The complete Cloud ERP lifecycle:

From strategy to adoption,

and beyond

Value first with a people mindset

Contents

Completely transform business models for manufacturing, food and retail

Why read this guide?

This guide sets out the best practice, essential stages and associated methodologies that create an inclusive culture across the organisation. It provides a holistic approach to building a roadmap. It will help you ensure that every stakeholder, business owner, department and user, understands and appreciates the need for change.
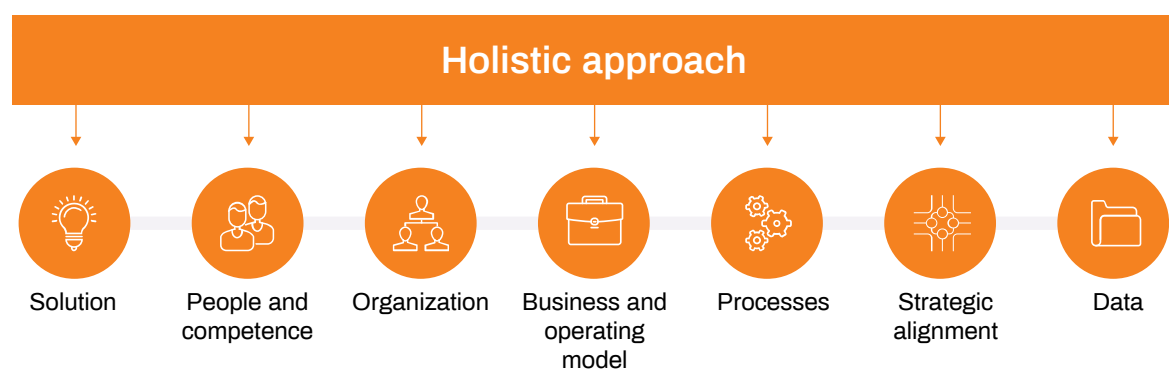
We highlight how you can leverage data to best business advantage, using the advanced analytics and Artificial Intelligence tools inherent in Cloud ERP.

We also outline the considerations you will need to make when implementing an 'Evergreen' approach to aftercare for your Cloud ERP project. This is an approach that delivers maximum uptime, ongoing innovation, security, and continuous operational improvement. It will also help you in exploiting new opportunities for progress as they arise.

Cloud ERP is a catalyst, not an outcome in itself

Setting the scene for change | Planning

Every journey requires careful planning to make sure that your reasons 'why' (the hoped-for value) are validated by your approach to 'how'. A Cloud ERP project, correctly planned, benefits people in direct proportion to their understanding of 'what's in it' for them. Correct planning is about being holistic. Be ready to explore every touchpoint related to anticipated project outcomes from both the process and, more importantly, the people points of view.

Holistic approach

Solution · People and competence · Organization · Business and operating model · Processes · Strategic alignment · Data

Setting the scene for data value optimization | Taking care of the data

Preparing for change involves taking a fresh look at how you can extract business value from your data by connecting it and making it available at every identified point in your holistic discovery stage.

Cloud ERP will bring the resounding benefits of advanced and predictive analytics into your processes and your decisions. These benefits will range from supply chain route optimization, to improved order-to-cash ratios, understanding customers better and driving higher rates of customer retention, and much more besides.

These benefits will only be possible if you prepare the way to make them so. Data—and what you intend to use it for—has to figure prominently from the start of any Cloud ERP planning you undertake.

This is essential groundwork for making sure that you cover every aspect of how to facilitate and optimize the use both of data and the sophisticated tools your Cloud ERP project will give you access to.

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Setting the scene for project success | Longevity

An assumption that Cloud ERP is just a technology project, best left in the capable hands of the IT team will bring along its own bugs into system effectiveness.

Anything that goes wrong will be blamed on the technology experts. Yet things often go far more wrong than can be fixed by turning it off and turning it on again.

