

A Comprehensive Guide to Buying an ERP

What is an ERP?

In today's complex and competitive business environment, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems have become indispensable tools for organizations seeking to streamline their operations, improve decision-making processes, and gain a competitive edge. ERP systems integrate various business functions, such as finance, supply chain management, and customer relationship management, into a centralized system, enabling efficient data management and process automation.

The selection of an ERP system is a critical decision that can significantly impact your organization's efficiency, productivity, and competitive advantage. We will go over the process of buying an ERP and help show why each factor of an ERP is crucial. This document will outline the typical sales process from discovery to go-live from the perspective



of a Chief Financial Officer. This POV is to help convey the importance of having a dedicated team in both your software solutions partner and internally within your company. By following a systematic approach and considering these factors, organizations like yours can make an informed decision that aligns with their unique business needs. You will see in the example below the importance of dedicating time to making an informed decision that will point your business in the right direction.



Overview of Calvin's Coffee Company

Calvin's Coffee Company has been a popular coffee brand in the Northeast for quite some time now. Their President, Peter Calvin, is the 3rd generation of owners from the Calvin family. Calvin's Coffee does more than just distribute the coffee. They work with farms all around the world to get fresh imported raw coffee beans. They then roast the beans according to orders they have. Different machines help package the coffee, and they have a warehouse set up to then be able to distribute the coffee to their customers.

They are a business-to-business sales company. They have customers like hotels, stores, gas stations and restaurants who buy from Calvin's and then sell it to their customers.

Calvin's Coffee has between 50-100 employees and will need at least 10 concurrent users. These users are Peter the President, Fred the CFO, Carrie the Controller, Pam the AP clerk, Sam from Sales, Ingrid the Inventory Manager, Harry the HR Representative, Margaret from Marketing, Paul the Plant Manager, and Susan the Supervisor. There are times where during the busy season, more people from the plant like the supervisor's assistant, the Warehouse Supervisor and others need access to the system as well. Calvin's Coffee Company has between \$10-20 Million in revenue and is outgrowing their current system. They are using QuickBooks and have everything attached to servers, which is an issue when employees want to work from home at times. For them to continue growing, help streamline their processes, and give the employees the hybrid schedule they are asking for, Fred and Peter agreed it's time to switch ERPs.

From this point on, the whitepaper will take place from the perspective of Fred the CFO, as he navigates buying an ERP.

Recognizing the issue (CFO POV)

In today's highly competitive business landscape, staying ahead of the curve is essential for long-term success. Calvin's Coffee Co is no exception to this rule. We are committed to delivering the finest coffee products to our customers while maintaining financial prudence. To achieve this, we recognize the need to invest in a state-of-the-art ERP system that will streamline our operations and empower us with real-time financial insights.

Our current systems have served us well, but they are no longer adequate to support our growing business. We face various challenges, including:

- **Inefficiency:** Manual data entry and disparate systems result in inefficiencies in order processing, inventory management, and financial reporting.
- **Employee Limitations:** Unable to give all the users that need access to the system access when they need it and where they need it. Also, there is no way to work from home with servers.

- **Scalability:** Our existing systems are not scalable enough to support our ambitious growth plans.

Calvins Coffee Co aims to expand its market presence and diversify product offerings. To achieve this, we require a robust ERP system that can:

- Seamlessly integrate all business processes, from procurement to sales.
- Provide real-time visibility into our financial data, enabling informed decision-making.
- Scale with our business growth and adapt to evolving industry trends.

Business Requirements Assessment

Before initiating our selection process, it is essential to conduct a thorough needs analysis to identify and prioritize our organization's specific requirements. This involves engaging stakeholders from different departments, documenting existing workflows, and pinpointing pain points and areas for improvement. By understanding our organization's unique needs, both in terms of functional and technical requirements, our selection team can create a clear roadmap for the evaluation and selection process.

After understanding the need to change, we created a team of people that we are going to go through this process with. Mainly it will be myself and Carrie the Controller. Closer to the Final Selection process, we will have Peter the President, and Pam our AP Clerk review the product before we commit to and sign any proposal. We have reached out to Polaris Business Solutions as they are experienced with many ERPs, like QuickBooks, and have helped others move from it and upgrade to a more robust ERP. They will help us from the discovery call all the way to ongoing support after the product goes live.

The Discovery Call

During our discovery with Polaris, they asked us a variety of questions from how we do things, our processes, how our current product is working, and of course all our needs for a new ERP. Below are some of those questions:

- What does your company do?

- How many employees and how many users?
- What is your current system?
- What do you like about it? What don't you like?
- What are some non-negotiables about a new system?
- Have you looked at any systems?
- What is your projected budget for this?
- When would you like to go live?

