

How to Build a Roadmap for Your Oracle E-Business Suite Applications

Does your organization feel intimidated by the “U word”— as in upgrading your Oracle E-Business Suite ERP system? You’re not alone. While businesses reap huge benefits from the features, functions and sheer power of ERP software, the reality is that ERP systems by their nature are complex to manage. With so much focus on day-to-day operations and maintenance, there is little time to plan for the future. The idea of making any changes at all, let alone upgrading to a new release, is often put off as long as possible because of concerns about costs and complications.

This sentiment was echoed in a recent study by Forrester Research published in 2011 which found that many ERP software customers avoid upgrading due to limited IT budgets and high upgrade project costs. Of the over 900 respondents surveyed in the study, only 25 percent planned to invest in their existing ERP systems in 2011 compared to 29 percent in 2010.

Upgrading Protects the Business Value of ERP Systems

Even though it may seem easier to simply avoid the upgrade issue, it’s important to point out that there are some very good reasons to consider upgrading your Oracle E-Business Suite software.

The most important reason is that upgrading protects the business value of your ERP system. Businesses continually change with new goals and objectives. Just think about how your operations have evolved over the last five years thanks to technological innovations like social media and smart phones. It’s a mistake to not employ the same forward thinking when it comes to your ERP system. Upgrading your E-Business Suite software provides a way to take advantage of strategic efficiencies and technological improvements offered by the latest release to accommodate the way your business has grown since the ERP system was initially implemented.

In addition, the upgrading process can also serve as an opportunity to implement features and functions that you paid for but that were not part of the initial E-Business Suite roll-out or to correct processes that have required costly custom reports or workarounds.

E-Business Roadmapping Methodology Helps Develop ERP Strategy

Now that you can see the potential benefit of upgrading to the latest version of Oracle E-Business Suite, the next questions are:

1. How do you determine if upgrading makes sense?
2. How do you plan for a possible upgrade project without disrupting normal business operations?

Here, too, there is good news. By leveraging a standardized and tested road-mapping methodology, your organization can carefully evaluate the current state of your ERP system and develop a strategic system plan for your Oracle applications.

For some organizations, the answer will be upgrading, for others it will be re-implementation and for some it will be stay on the same release. The key is that you will have the opportunity to do a precise and in-depth analysis of your specific ERP system before making any decisions.

Methodology is Flexible and Adaptable

This methodology identifies 23 distinct steps, but the process is adaptable and flexible, depending on your organization’s specific needs.

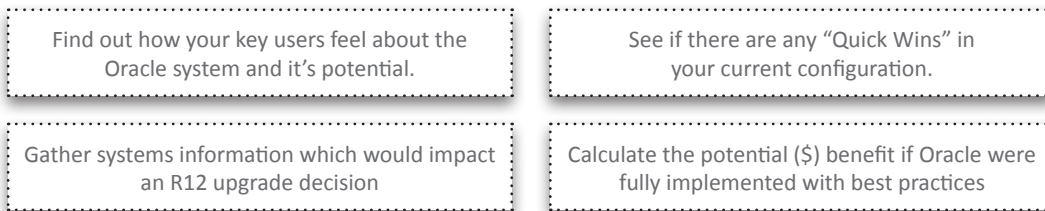
The objective is to evaluate your environment, discover challenges and opportunities, and determine what activities are needed to fully develop a strategic roadmap for your Oracle applications. Some businesses will choose to close out the exercise after the first phase, while others will find it beneficial to continue through the entire road-mapping process.

Typically, what you learn in the initial analysis dictates whether your organization should invest the time and money it takes to continue with the detailed analysis and the roadmap.

Evaluate the Potential - Phase 1

The goal here is to measure how much improvement your organization can potentially gain for your Oracle systems. First, surveys are used to discover how key users feel about the current Oracle E-Business Suite system and its potential. Next, the current configuration is analyzed to see if there are any quick adjustments that can be implemented to improve business processes. At the same time, systems information is gathered that will be needed when deciding whether to upgrade to Oracle E-Business Suite R12. Finally, steps are taken to calculate the potential financial benefit if an organization chooses to fully implement Oracle with best practices.

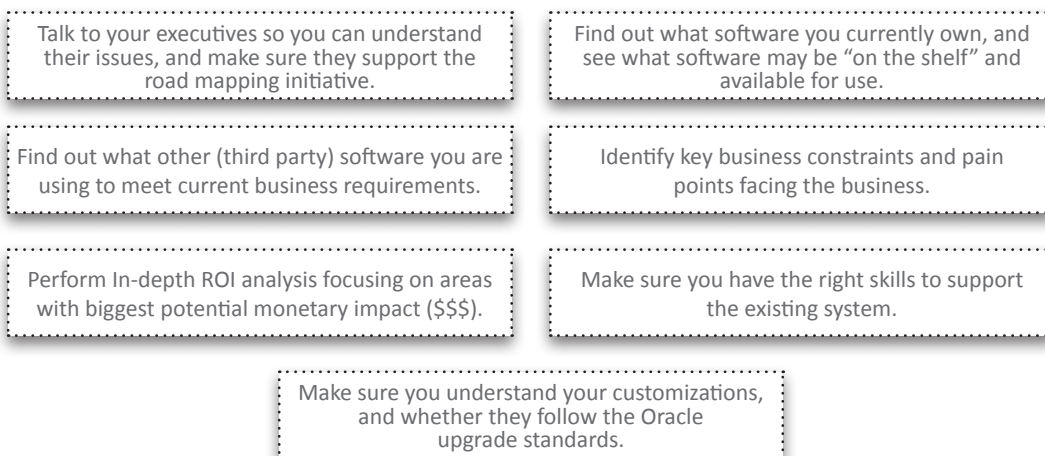
At the end of this phase, you will clearly understand if there is a demonstrated business value to extending the use of Oracle E-Business Suite. If there is, then it's time to move on to the next phase of the process.