Implemented with a view to treating it as a valuable asset to the business long into the future, Cloud ERP will justify the investment needed if care and attention is paid to the asset throughout its life. Only then will it enable the business to grow. It will also evolve itself, to serve the business needs as they evolve.

The road ahead

All this planning might sound like a huge wave of stratgies, plans, consultations and discovery tasks. It is not. Effective strategy planning and change management is simply a matrix of elements that connect value with people, data with decisions and processes, and productivity with the tools that will make it possible.

If none or only some of this happens, the flood of activities and costs involved in sorting out false starts will be far more costly.

Get ready to enjoy the journey with confidence, knowing that you have the clearest possible direction for the road ahead.
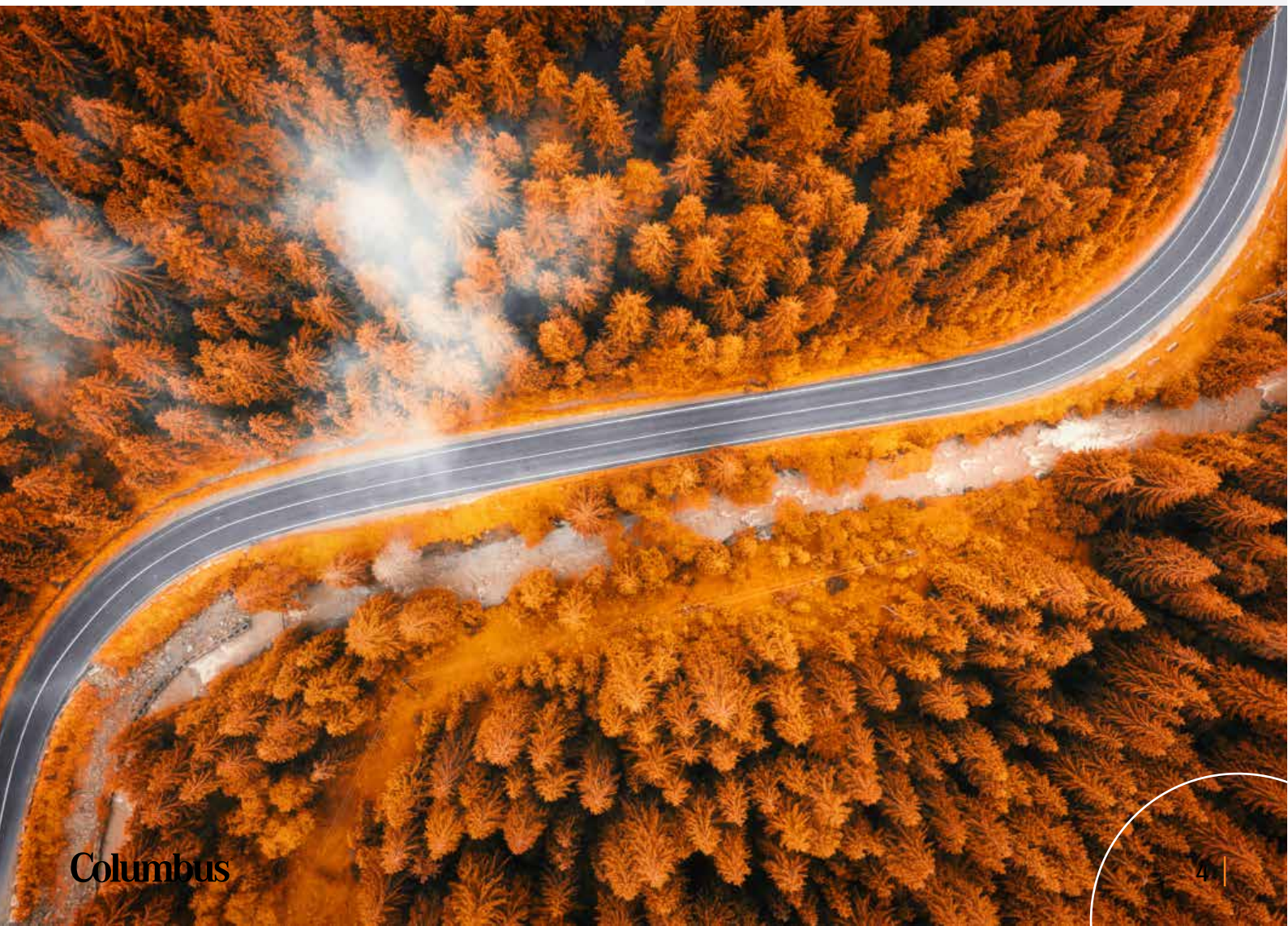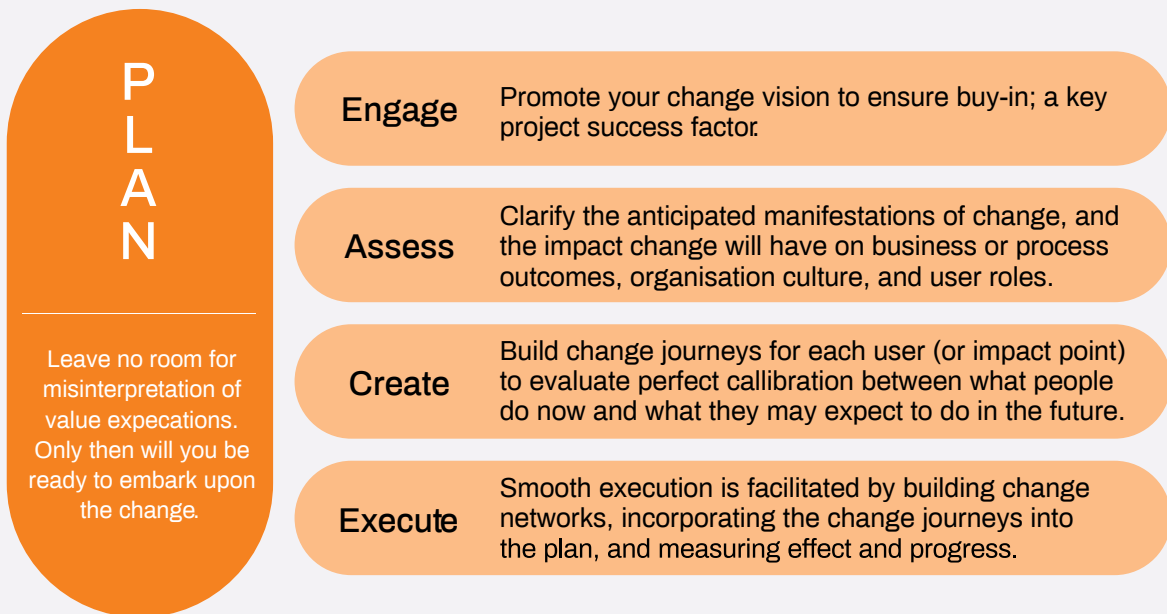
Put value first and the rest will follow

