SAP Thought Leadership
Solutions for Small Businesses and Midsize Companies

Telltale Signs That Say You've Outgrown Your Current Systems

Knowing When Your System Has Reached the Tipping Point

The Best-Run Businesses Run SAP™

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Having the right software and technology is essential to growing a business – yet many companies feel the constraints of inadequate systems. Outdated applications, manual processes, and countless integration challenges consume time and resources. So how do you know when you've reached the tipping point?

When to Update Your Systems

When does the cost of system maintenance and process limitations become so great that you can't afford not to update your current systems? Review the telltale signs that say it's time to move to a system that better supports your growing business:

- Recurring headaches about reporting
- Numerous integration hassles
- Rigid systems that limit flexibility
- Too many unsupported business processes
- Manual processes that drain time and resources

Sound familiar? If so, there's a good chance that you're exhausting valuable time and energy supporting the basic needs of your business. Consider the benefits of moving to a single, complete, scalable solution that supports your needs and can grow as your business grows. One that allows you to start anywhere. One that lets you address your most pressing needs first, then add users, functions, and geographic support as your business expands.

But first, let's review each of the signs in more detail.

TELLTALE SIGN: RECURRING HEADACHES ABOUT REPORTING

As your organization grows, data, calculations, and transactions also grow, in both volume and complexity. If your decision makers must constantly make decisions based on incomplete or inaccurate data, or delay decisions until full and accurate reports become available, then critical business decisions are compromised. Timeliness and accuracy of data have a direct impact on the ability to make better informed decisions, reports analyst firm Aberdeen Group. The group also notes that best-in-class companies are taking strides to reduce time to information, generate a common view of data, and arm business decision makers with high-quality data to support enhanced business performance.

Aberdeen Group reports that 75% of best-in-class companies are able to edit, share, store, and finalize content to provide users across multiple business units with the tools and information to do their jobs[1] – making timely reporting a key component of best-in-class operations.

To alleviate headaches about reporting, organizations must replace "gut feel" choices with fact-based decisions by providing visibility into key business results. Rapidly growing small businesses and midsize companies can improve reporting and increase visibility by replacing multiple spreadsheets and data reconciliation with a single integrated solution that provides timely access to accurate information and business intelligence.

TELLTALE SIGN: NUMEROUS INTEGRATION HASSLES

A second sign that you've outgrown your current systems and infrastructure is significant time spent integrating disparate systems and aligning data from multiple sources. If your company has grown through one or more acquisitions or is running different systems in various areas of operation, you may be spending too much time troubleshooting and maintaining integration points – and not enough looking for opportunities to reduce costs and improve productivity. Over half of the small and midsize companies participating in an independent Forrester Research survey reported the "ability to integrate with other systems" as a very important criterion when selecting potential software.[2] Forrester also listed "improving integration between applications" as one of the top four business goals of IT departments.[3]

A single comprehensive application can handle all key business activities, eliminating the complexity and expense of integrating multiple systems. You spend less time on system maintenance and more time planning and implementing innovative functionality. With fewer integration points, a company can focus on systematic reviews of business processes, identifying and prioritizing opportunities to cut waste, redundancy, and costs.

TELLTALE SIGN: RIGID SYSTEMS THAT LIMIT FLEXIBILITY

Your company is poised to push into new markets, introduce new products and services, and bring on new employees. But expanding into a new region or product line means dealing with a rigid system – and considerable IT effort. Line-of-business managers don't want to wait for system support. New employees can't access data they need to do their job. IT is caught trying to figure out another workaround. Without the proper support, initial results aren't what they should be.

You need a solution flexible enough to grow with you – a highly configurable and comprehensive system that adapts quickly to your business without the need to buy or integrate additional software. Supporting new languages and currencies should happen with a mouse click, not after hours of coding and customization. A solution with a modular design makes it easy to start small, focusing on your most pressing needs, and then add users and functions as you grow.