After we had gone over these questions, we chatted a bit longer and they helped clearly outline what the next few months were going to be like. We had mentioned that we would like to go live within the next year, which gives us about 6 months to find review some options, review pricing, and begin our implementation. This seemed very reasonable to Polaris, and they mentioned we would have an outlined plan ready to go by our next meeting and we would review that schedule. They then recommended we take a closer look at Acumatica Cloud ERP. It meets most of our requirements and we can configure the solution to make it work for us. Next up, Polaris scheduled an overview demo.

The First Product Demonstration

The call was scheduled with me and Carrie, as well as Morgan, their Business Development Lead and Todd their President. During this call they gave a brief intro to explain a little bit more about who they are. After that they broke down who Acumatica is, with an explanation of the customer bill of rights, and a discussion about the growing ecosystem of products. They then showed us different modules such as Finance, Inventory, Sales Orders and some of the interesting features in CRM. They explained this product is cloud based, so our users would be able to have the hybrid schedule they wanted, and we would have access to unlimited users, so everyone who needs access has it, as well as some other amazing features. Some that stood out were Purchase Order Management, Warehouse Management and Financial Management.

Once we had the demo, our internal discussions began. They scheduled a call to review the demo and what we needed clarification on and anything else we might have needed. At this time, we were able to discuss some of our concerns like how we have many different moving parts from ordering coffee beans and having to track them all the way to the customer, to making sure we have a way to

prioritize which orders are when. They helped air out any concerns and we were ready to have our deeper dive demo.

The Deeper Dive

During the in-depth phase of our sales process, we involved our President, Peter, in some of the discussions, and our Accounts Payable Clerk participated. This deeper dive demo provided us with a more comprehensive understanding of how the product would seamlessly integrate into our operations. Polaris had customized certain aspects to align with our company's needs, allowing us to envision our day-to-day workflow more vividly. This opportunity granted us greater visibility, and Peter had the chance to address any specific inquiries he had. Given our company's intricate nature, as I previously discussed, this step was particularly pivotal.

Moreover, revisiting the product during this session allowed us to reacquaint ourselves with the system and uncover details that may have eluded us during the initial presentation. Following this productive discussion, the subsequent topics on our agenda were pricing and the project plan. We conducted a comprehensive assessment of the total cost of ownership, encompassing software licensing, implementation, training, and ongoing maintenance expenses. This analysis served as a critical step in ensuring that our investment would yield a positive return.

Pricing and Proposals

After careful review, we knew it was time to internally discuss if we were ready for a proposal. Peter was ready to move forward, but wasn't sure about pricing, but I was ready to make the switch. The product had what we needed and was able to grow as our company did. Thankfully we had a meeting scheduled with Polaris to discuss pricing and review the proposal.

Polaris walked us through every portion of the proposal, making sure we understood every aspect. From the nitty-gritty details of their product to the personalized plan for implementation, they left no stone unturned. After we had a chance to dive into the proposal ourselves, we gathered as a team to discuss how it would impact us. We talked about the changes it would bring, the benefits we could expect, and any potential hurdles. Thanks to Polaris' thoroughness in explaining everything, our discussions were constructive and informed.

In the end, we felt confident about the proposal and Polaris' commitment to our success. We put pen to paper, signing the proposal and marking a significant step in our partnership with Polaris. This signature wasn't just about formalities; it was a symbol of our joint dedication to achieving our goals and embarking on this transformative journey together.

Your Company Buying an ERP (End POV)

Selecting the right vendor is a critical aspect when choosing an ERP system. As a vendor, we understand that our reputation, experience, and expertise are vital in ensuring successful ERP implementation and ongoing support. We take pride in our track record within the industry, backed by positive customer testimonials and case studies. Our commitment to product development and updates guarantees that our ERP system will continue to meet the evolving needs of our clients. We prioritize financial stability, ensuring our clients have a reliable and enduring partnership with us. Our implementation methodology, comprehensive training programs, and exceptional customer support are designed to facilitate a seamless transition and empower businesses to maximize the potential of our ERP system. Building strong and lasting relationships with our clients is at the core of our values, as we believe it fosters mutual growth and success. Choosing us as a vendor means gaining a trusted partner committed to empowering businesses with a high-performing ERP solution for continuous improvement and long-term success.



By following the guidelines we outlined, your organization can make an informed decision when selecting an ERP system that aligns with their specific business requirements. Ultimately, a well-selected ERP system can enhance efficiency, streamline business processes, and contribute to long-term success. If you think you are ready to start your ERP search, look no further for a vendor that will understand the importance of finding an ERP that's right for you. Reach out to us at info@polaris-business.com and we will help point your business in the right direction.