

White Paper

How to Drive ERP Systems to Success

Authored by John McGrann

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June 2009

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John McGrann MBA ACMA AIMC

John has a practical and professional approach with well developed business management, financial and applications skills, developed through working on a range of projects and assignments for UK public sector and international private sector organisations.

He has extensive experience of working on, supporting and implementing *Oracle 11i Financials, HR and Supply Chain modules* within the UK public sector at *Network Rail, The Rent Service* and *Ministry of Defence*; and in the private sector, with *General Electric, Canon, TUI* and *Saudi Telecom*

John enjoys a challenge and welcomes project management deliverables and ensures targets are met and exceeded where possible. He has a calm and worldly approach and forges good working relationships at all levels. His results are achieved through people.

He is now on a mission to Drive ERP systems to success and is available for short term assignments and on a retainer.

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INTRODUCTION

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems are company-wide computer software systems used to manage all the resources, information, and functions of a business ideally from a single database.

ERP systems were introduced at a rapid pace in the 1990s to meet the Y2K challenge and many organisations took the opportunity to replace legacy information systems.

All ERP vendors have integrated their most efficient business processes in their ERP systems as best practices. These may or may not meet the needs of individual organisations.

Organisations often seek the help of vendors' or third party consultancy teams to implement ERP systems. After *Go Live* the responsibility for the technical and business performance of the system will lie with the client organisation.

The technical performance of the system will usually be supported by the both the organisation's and vendor's technical teams. Generally technical performance is viewed as good by most organisations.

The business performance of ERP systems varies from one organisation to another and is often reflected in the views and evaluations of key users.

In my experience and research I believe less than 40% of organisations would currently claim that their ERP systems add real value to their bottom line.

PURPOSE

This paper will consider from an organisational perspective, the current perception of ERP systems performance generally, identify the reasons for shortfalls in performance and propose a route to maximise performance in the longer term.

The paper is restricted to the business performance of ERP systems and uses Oracle applications as the example for no other reason than that is where my primary experience lies.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS

- CXOs
- Senior User Managers
- ERP Super Users
- Implementation & Support Teams

ORGANISATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document has 4 Main sections:

Section	Contents	Page
Current	Current Perception of ERP Systems Performance	
People	People Drive ERP Performance Success	
Drivers	The Drivers Of ERP Performance Success	
Summary	Drive ERP Systems To Success	

CURRENT PERCEPTION OF ERP SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE

The key objectives for all ERP systems should be:

- Automating processes - cost savings
- Informing stakeholders (reporting) - effective information for competitive advantage
- Educating users and managers – utilise the full potential of ERP
- Transforming the way business is done – use ERP to change for the better

Technology vs. Business View

Often in organisations there is a real divide between the IT and business teams over ERP systems. The executive decision to implement an ERP system is often without consultation with the lower echelons. ERP systems in the main will gain competitive advantage and improve share price for companies.

The IT team together with the implementation partner deliver the system and subsequently support it. What is delivered is usually the minimum to meet business requirements and support thereafter tends to be reactive and technical.

The business teams face a lot of disruption and anxiety during the implementation which is somewhat relieved by the newly automated processes and capabilities of the system. However the *Go Live* heralds the end of the process and thereafter both IT and business users take a reactive stance.

In organisations where the ERP system is not seen as a success, the IT view will be that the system works and is supported adequately. Routine application work may be retained by the IT team who feel the users are not capable.

Business users also note the end of the process at *Go Live*. Whatever they have then they hold. The gaps will be filled with ancillary systems including MS Excel and MS Access. Although some processes will have been improved the information required to fulfil their business role may not be available. The job gets done albeit in an inefficient manner and frustration sets in.

Both sides will claim some success as the system is live and supported by IT. Business users will claim to have made the best of it by using backup systems and workarounds because the system can't deliver everything. Ownership and management of the enterprise system is unclear, the capabilities of the system unknown, progress is limited and the ERP vendor is likely to be blamed for the lack of success.

The organisation is the loser.

Reasons For Performance Shortfall

ERP performance shortfall reveals itself in heavy customizations, a lack of planning and management, disgruntled users, ad hoc ancillary systems in MS Excel and MS Access, an array of reporting tools; problematic interfaces and is often IT driven. There is a big gap between the users and the applications team in IT.

There can be a number of key reasons for a shortfall in ERP systems performance:

- Independent business units and politics
- Lack of management or leadership
- Business process issues
- ERP evaluation
- Lack of effective change management
- Not measuring success
- Poor Data
- Poor role definition
- Lack of an effective reporting strategy
- Lack of empowerment
- Ineffective change control

In my experience under-performing organisations tend to have most of the aforementioned characteristics.

PEOPLE DRIVE ERP PERFORMANCE SUCCESS

Why do people who ostensibly have the same start in the career race perform at different levels? Why are so many organizations failing to perform to a high level in automating processes, informing stakeholders (reporting), educating users and managers, and positively transforming the way business is done? Surely these are the key objectives for all ERP systems.

