Mindover Software™
solutions for business minds

The future health of your company depends on having the right ERP system for your business. There are many choices, and system selection can be challenging. Each supplier will proclaim the superiority of its products, but only you can decide which system best fits your needs.

Here are ten tips to help your company make a smarter ERP selection:

1. **Know the big issues:** Approach your selection process with the "big issues" in the back of your mind – functionality, of course; history and maturity of the package; reliability and strength of the developer; credentials and reputation of the implementation partner or team; and the long-term support system including user groups and third-party resources that may be available. These important considerations are outlined in a companion document to this one.

2. **Make a list, check it twice:** Identify unique procedures, processes or requirements that you need to support your business today and in the foreseeable future. Most of the functions you need will be common in your industry, and it's good to know what those are. But it's even better to identify things that are unusual in the way you do business or interface with your customers.

3. **Focus:** Use the Internet, selection tools, consultants or other resources to identify the relative handful of systems that have the right functionality for your specific industry. This will cover all or most of the industry requirements; no sense wasting time and energy investigating systems that don't have the right capabilities.

4. **Zero in:** Once you know the "basics" are covered, you can focus in on how well the short-listed system address the unique requirements identified in step 2. Don't expect a package to have all the function you want right out-of-the-box but do expect, and watch for, the ability of the package to adapt to those unique needs without programming.

5. **Easy-to-use is not a cliché:** All systems say that they are "easy to use", "intuitive", and/or "user-friendly". What's important is that your users find the system, well, usable. Be sure to include actual future users in the selection and implementation process. Only they can tell you if the system "fits" with their daily routine and activities.

6. **Get the full price:** When you get to the point where you are collecting proposals from the final candidates (no more than 2 or 3, usually), make sure that the proposals are complete, including all hardware, software, tools, tailoring, conversion, user training, implementation management, etc. Be sure that competing proposals are "apples to apples" – include the same menu of goods

and services. Don't be afraid to go back to any candidate vendor and ask for an update to include something that may have been missing.

7. **Check references:** Ask for contact information for companies in your industry, preferably near your size, that are using the system. Talk to them – or visit them if possible – and see how the system works in a real situation. Be sure and ask about support, user community, and how well the supplier maintains the system.

8. **Control the demo:** If left to their own devices, vendors will demonstrate what their system does best – who can blame them? Do your homework and develop a demo scenario that shows what you need to see (particularly how the system addresses the unique requirements (see point 2). You can let them show off a bit, too, but limit that to a small part of the allotted demo time. Make sure the future users get to see (and test drive) the system so they can check its usability.

9. **Don't be penny wise and pound foolish:** In an attempt to meet budget limitations, companies may be tempted to cut corners – either choosing the wrong system simply because it costs less, or skimping on implementation help or user training. Either choice will result in a less effective system that will not deliver the benefits you seek. Focus on the benefits and be willing to pay what it takes to implement the right system in the best way possible.

10. **Put your "A Team" on the project:** Be sure to pick a strong leader to head the selection and implementation project and assign your top performers to the team. You'll want the real "doers" actively involved; the people you can probably least afford to spare from their daily responsibilities. Nevertheless, these are the ones who can and will make the right selection and get the system implemented. Be sure that the supplier assigns their own "A Team" to your project as well.

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