

Exact Macola

**AN EXACT
WHITEPAPER**

5 Signs Now's the Time to Upgrade to Enterprise Business Software

Are You Looking to Increase the Speed, Accuracy, and Reliability of Your Business Operations?

If you're like most manufacturing and distribution companies, you've started out with a hodge podge of manual and siloed systems to manage your business. Chances are, you use accounting software to record transactions, post them to the general ledger and generate income statements and balance sheets. A variety of spreadsheets, software and manual processes manage your sales, manufacturing, distribution and other operations.

But workloads have grown. Your management can no longer see everything going on in the company. Vast quantities of information make decisions overwhelming. Manual business processes are cumbersome and time consuming. Tasks grind to a halt as employees' inboxes become swamped. Documents get misplaced. Answering questions—such as what is the cost of labor and materials for a particular product or where an order is in the production line—demand increasingly time-consuming research via email, voice mail, or walking to the shop floor. Important work falls through the cracks.

Enterprise business software solutions address these issues and more. Evolving from enterprise resource planning (ERP) applications that traditionally managed financials, manufacturing and distribution, modern enterprise business solutions also encompass customer relationship management (CRM); human resource management (HRM); document management, workflow and automation; and more. These solutions automate manual business processes and transactions to enable your team to react to business events without human error or delays. They make business data available in real time across your organization so you can make data-driven decisions. And they centralize the creation, management and secure access to business documents. Better yet, today's solutions are easier than ever to use. Each member of your team sees only relevant functionality needed for their specific role.

These benefits mean that virtually every small to medium-sized manufacturer or distributor eventually adopts enterprise business software. According to the Aberdeen Group, 97% of leading manufacturers take advantage of these solutions. If you haven't adopted one of these solutions already, the question is not whether you'll do so, but when.

So how do you know when the time is right for your business? Consider these five signs.

#1—Your company tracks critical information in systems that are neither automated nor integrated

Accounting software manages only financial records. It doesn't handle projects, production, distribution, or CRM. For these and other tasks, you use spreadsheets, paper-based, or other siloed or homegrown systems. Since these activities aren't integrated with your financial system, you end up entering the same data into multiple systems, which is time consuming and leads to mistakes. For example, updating your books requires someone to re-type data from purchasing, inventory and other systems into your General Ledger.

Integrated data provides the greatest opportunity for efficiency and productivity gains

Enterprise business software automates all your business processes and functions including project management, distribution, quality management, accounting and finance, HRM, CRM and manufacturing. Data entered into any of these modules is stored in a single repository that serves your entire enterprise. By eliminating the need to maintain separate systems and manually re-enter data into each one, you save time and slash your risk of error. In a recent survey of enterprise business software users, Panorama Consulting found that improved productivity and efficiency as well as reduced duplication of effort were named as a top benefits. As one example, when all of your business systems are integrated, your books become self-reconciling, which dramatically speeds the production of financial statements. Wayne Bailey, CIO for Reno Refractories made the following statement after implementing their Exact Macola enterprise business software solution, "We used to be 2-3 months behind on our financial statements. After implementing our ERP, we are now four days from closing our financial statements."

#2—You want to improve collaboration by boosting efficiency and transparency

Your company has mission-critical work processes that demand collaboration and cross-company interactions. As you grow, manual processes take too long or allow tasks to fall through the cracks. For example, when a change order comes in, your production planner might leave a voice mail, email, or Post-it® note to notify the production manager. A lost message that delays or prevents the production manager from receiving notification of the change can impact everything from scheduling to purchasing to production. Similarly, it's often difficult to track all the documents necessary to fulfill an order, including estimates, purchase orders, advanced shipping notifications, and shipping documents. When you must manually reconcile these documents, you can end up with mistakes or delays throughout your order-to-cash processes.

Workflow engines prevent important tasks from getting lost

Workflow engines within enterprise business software prevent important tasks from getting lost. Workflow engines automatically route tasks to the next person in the chain. This automation aligns all parties to the process, ensures tasks are performed in a consistent manner and tracks progress to eliminate human error. Workflows also alert key individuals of critical business situations, such as when a change order means production schedules need to change or purchasing needs to order a new part. Document management capabilities centralize the creation, storage, access, and version management for all documents that support your business. People can easily see online copies of documents related to transactions and workflows, which makes it faster and easier to reconcile a PO with an invoice, for example.

#3—You lack real-time visibility into the performance of your business

When your data is stored in multiple disconnected systems, it's difficult to keep your fingers on the pulse of your business. You need an army of people spending hours, days, even weeks pulling data out of different spreadsheets to create custom reports that answer questions such as:

- What's my sales pipeline and forecast?
- What are my open accounts receivables?
- What's the rate of inventory turns for a specific part?