Individual performance

Despite the same standards of academic achievement, similar backgrounds, the same training, shared social skills and work experience, some individuals perform much better than others. Recent studies have shown that our natural and learned skills through training and experience - the *basics* - only represent at best a 20% contribution to our performance. The remaining 80% which affects our performance comes from our personal skills - those crucial other elements such as our thinking and our behavioural aspects. Including but not limited to:

- Decision making ability and judgement
- Leadership
- Assertiveness
- Coping with stress
- Enthusiasm and energy (Passion)
- Motivation
- Team building
- Self-confidence
- Initiative

These are the *drivers* for successful personal performance. It explains why some professionals with less academic achievement outstrip their better qualified peers. Perhaps acquiring the

basics will ensure satisfactory performance - but it's the *drivers* that deliver superior performance.

Organisation ERP Performance

So why are so many organizations failing to perform to a high level in automating processes, informing stakeholders (reporting), educating users and managers, and transforming the way business is done? Surely these are the key objectives for all ERP systems. I believe we can learn a few things from people performance when we analyse the shortcomings of ERP systems performance.

Many of these organisations share the same *basics* including: the technical infrastructure; qualified IT and applications staff; competent users; the project methodology; implementation integrator; and the same ERP application itself which is in use in many global organizations.

Organisations which fail to maximise the potential of ERP systems display similar problems such as heavy customizations, a lack of planning and management, disgruntled users, ad hoc ancillary systems in MS Excel and MS Access, an array of reporting tools; problematic interfaces and are often IT driven. There is a big gap between the users and the applications team in IT.

Could it be that just like people, ERP systems need behaviours and attributes to drive them to success? Does the *Go Live* signal the end of the process or merely a point in the journey. I believe even in successful ERP implementations the *Go Live* is the half way mark at best.

So what are the *drivers* for ERP performance success?

In my experience I would suggest the following:

- Actually Managing Oracle Applications - as an investment.
- Successful Change Management - people are key.
- Leading a Support Team - proactive not reactive.
- Measuring Success and Value for Money - monitoring performance.
- Data and Information - planning and managing.
- Customers and Collaboration - working together for the benefit of all.

- Reporting and Business Intelligence - the right tools for the job.
- Empowerment and Super Users - unleash skills and passion.
- Change Control and Value for Money - cost benefit analysis.
- Project Management Kept Simple - a few tips.
- Process Improvement - continuous and alignment with applications.
- Management Information Systems - efficient and effective systems.

These are all people-centred activities required for better ERP systems performance. Fundamentally, ERP systems are investments. They need plans, actions, energy, rules, policies, analysis, management, customer-focus, leadership and lots of passion to drive performance. The *drivers* of people and ERP systems performance have striking similarities.

I wonder if there is a link between highly performing ERP management and highly performing ERP systems.....

THE DRIVERS OF ERP PERFORMANCE SUCCESS

In a recent poll on the social networking site LinkedIn.com respondents were asked whether their ERP systems added value to the organisation.

- 32% - Real Cash Benefit / Cannot Live Without It
- 68% - Too Complex / Little Value / In Learning Mode

These figures came as no surprise to me. Many of the associated comments bore out the reasons for shortfalls in performance. The IT people believed they had done their job and the user respondents were disgruntled in the main.

I have spoken to many users over the years including many from organisations with which I have no association. Here are a few of many examples of why they are unhappy with their ERP system.

After 9 years with Oracle Financials the accounting manager told me his accounting system was in Excel. A procurement professional informed me he ran the same query from 3 different Oracle reporting tools and yes he got 3 different results. A financial controller in a multinational said his own country had implemented Oracle Financials and later taken it out. The corporate HQ had failed to consult them. A large national organisation with many Oracle EBS modules also has 3 MS Access databases for each employee!

Actually Managing ERP Systems

Normally I ask a number of questions of organisations to see how well their investment in ERP is being managed by them.

- Who owns your Oracle applications? IT or the Business?
 - IT driven approaches are not the best.
- Who manages your Oracle applications?
 - Projects, development and support are best managed by one manager.

- What is the Strategy for Oracle applications?
- How much will you spend on your Oracle applications over 10 years?
 - This really focuses people on the importance of maximising benefits from ERP.
- Who are your customers?
 - The ultimate payers for your service. This should be the executive management.
- What is your customisations policy?
 - People at all levels must realise the impact of customisations in ERP systems.
- Is your Oracle Applications strategy aligned to business / corporate plans?
- Is your support team purely reactive?
- What % of the potential of Oracle Applications are you utilising?
- How does your Oracle Applications performance compare against prior years? Other orgs?
 - Are you measuring success or performance?
- Budgeting and MI reports?
 - A big investment needs an appropriate level of reporting.
- Do you implement change successfully?
 - I need examples of good and not so good change programmes.
- Is your user community empowered?
 - There are huge benefits here but it needs a little courage.