TELLTALE SIGN: TOO MANY UNSUPPORTED BUSINESS PROCESSES

As you expand into new sectors, you must be able to support new business processes and areas of growth. But a patchwork of systems and spreadsheets can leave entire business processes unsupported. You need comprehensive, fully integrated business functionality that helps you streamline core processes and gain visibility across the entire business – from marketing, sales, and service to procurement, production, financial management, and business analytics. Forrester Research reports that almost 75% of small and midsize companies in North America and Europe list overall functionality as a "very important" criterion for selecting software. [4]

You need a solution optimized for quickly growing small businesses or midsize companies, one that can adapt to and support new business processes. It must support industry-specific best practices to equip you with the methods of the best-run companies in your industry while offering the flexibility to support your unique practices.

TELLTALE SIGN: MANUAL PROCESSES THAT DRAIN TIME AND RESOURCES

Historically, one of the primary roles of IT has been to drive process efficiency, productivity, and cost reductions through IT automation and standardization. If your business still relies on manual processes to complete routine transactions, an effective enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution can help you streamline and automate manual processes, freeing up time for higher-value projects. The solution should have controls and automated alerts that help employees respond more quickly, reduce waste, and avoid problems.

When does the cost of system maintenance and process limitations become so great that you can't afford not to update your current systems? Review the telltale signs that say it's time to move to a system that better supports your growing business.

Support Growth with the Best of SAP® Software

Your company is growing rapidly, but your current systems are holding you back. Integration challenges, manual processes, and data manipulation consume time and resources, leaving little left over to support new business processes. You need a single integrated business management software solution that is affordable, flexible, and quick to implement. SAP offers a range of ERP solutions for small businesses and midsize companies designed to drive IT efficiencies, streamline processes, improve reporting, and support growth.

SAP® solutions for small businesses and midsize companies make it affordable to implement and own world-class, flexible business management software that can scale as you grow. From licensing agreements to monthly subscription plans, SAP has a solution to fit your budget, timeline, and growth objectives. SAP solutions allow companies to spend less money and IT effort on implementing and managing solutions, and more time focused on business.

Each complete and integrated SAP solution comes with all the functionality you need to run your business – including analytics and support for best practices. SAP solutions for small businesses and midsize companies can be extended with additional in-depth functionality such as preintegrated customer relationship management, supplier relationship management, and business intelligence functions. With unmatched ability to handle the most demanding local and global business requirements, SAP solutions can support a wide array of new operational, geographical, and financial business processes as you grow.

What does that mean for you? Increased reporting functions, greater system flexibility, and no more integration headaches. In short, better software, better support, and less stress.

Use one of these flexible SAP solutions for small businesses and midsize companies to solve your problems now – and position IT to support your company's future:

- The **SAP Business One** application gives you a single application for key business activities, eliminating the complexity and expense of integrating multiple systems. It can be deployed quickly – in as little as two weeks – and requires minimal maintenance.
- The **SAP Business ByDesign™** solution is delivered on demand, giving you powerful SAP software with no need for costly IT infrastructure and staff – all for a low monthly fee.
- **SAP Business All-in-One** solutions offer sophisticated applications and state-of-the-art technology that can be easily adapted to fit changing business needs.
- **SAP BusinessObjects™ Edge Business Intelligence (BI)** software is a comprehensive BI solution supporting statutory, ad hoc, and analytical reporting.

LEARN MORE

When you learn to read the signs, you will be able to recognize when your IT environment is holding back your business. You will notice that integration challenges, manual processes, and data manipulation are consuming time and resources, leaving little time left to support new business processes. But the news is not all bad. This is your opportunity to move to a single, complete, scalable solution that supports your needs and can grow as your business grows. If you would like to find out more about how you can harness the flexible SAP solutions for small businesses and midsize companies to solve your problems now – and position IT to support your company's future, please visit www.sap.com/sme.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Automating Extended Business Processes,* Analyst Insight, Aberdeen Group, February 2010.
2. *The State of SMB Software and Emerging Trends: 2010,* Forrester Research Inc., February 12, 2010.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

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