Discover and Review - Phase 2

The objective in this phase is to gather essential information about how your organization currently uses the ERP system. Initially, executives are interviewed to understand any issues they consider to be important and to gain their support for the road mapping initiative. Next, the focus is placed on identifying what software you own, if there are applications that you own but are not taking advantage of and if the configuration uses any third-party software applications. It is also important to identify key business constraints currently confronting your organization, as well as to perform an in-depth ROI analysis to pinpoint the areas with the biggest potential monetary impact. In addition, it is critical to ensure that the organization has the skills to support the existing ERP system. Finally, all customizations are identified and it is made clear if they follow Oracle upgrade standards.

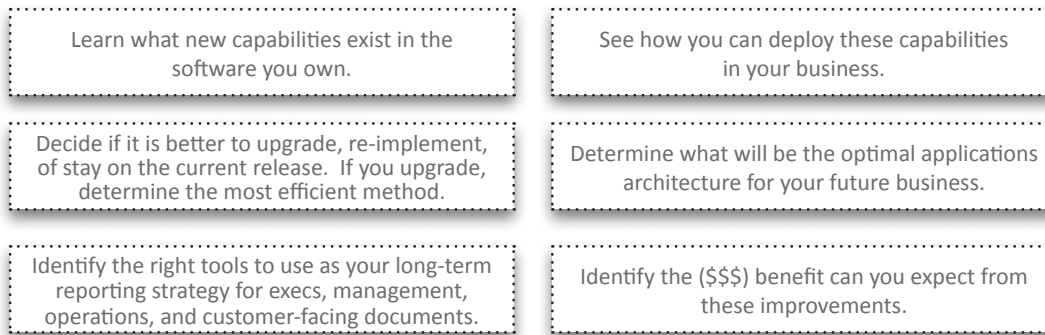
When this phase is completed, your organization will have a current and complete picture of its entire ERP system and where the potential exists for improved ROI.



Define the Future - Phase 3

The goal in this phase is to compare your current ERP system to the latest capabilities of Oracle E-Business Suite. First, the focus is on learning what new capabilities exist in the software you own and determining how to deploy the capabilities in your business. Then all the information gathered so far is used to make the strategic decision to upgrade, re-implement or stay on the current release. Depending on this decision, the next steps are determining what the optimal applications architecture will be for your future business, followed by identifying the right tools to use for your long-term reporting strategy. Finally, it is important to identify the financial benefits the organization can expect to gain from any system enhancements.

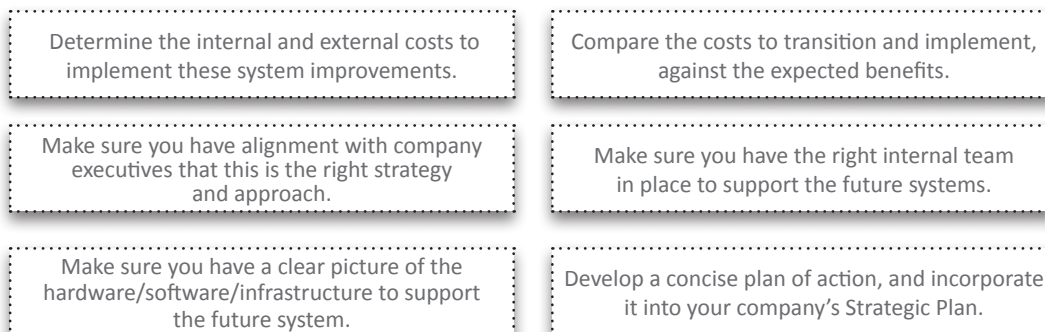
When this phase is completed, your organization will be ready to embark on the planning process.



Develop the Plan - Phase 4

With all the careful preparation accomplished in the first three phases, the goal of this phase is to create a practical plan to take advantage of new capabilities. First it is critical to pinpoint the internal and external costs to implement system improvements—and then to compare the costs to transition and implement the improvements against the expected benefits to be achieved. Next, it is important to cement executive support for the strategic approach and ensure that the personnel with the right skills are available to support the future system. Also, there should be a clear understanding of the hardware/software infrastructure that will be required to support the future system.

With all these elements in place, now it will be possible to develop a concise plan of action that can be incorporated in your company's Strategic Plan.



Seeing a Clear Path Ahead

Sometimes the hardest part of making changes is finding the right strategy to get started. This E-Business Roadmapping Methodology is a structured, methodical, and logical way for customers to develop a plan for improving their use of Oracle E-Business Suite— whether this means upgrading, re-implementing, or staying on the current release.

At the end of this exercise, your organization will have the following:

- A clear picture of what is owned.
- A good understanding of what can be accomplished if the software is leveraged.
- A monetary estimate (business case) of cost savings that can be achieved.
- A plan to get it implemented.

The ultimate benefit of the E-Business Roadmapping Methodology is that is an effective way for your organization to establish the best way to invest in your ERP system to maintain its strategic value now and in the future.

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