Successful Change Management

Traditionally, change management around Oracle applications projects means:

- Communicating features and benefits of the new system.
- Training, education, and external information programmes.
- New organisational structures, policies, and procedures.
- Monitoring and evaluating the organisation's performance.

But this is not the whole change picture. Have you ever wondered why often projects and major developments fail to meet expectations?

There are 8 reasons for failure of change programmes, and of course, 8 ways how to combat them and deliver effective and successful change management.

Reasons for Change Management failure

- Too self complacent - people work more effectively under a little stress and urgency.
- No effective leadership alliance - if the leadership is missing success is unlikely.
- Lack of a vision and strategy - you need to know where you are headed.
- Ineffectively communicating the vision - otherwise the vision / strategy is unsupported.
- Barriers to the new vision - people blocking progress and why
- Lack of immediate progress - need short term wins to gather momentum.
- Complacency returns - the balance can easily shift back to the old ways.
- Change not embedded in the organisation's culture - it needs to go deep and wide.

Winning the Change Game

If you intend change to be successful then you need to combat the reasons for failure. And it's never too late.

- Firing up The Team! - Create a sense of urgency and crisis. You need targets and accountabilities.
- Leaders on and off the pitch! - Create from the powerful and influential and make it visible.
- A Vision of Glory! - Make the vision feasible, desirable, focused and flexible.
- Roaring on the Team! - A simple message using many channels with leaders setting an example.
- Battling and Dominating! – Align systems and organisation to the vision, and deal with troublesome managers.
- Goals! – Celebrate and communicate short term wins.
- More pressure! More goals! – Create more change, success and leaders.
- The Winning Mentality! – Make successful change part of the culture.

Leading a Support Team

The very name conjures up visions of a purely reactive force yet these teams should be a proactive force and the foot soldiers to enable the *drivers*. The support team should be sitting between the IT and business teams and made up of skilled functional and technical analysts, and where possible, with business experience.

Other factors which will improve the support team:

- Efficiency of the support function - Measure Productive vs. Non Productive time in Oracle Time and Labour
- Measure solutions and financial benefits - Celebrate and communicate new solutions.
- Cost benefit analysis & Customisations - Undertake for all changes to the ERP system.
- Flexible staff - Analysts should be able to cover multiple modules and be trained in the *drivers*.
- Cost or profit centre – For benchmarking and efficiency analysis. Consider using spare capacity as a service provider externally.
- Outsource – Counter it on the basis of cost, continuity, communications, loyalty.
- Use Intranet for Support Service Requests – A simple form sent directly to appropriate analysts saves 1000s hours of wasted efforts.
- Set Up A Crack team to deliver efficiencies and solutions with current functionality:
 - Within Support Team.
 - Be flexible for enhancement work.
 - Focus on current functionality.
 - ERP and business process skills.
 - Work with SMEs and Super Users in business.
 - Quick Wins.

- Only Added Value Work.

Measuring Success & Value for Money

How do you measure success of your current and planned ERP applications performance?

Value for Money is based not only on the minimum purchase price (*economy*) but also on the maximum *efficiency* and *effectiveness* of the purchase.

Performance Indicators

A good management accountant should be able to develop the PIs and identify the information process to capture them:

- Return on Investment - Cash savings and additional income generated by the use of the ERP system relative to the capital investment.
- Service Requests Analysis & SLAs - Resolution of support calls against Service Level Agreements.
- Efficiency Analysis - Comparison of productive vs. non-productive hours for applications support team.
- Support Hour Cost - Controllable costs divided by the number of direct productive support hours.
- Development Hour Cost - Controllable costs divided by the number of direct productive development hours.
- Efficiency Savings - Savings as result of newly deployed solutions.
- Production Change Request Analysis - Costs by customer and efficiency savings.
- Customer / User Analysis - Support calls / Change Requests / Support Costs / Development Costs / Escalations / Complaints / Super User Group solutions
- Training Provision Analysis - Attendees' evaluations / Courses provided / Efficiency of trainers.

Measure solutions and financial benefits

Cost benefit analysis should be undertaken for all change requests and customisations. Applications support managers should provide the development and support costs and the business user should provide the financial benefits. Such an approach often dissuades users from submitting non cost effective changes.

ERP Benchmarking

Compare performance against other leading companies; against potential usage; and, internally against past performance.

The clear objective is to use the analysis to plan and deliver improved performance. It should include these broad classifications:

- Return On Investment performance.
- Customer Service performance.
- Support efficiency performance.
- Database performance.
- Project objectives performance.
- Change control performance.
- Transactional performance.

A process to deliver benchmarking results:

- Analysis of current ERP performance.
- Compare against internal and external performance.
- Compare against potential usage.
- Develop a set of solutions to improve performance.
- Develop an Action Plan.
- Deliver Action Plan.
- Review results of the Action Plan.

