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Country-Based Needs Regarding ERP Systems for Midmarket Businesses by Tracy Narvaez

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A primary benefit for companies that have or want to implement ERP systems is the enterprise wide customization that is possible. Processes in every department can be set up in a module and then integrated with other modules as required. By the same token, businesses in various countries do the same things in different ways and appreciate the possibility of software that can be precisely tailored for their needs.

The requirements of companies in South Africa are worlds apart from those in Europe and the US. Even large companies in SA do not really require the all-encompassing scope and equally high price tag that comes with global solutions provided by multinational providers. The end result is that many firms have paid too much for a large-scale system they don't need or gone the other way and settled for a lower midmarket offering that precludes any possibility of growth.

What makes it worse is that these international vendors send in people from their American and German offices for the implementation. These foreign consultants have no clue when it comes to the South African way of doing business. Before anything else can be done, the customer's divisional heads and IT manager have to sit down and explain the whole process and the paper trails. To get past such problems, what the region needs is an upper-midmarket solution implemented by a local team.

The ideal answer lies in something with a built-in framework for companies in the midmarket range that can easily be implemented by a local implementation team. It brings together everything from subsidiaries and agencies to offices under a single IT system. It is scalable enough that when the company decides to wade into a new area, the framework is already there and simply needs to be activated and customized.

Customers can choose to begin with core modules like Sales and Distribution, HR, FI/CO and Production. The data from old packages can be migrated to the ERP and the whole thing can be moved form a test server to a live environment. Meanwhile, the company can keep adding and integrating other modules they need around this existing core.

This is the kind of low-cost, simple to use and smaller customization/implementation timeframe package that appeals to South African businesses who seek value for money above all else. This also leads to the obvious choice of local consultants. A foreign team would be expensive and they would have too much culture shock and a big learning curve to get the project completed as quickly or effectively.

A local team can co-ordinate with the company's managers and get the implementation over with very quickly. In addition, they can help with change management. It is critically important to get the management and users on-board with the new program and the new IT-based method.

A lot of companies fail with ERP systems because users simply do not understand why they have to use the system to do things they have been doing manually for years. Employees will only accept the new methods if it comes from experienced local consultants who can explain how it is working well in other companies in South Africa. It needs training and has to be explained in a way that employees can relate to.

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Tracy Narvaez - About Author:
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