Information availability is a key benefit of enterprise business software

Lack of visibility is a particular problem for executives with enterprise-wide responsibility. These executives need access to data about the performance of the entire company at a moment's notice to answer a shareholder question or make a strategic decision. Information availability is a key benefit of enterprise business software. These solutions enable you to instantly create ad hoc reports to make informed decisions more rapidly. Personalized workspaces display all your key performance indicators in easily understandable charts and graphs. You can drill down to the underlying detailed data and interact with it in a contextual manner that supports immediate action. These workspaces are available from the web or mobile devices so you can access them anytime, anywhere.

#4—You need to improve profitability by reducing manufacturing costs

Because you're under constant pressure to keep prices low, the only way to achieve reasonable margins is by cutting your manufacturing costs. But as the saying goes, you can't improve what you can't measure. You need to know what your costs are before you can find ways to reduce them. If you are unable to accurately measure all elements of your manufacturing costs, including materials, labor, overhead, and subcontract manufacturing for each of your products, how can you identify specific and meaningful cost drivers and opportunities to reduce costs?

By providing complete visibility into all of your costs, including material, labor, and overhead costs, enterprise business software enables you to accurately determine your costs and profitability—as well as pinpoint areas that can be improved. This is critical if you're exploring future manufacturing strategies and competitive cost pressures.

#5—You want to improve your competitive advantage

Cumbersome manual processes impede competitiveness in many ways. An inability to easily answer customers questions impacts customer service. Having to track down information through telephone tag, email or by walking around the plant, for instance, makes the quoting process laborious and time consuming—which can lead to lost business. If you're manually moving parts through each successive step in your production process, you lack visibility into how long it takes to make the part as well as what aspects of the manufacturing process are inefficient and need improvement.

Automation ensures that work processes are completed in a timely fashion that makes you more responsive to customers. Document management means you have instant access to necessary documents, which further improves cycle times.

Take the quoting process. Enterprise business software makes it easier for sales reps to gather all the information they need to put together a quote. Sales reps can instantly see the latest pricing for components; quickly determine the labor necessary to produce the item; see similar quotes; and even view historical information about which previous quotes turned into orders to make more accurate quotes more quickly. RiteWay Manufacturing, an Exact Macola customer, took advantage of these capabilities to reduce the time it took to quote large custom projects from 3-5 days to less than half a day.

Enterprise business software's reporting and analysis tools also give you visibility into historical time, cost, labor and quality data. By comparing this data to estimates, you can judge what's working and what isn't—and make the necessary improvements to enhance your competitive advantage. Your business can, for example, speed manufacturing processes by more accurately tracking the time it takes for each quantity of product to be completed and which workers are assigned to each job. Managers can easily see where delays might be occurring and hold employees accountable

Manually intensive processes severely limit your ability to gain a competitive advantage

Conclusion

Are you ready to migrate from your accounting software and disparate manual systems to enterprise business software? Now may be the time to make your move. Ask yourself whether you're ready to take your business to the next level by:

- Automating your business transactions and tracking all your data in one central repository to avoid excessive time and errors from duplicate data entry.
- Improving collaboration and cross-company interactions by boosting the efficiency and transparency of your work processes
- Gaining real-time visibility into the performance of every nook and cranny of your business
- Improving your profitability by reducing manufacturing costs
- Enhancing competitive advantage by streamlining business processes and delivering better, more responsive customer service.

About Exact Macola 10

Exact Macola has provided software solutions to thousands of small and medium-sized manufacturers and distributors for over 40 years. Our solutions help organizations increase revenue, reduce costs, mitigate risk, improve operational efficiencies, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Our flagship product, Exact Macola 10, is business and enterprise resource planning (ERP) software aimed at helping customers better:

- Understand costs and performance metrics
- Plan properly for labor, materials, resources, and compliance
- Deliver their products predictably and within budget

We do all this by increasing the speed, accuracy, and reliability of business operations.

While most of our competitors charge extra for every add-on piece, we offer a comprehensive suite of functionality including accounting, manufacturing, distribution, CRM, HRM, workflow, automation, and document management software....all with mobile access and integration support for 3rd party applications. We provide all this for one budget-friendly price.

Product Website:

<http://www.exactmacola.com/erp-software/manufacturing-solutions/exact-macola-10>

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http://go.panorama-consulting.com/rs/panoramaconsulting/images/2014-ERP-Report-2.pdf?mkt_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRonsq%2FKZKXonjHpfSx54%2B0qT%2Frn28M3109ad%2BrmPBy92IABWp8na%2BqWCgseOrQ8llwLV9W%2FRM0RqqI%3D

From Panorama 2014 ERP Report, Use chart on Page 15—“Type of Benefit Realized”

<http://www.aberdeen.com/research/9820/RR-erp-manufacturing-technology.aspx/content.aspx>

From Aberdeen Report “Creating a Modern, Effective Manufacturing Environment with ERP, use Table on Page 9, Table 1: The Benefits

Sources

“Creating a Modern, Effective Manufacturing Environment with ERP” by Nick Castellina, Aberdeen Group, October 2014

“2014 ERP Report” by Panorama Consulting Solutions

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