Data and Information

Data Migration

Data migration is one of the most important activities in determining the success of an ERP implementation. Since many decisions must be made before migration, a significant amount of planning must occur.

Unfortunately, data migration is the last activity before the production phase of an ERP implementation, and therefore receives minimal attention due to time constraints. The following are steps of a data migration strategy that can help with the success of an ERP implementation:

- Identifying the data to be migrated
- Determining the timing of data migration
- Generating the data templates
- Freezing the tools for data migration
- Deciding on migration related setups
- Deciding on data archiving and purging

Data Quality

Ensure data quality is maintained in your ERP system. Get it right first time and keep it right.

- Invest in a data quality audit tool and report back to users.
- Archiving and purging policy that works.
- Ensure users have regular and effective housekeeping routines.

Database Performance

DBAs do a fine job but make sure they are being proactive in optimising database performance.

Leverage some great features in Oracle 11g database

The 11g database upgrade delivers the platform for potential solutions to technical and business issues and includes these features:

- 11g Data Masking.
- Oracle Database Partitioning.
- Information Lifecycle management.
- 11g Compression.
- Oracle Database Vault.
- Oracle Transparent Data Encryption.
- Data Profiling and Anomaly Detection.
- 11g Database Replay.
- SQL performance analyser.
- 11g Active Data Guard.

Management Information and Data

Management information is data which has been processed to make informed decisions. Much of what is produced and referred to as MI is useless for that purpose. The repetitive production of data that appears to meet no specific management need should therefore always be vigorously questioned.

Data and technology are not ends in themselves. They are only a means to producing management information.

Process Improvement

ERP vendors have standard business processes designed into their systems. These are based upon best business practices. Different vendors have different types of processes, each of a modular nature.

There are several important points to managing business process improvement:

- Organisations may choose to adopt standardised processes or customise the ERP system.
- Customisations are expensive to develop and support long term.
- Customisations are a risk during upgrades.
- Neglecting to map current business processes prior to starting ERP implementation is a main reason for failure of ERP projects.
- Organizations should perform a thorough business process analysis before selecting an ERP vendor.
- Link each current organizational process to the organization's strategy.
- Analyse the effectiveness of each process in light of its current related business capability.
- Understand the automated solutions currently implemented.
- Integrate the business and application process for training and support purposes.
- Continuous review of key processes by business and applications team.

Customers and Collaboration

Define Your Customers and Users

It is so important to clearly define your customers. They will have a big impact on your ERP systems performance as they consume your resources. So what is a traditional view of a customer?

- Consumer of your goods and services.
- They pay for your goods or services.
- They are able to choose other suppliers.
- If they are unprofitable or troublesome, as a supplier you can end the relationship.
- There is a legal agreement.

In an enterprise-wide system the only group that would fit as customers are those at the executive level. Senior and middle managers do not have the helicopter view or enterprise responsibility - yet can often cause strains on ERP resources and performance.

If you are not a customer then you are a user, albeit you may be very senior in the organisation.

Set up an Engagement Model

Especially in large organisations it is important the right ERP project and/or support team members meet the right business users at the right levels. The frequency, content and reporting of those meeting should be pitched at the appropriate levels. Action points rather than minutes should be the output.

Report back on MI

The meetings should offer the opportunity to discuss ERP management information important to those around the table.

Set up a Custodianship Model

The model defines roles, responsibilities, duties, and relationships between the applications team, all levels of management, Super Users and other stakeholders. Without it - chaos reigns.

Weaknesses of many traditional ERP organisational models of *Internal Customers*:

- *Customers* are not engaged on a commercial basis.
- There is no legal agreement.
- *Customers* do not pay for services.
- *Supplier* cannot disengage high maintenance *customers*.
- *Customers* exert undue power over *supplier*.
- Many inefficiencies as no challenge is made to *customer requirements*.
- *Customer* demands are higher priority than organisation needs
- Noisy & complaining *customers* consume greater resources.
- Money No Object attitude!
- No reciprocal services afforded to the ERP team.

Strengths of Custodianship Model:

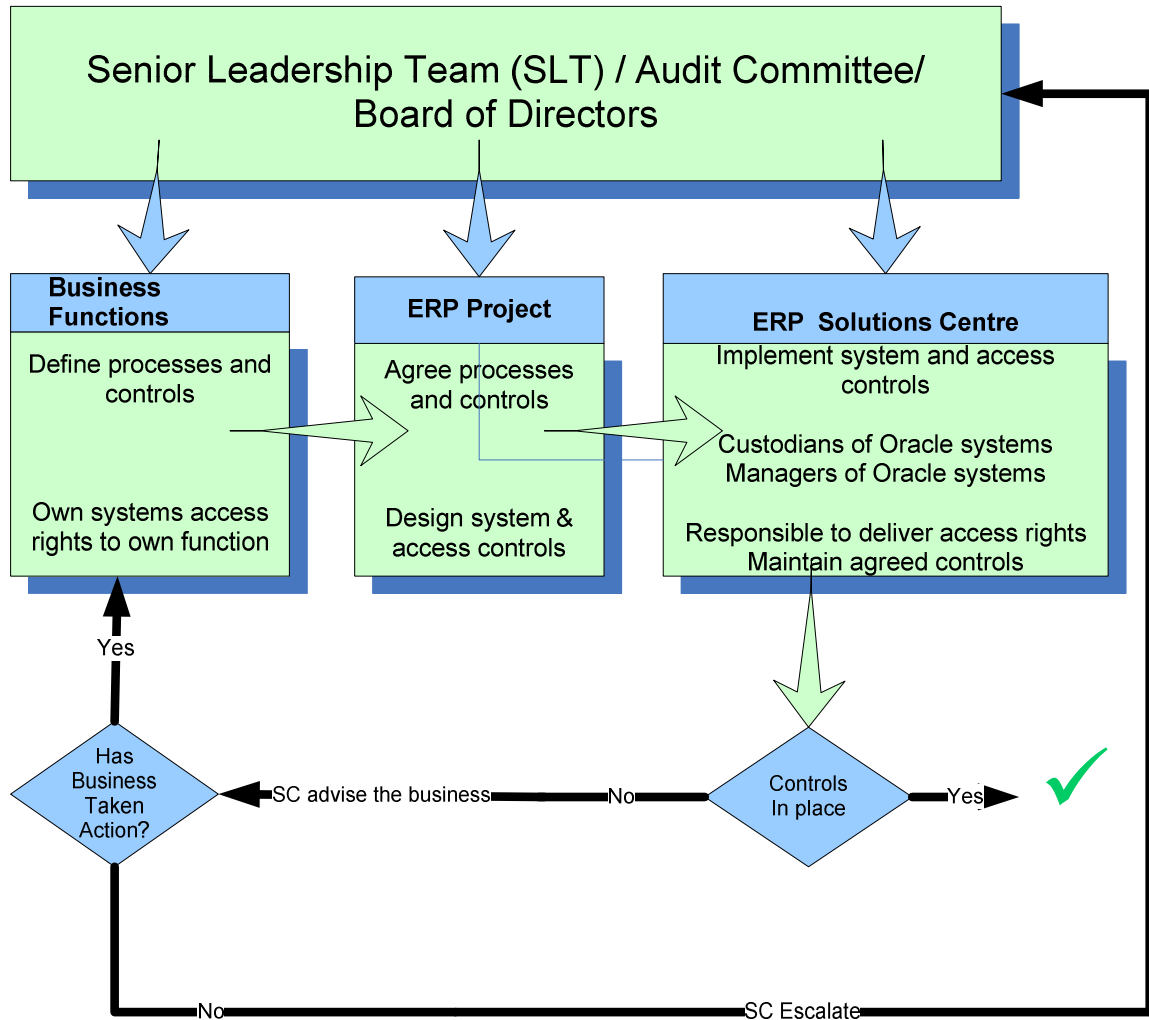
- Engagement model works at all levels.
- Equal *partners* in all dealings.
- *Business Partner* analysis evaluates services and costs.
- Escalation to IT senior managers and Business Partner senior managers.
- ERP team challenges all *Business Partner* requirements.
- Overall priority is the interests of organisation.
- Exploitation of Oracle modules via Oracle Super User Groups.
- Joint work delivering efficiency savings.

- Reciprocal services afforded to ERP team by Business Partners.
- Agreed Code of Conduct.

Key Principles of Custodianship Model:

- *Business Partners* own business processes and controls. ERP teams implement and maintain them in Oracle Modules.
- *Business Partners* authorise access to their modules, ERP teams grant and monitor that access.
- *Business Partners* own application data and ERP teams monitor data quality.
- ERP teams are custodians & managers for live Oracle applications.
- ERP team authority is delegated from the IT Senior Leadership Team.
- All actions are aimed at benefiting the whole of the organisation.
- Manage Reporting Strategy – constant agenda item.

Custodianship Model for ERP Solution Centre (SC)



Reporting and Business Intelligence

In any company there are 2 clear aspects to reporting – namely the definition and the technology.

The definition of reports required for internal and external customers is entirely a matter for the business managers. For example, Finance teams define what reporting is required to meet statutory and regulatory requirements. They define what information is included, who receives the report and when the report is delivered to the customer.

The ERP team is responsible for advising on, developing and supporting the technology used to meet the needs of business reporting. The ERP role is to focus on how reports are delivered effectively and efficiently using the most appropriate reporting tools – including business intelligence tools.

A partnership is required to meet the reporting needs of the business. Too often those roles are blurred and confused with the result being inefficient delivery.

