid errors through even the most complex processes.

