

MVP VS ERP

THE MERITS OF MVP IT PROJECTS

A FEW EXAMPLES...

Example 1:

Let's say you're upgrading from your current system, Sage 50. You know your current system doesn't do everything you'd like it to. So, you decide to write a list of requirements to approach providers about your new system about what it is you want.

You interview some ERP partners to see if they share the same vision as yourself of an all singing, all dancing system.

It turns out the ERP partner you approached does exactly what you asked for, but will be a 'bit more' than what you were expecting.

You accept.

9 months later, your new system isn't quite live yet.

The development and building of the system has been really time-consuming, and has been incredibly hard to get right.

You're starting to worry that you may not need all this functionality, but it's too late to back out now.

The system is finally live...but you've been pulling all nighters for 6 months to get it perfect, and it's cost you a lot.

Even with the new system, customers aren't quite getting what they wanted and haven't been able to get in touch with you for ages!

A FEW EXAMPLES...

Example 2:

Let's say you're current system is alright, but you know it needs to do more to support your businesses goals.

You can see a lot of big promises from partner websites but you're worried they'll be over complicated and expensive.

You want to bring your business into the 21st century. Ideally, the system would automate processes and get you and your team in front of customers more, but you're wary of 'running before you can walk'.

You don't want to be bogged down in detailed requirement lists. You just want a system that'll simplify things and improve processes! You need to know it can grow with the business, so extra functionality can be turned on later. After all, anything's better than what you're using now...

You've seen some online demos from Cloud ERP providers, they get what you're after. Their systems can go live quickly, and have the ability to scale up as your business does.

You can deploy finances first and future modules after the systems live. They didn't try to sell you the 'dream' with plenty of time and days attached.

You're 1 month in and testing the new system. The provider has proposed MVP as a good place to start. Once you know the system, they say, it'll be easier to understand where to invest as phase 2.

You're 3 months in. The new system is well bedded and you're pretty much there with phase 2 as well. It's been cheaper than you expected as things you thought you might want, weren't actually needed in the end.

Putting in the basics as an MVP first was definitely the right way to go!

“GET LIVE QUICKLY” OR WHY YOU SHOULD AIM FOR MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT OVER ‘EVERYTHING HAS TO BE THERE FOR DAY 1’

We’ve done a lot of implementations of Dynamics over the last 15 years. Navision, NAV, Business Central. We’ve learned a lot of lessons along the way. And while many of those implementations have been very different, the lessons learned have been basically the same.

In short, “keep it simple!”

“That’s all well and good with a smaller finance project, but we’re a manufacturer and distributor. We need to have integration with hauliers, and we need to develop it to suit our existing sales, goods in scanning, warehousing, production and 3PL processes, along with EDI feeds from our 12 biggest customers!”

My answer to that would be - how do you do it now? If you have all that in place currently, and it’s well documented, and works nicely, then sure. Maybe that can be in scope Day 1. But most businesses don’t have that already, it’s utopia for the new system. Somehow though, it becomes ‘must have’ functionality, the project can’t go live without it, and the implementation fee balloons.

To be clear, this is one of the reasons ERP projects fail. And that comes at a cost.

Below are some great examples of what can go wrong!

ERP DISASTER ZONE: THE MOSTLY COSTLY FAILURES OF THE PAST DECADE. [THE REGISTER.COM](#)

15 FAMOUS ERP DISASTERS, DUSTUPS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS. [CIO.COM](#)

So, how do ‘nice to haves’ become ‘must haves’?

Well, for sure some of the blame, if we must assign it, rests with the partners implementing systems. In a world of day rate professional services, bigger projects with large number of days, pay the bills.

Salespeople get bigger commissions, partner senior management see big wins, consultants and developers are kept busy.

There’s also a ‘the customer is always right’ mentality, which often means partners saying “yes” to a requirement, instead of “why do you need this?” or at least “why do you need this for Day 1?”

And for sure, some accountability must sit with the customer or CIO who thinks that every system needs to be borderline self-aware, with features and functions from Enterprise level systems in their SMB NAV project.

SO WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

How do we change that mindset of partners looking to maximise deal value? And the IT manager with a 3000 item MoSCoW list that looks like a bag of M&M's?

WE SAY THE ANSWER IS MVP. GO LIVE WITH MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT.

If you're a customer, ask this of your partner. The reason being, is that even the base product of whatever you're switching to, is likely streets ahead of what you're using now. Whether that's from an old green screen AS/400 to Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations, or from Quickbooks or Sage to Dynamics 365 Business Central. So even with the same set of headline functionality, you'll be getting benefits from Day 1.

In our case, we see customers going live with just the core financial module of Business Central. But even then, they're able to automate the creation of purchase invoices from an Outlook mailbox, along with sending them approval using Microsoft Power Automate (Flow). They can edit data in Excel, and push it back into the system. They can connect to Power BI to report on their financial information, and all of this is completely standard and can therefore be deployed quickly.

Another advantage to this approach is system familiarity. Deploying all modules of an ERP system puts a lot of pressure on super users and end users. Trying to automate all processes and learn systems at the same time means more training and UAT, along with doing a day job. Inevitably the testing doesn't get a look in!

And finally, a lot of the big requirement lists we see are because the existing system is, basically a bit rubbish. There's the concern that if functionality isn't in on Day 1, that it never will be, and also that the same workarounds needed currently will still be needed. By getting users up to speed on the MVP system, they can work out new ways of working. The requirements list for a Phase 2 suddenly becomes much shorter. It might even be possible to take a 'postmodern ERP' approach as Gartner calls it, and to integrate specialised systems into the core ERP, instead of having the core system developed to satisfy a requirements list.

LESSONS LEARNT

Going back to my opening paragraph - we learned this lesson the hard way. We weren't strong enough to push back on requirement lists, and we were also tempted by large numbers of days. Projects went badly and scope creep crept in. We wanted to help customers, but in the end they weren't that happy.

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

The way we do things now is fast, and simple. We have happy customers and successful implementations. For sure some customers want more complexity, but we get you live first, and build from there. We'd encourage you to do the same, and learn from our years of experience, instead of from a failed project.

Our Kikstart implementation is the ideal way to get up and running with an MVP of Business Central. Once we've collected your chart of accounts and had our initial consultation meeting, we can get you up and running with Business Central in just ONE WEEK!

**TALK TO US IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE A
GOOD FIT FOR YOU!**

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Empower. Business. Growth.

We're all about empowering small and medium businesses to punch above their weight.

We provide affordable Microsoft Dynamics solutions that are quick to set up, integrate fully with M365, and work in the cloud.

We're here to help you streamline your operations and succeed, with minimal fuss.