The partnership team should have a clear strategy for delivering reporting including:

- Align with the company Reporting Strategy.
- Top down...bottom up approach.
- Utilise best practice.
- Deploy appropriate Oracle tools.
- Baseline current reporting.
- Business users define requirements - the WHAT.
- Change request raised and fully scrutinised for value for money.
- Applications support team as service provider - the HOW.
- Detailed analysis.
- Agreed solution - effective and efficient.
- Controlled development.
- Fully tested.

- Deployed in production.
- Maintained and supported.

Oracle ERP Reporting tools

There are a number of Oracle reporting tools deployed in the ERP arena. Often companies have no clear strategy for reporting then it is easy to conclude that their deployment has been supply rather than demand driven.

The reporting tools include:

- Standard reports – out of the box and reliable.
- FSG - user defined in Oracle Financials but needs control.
- Customised reports - costly and high maintenance.
- SQL ad hoc queries - quick but risky.
- Oracle Discoverer - good ad hoc tool and needs control.
- Business Intelligence tools - need a full strategic analysis of cost and risk.

These tools may have been deployed without aligning it to any business reporting strategy; or analysing demand; or by structuring appropriate support and expertise in the business side or ERP teams.

Security

The ownership of Oracle reporting necessitates access to live production systems and sensitive HR, Contracts, Projects and Payroll data.

A great deal of work is needed in restricting and managing access to these areas with customers' consent. The ERP team should be the custodian of Oracle ERP applications on behalf of the company. They should manage access for users, databases, and applications' security, menus, responsibilities and functions

Skills

The business side rarely has the skills long term to develop reports at the correct standards. Although Super Users should be encouraged to be actively involved in design, development, testing, deployment and support.

Cost

The applications support team need to prioritise development working with the business. Their aim should be to meet all current and future support, development and reporting needs of customers with the current established numbers of analysts and absorbing new requirements by eliminating wasted efforts.

They need to be flexible in working across projects and support areas; seek to manage a robust change control for reporting including securing value for money; and have a mix of permanent staff supplemented by short term contractors to satisfy periods of high demand and backlogs.

Reporting Strategy

The applications support team should identify the need for an Oracle ERP Reporting strategy with the following highlights:

- Oracle applications customers defined.
- Start with a blank sheet of paper.
- Top down ...bottom up approach.
- Challenge all current reports.
- Select appropriate reporting tools.
- Minimise customisations.
- Deliver efficient and managed reporting.
- Deliver 'One Truth' reporting.
- Empower users.

The strategy should be led by the business and supported by the ERP team. There are huge potential benefits to successfully managing Oracle ERP reporting delivering correct, timely useful management information in a more efficient manner than the ad hoc supplementary tools often used in organisations.

Empowerment and Super Users

Organisations have many skilled Oracle end users and should develop them in order to maximise benefits from Oracle applications. Their business and applications experience together with their enthusiasm are invaluable to the organisation.

A plan to develop Oracle Super Users should include:

- Define the role of the Oracle Super User:
 - Member of the Oracle Super User Group.
 - Custodian of the module for the Module Owner.
 - Assist with maintaining module set up in response to business needs.
 - Module knowledge expert.
 - Resolves user business process and system usage issues, or escalates.
 - Provide updates for module information on Oracle Applications intranet site.
- Selection of Oracle Super Users.
- Training and Development for Oracle Super Users.

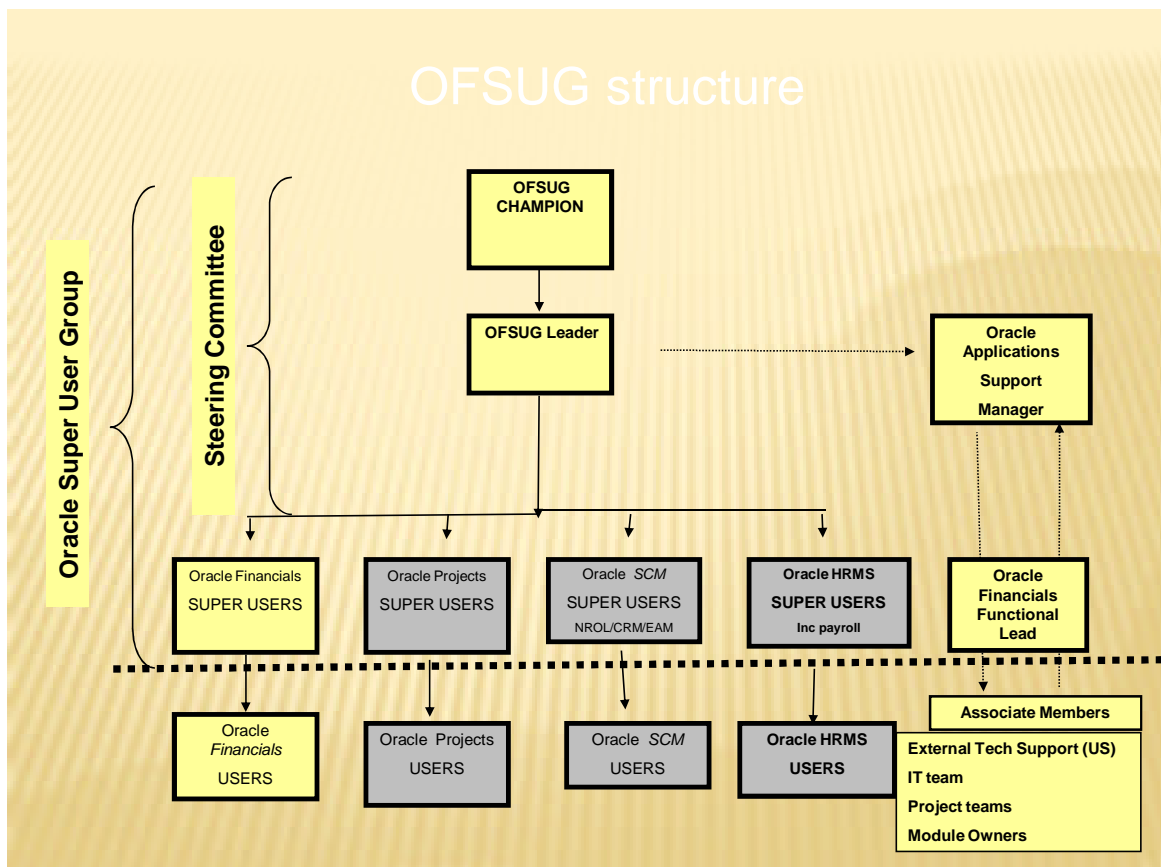
My experience in many diverse organisations leads me to advise that there are huge benefits in establishing effective Oracle Super Users and Oracle Super User Groups.

A plan to develop Oracle Super Users should include:

- A Vision - To be acknowledged as the Oracle Applications user experts in the organisation.
- Big Picture - Fit in the Oracle space in the organisation.
- Objectives - it must pay for itself with effective solutions.
- Benefits - Voice of the users, process improvements, efficiency, savings, best practise.
- Ownership - By the business.
- Structure - Relationships with other groups and stakeholders.

- Processes - Change requests, support calls analysis, business and application process review.
- Customers - Users, management, auditors, functions, stakeholders.
- Training and Education - Knowledge gaps, knowledge sharing. Presentations, user training.
- Funding - For group activities.
- Communication - Meetings, Intranet and bulletins.
- Short Term Requirements - Define group guidelines and get business commitment.

Oracle Financials Super User Group model

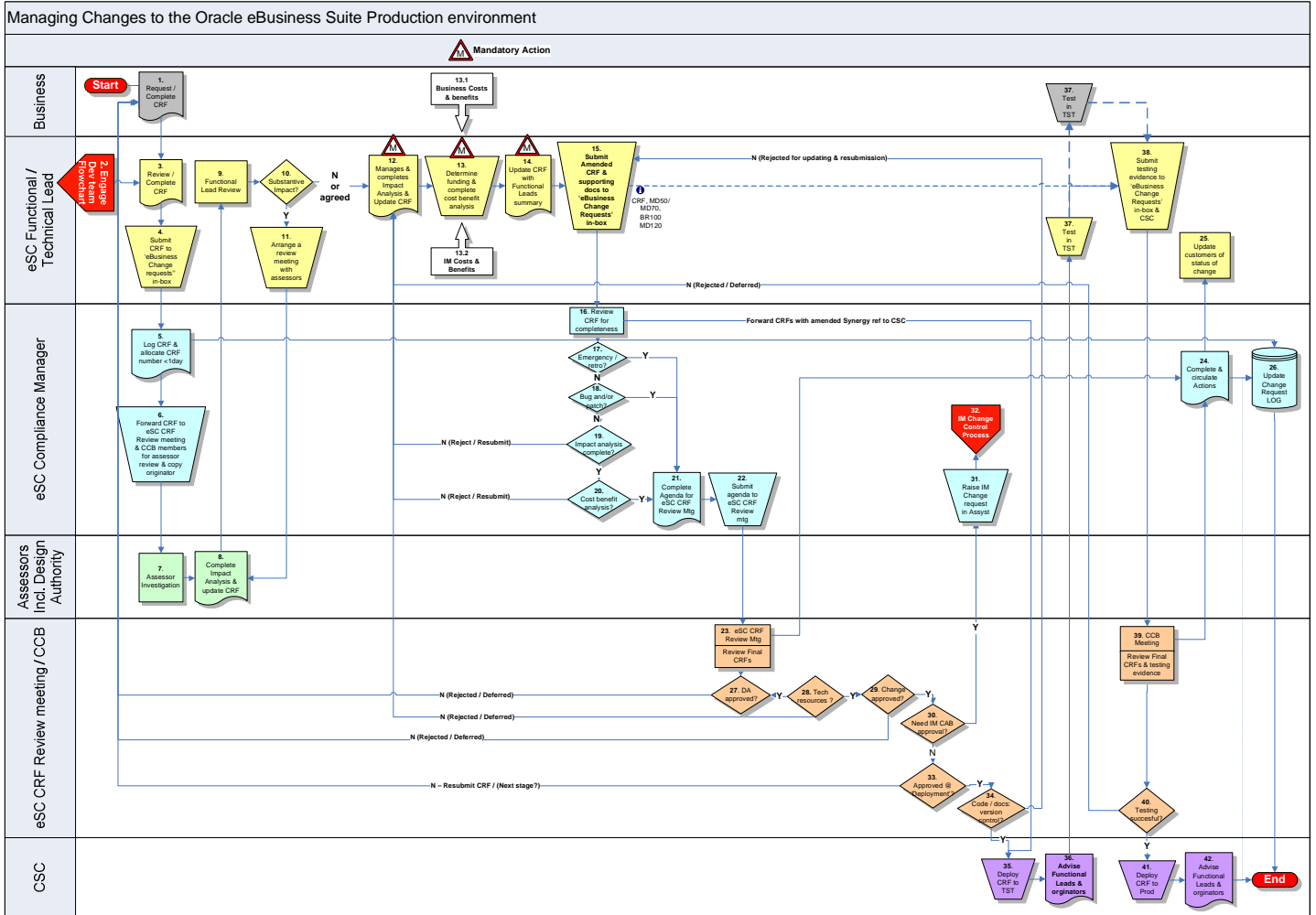


Change Control and Value for Money

The aims of Change Control are to:

- Safeguard the Production environment and the strategic and production designs.
- Provide a disciplined environment in which changes are effected in a timely manner.
- Ensure that every change has stakeholder buy-in and is fully documented, understood, planned.
- Ensure that the impact and potential risks of changes are analysed.
- Ensure that all relevant areas of the organisation are consulted when considering a change.
- Ensure appropriate management and contractual approvals are gained for every change.
- Maintain comprehensive, auditable records of changes.
- Minimise bureaucracy.
- Minimise the number of outages and release overheads.
- Cost Benefits Analysis for each piece of work.

Change Control Process Model



Project Management Kept Simple

Even after the implementation of ERP systems there is usually a number of projects still to be delivered in the ERP space.

The bureaucracy around projects can be necessary and cumbersome.

These are my best tips for managing projects:

- Keep them as simple as possible.
- Make effective change management a key objective.
- Develop partnership between project team and all stakeholders.
- Set expectations at the correct level.
- Get the necessary budget.
- Make sure key business resources are available.
- Plan well but be flexible.
- Meet obstacles head on and remove them.
- Keep reports and meetings as brief as possible.

Management Information Systems

MIS is a general term for the computer systems in an enterprise that provide information about its business operations. It's also used to refer to the people who manage these systems.

In the beginning, business computers were used for the practical business of computing the payroll and keeping track of accounts payable and receivable. As applications were developed that provided managers with information about sales, inventories, and other data that would help in managing the enterprise, the term *MIS* arose to describe these kinds of applications. Today, the term is used broadly in a number of contexts and includes (but is not limited to): decision support systems, resource and people management applications (ERP), project management, and database retrieval applications.

ERP systems are the key to the successful reporting of management information today.

Current key developments in management information include:

- 78% of global CEOs said in recent poll financial indicators were not enough to understand the health of their business.
- 100% said Non Financial Indicators were vital in predicting future performance and managing risk.
- Balance Scorecard - For measurement of:
 - Customers
 - Financial
 - Learning / Growth
 - HR Management
 - Internal Operations / Processes
 - Social / Community
 - Corporate Governance

ERP systems should be the key to the successful reporting of non financial management information today.

SUMMARY

Those responsible for the business performance of ERP systems should have clear objectives such as:

- Automating processes - cost savings.
- Informing stakeholders (reporting) - effective information for competitive advantage.
- Educating users and managers - utilise the full potential of ERP.
- Transforming the way business is done - use ERP to change for the better.

In today's recession, it's even more important than ever clients secure value for money from their investment in Oracle and other ERP systems.

My background as a management accountant and general manager combined with my functional and technical knowledge has certainly helped me manage ERP systems

Organisations where there is a shortfall in ERP business performance should be asking lots of questions. If more than 30% of organisations are truly benefitting from ERP systems then despite ERP weaknesses, it is possible for all organisations to be in the same position.

Much too heavy an emphasis is placed upon the technology which can be complex and confusing if organisations are buying what is available rather than what they really need for success.

It is important that the organisation has the *basics* in place with a plan to reach success with the use of the *drivers*.

People Drive ERP Systems To Success.