How to eliminate those heart-stopping moments with strategy planning and change management for your Cloud ERP project? Ensuring that value is defined with a people mindset.

Will it be worth it?

At the start of any Cloud ERP project, the seeds of success are sown by making sure that people across the business understand what to expect from change and involving them in the process of helping you manage it.

Such an approach will not only remove barriers to adoption, and resistance to change, but will also contribute significantly to realising the return on your investment.

Your roadmap to effective change management will be invested with success if it is populated with all the detail necessary through five key stages:

P L A N

Leave no room for misinterpretation of value expecations. Only then will you be ready to embark upon the change.

Engage — Promote your change vision to ensure buy-in; a key project success factor.

Assess — Clarify the anticipated manifestations of change, and the impact change will have on business or process outcomes, organisation culture, and user roles.

Create — Build change journeys for each user (or impact point) to evaluate perfect callibration between what people do now and what they may expect to do in the future.

Execute — Smooth execution is facilitated by building change networks, incorporating the change journeys into the plan, and measuring effect and progress.

Meaningful answers to the 'what's in it for me' questions, that will arise from your people, are worth time and effort to resolve. While these answers inform the change management strategy, they also reinforce its credibility and acceptability (buy-in) by building up understanding.

Most of ERP failures are caused by not giving priority to change management and training

The many challenges of change are addressed by basing your planning on two core interdependent pillars, focussing on putting value first but with a people mindset:
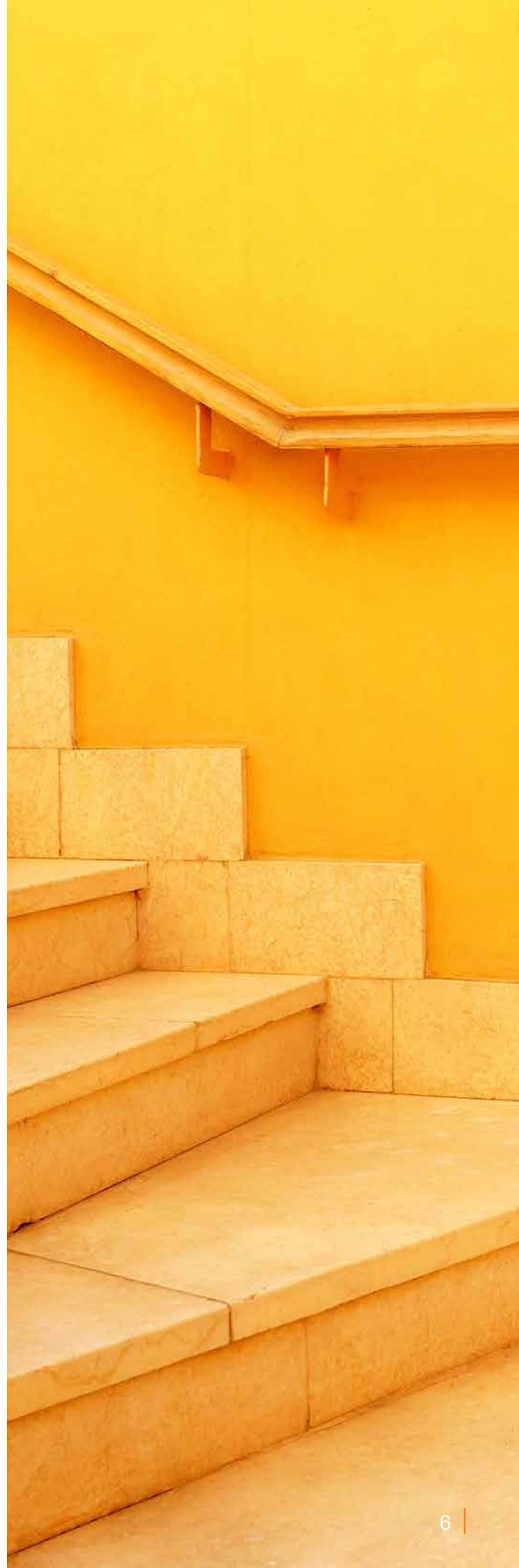
- Strategy and change management
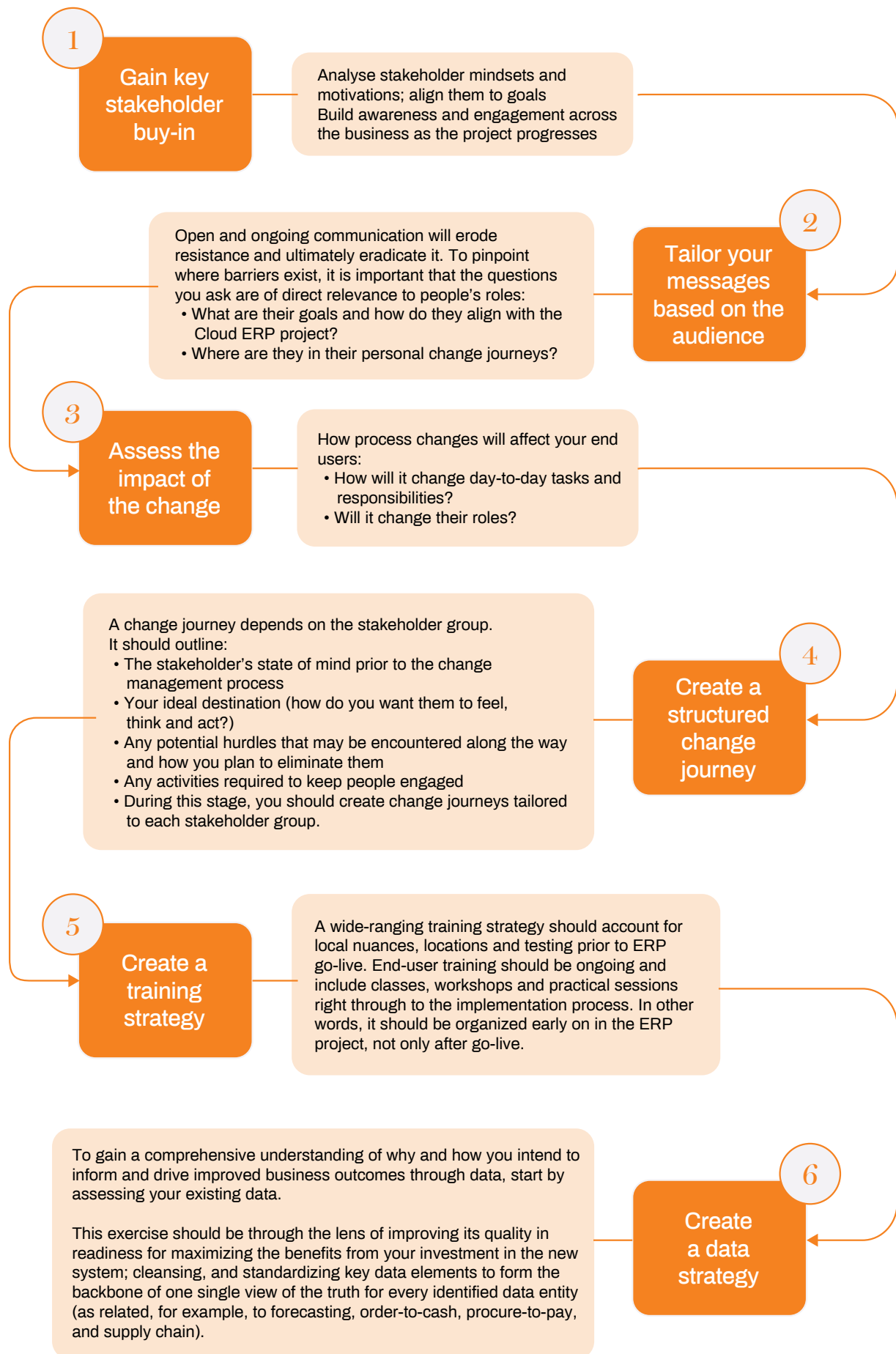- People management

Strategy and change management

Effective Cloud ERP planning is not about creating a list of things to do, and when to do them. It's about the methodologies that lead to each of those 'things' being done in line with best practice.

Cloud ERP projects are nearly always ambitious, expensive, and intended to be far-reaching, to the point of transformative. A time would have come, somewhere in the decision-making process, when the cost was approved. The go-ahead would have been given on the basis of a business case that presented the proposed transformation as good sense for the business, and the ideal solution to the problem/s or opportunities that had been identified.

To justify this confidence, the disciplines of strategy and change management bring pragmatism to the process of readying the business. These disciplines will not have to be developed in-house since your Cloud ERP implementation partner should be able to supply you with the necessary templates, and accompany you along the way to completing them.

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Six key elements of the strategy and change management phase

1

Gain key stakeholder buy-in

Analyse stakeholder mindsets and motivations; align them to goals
Build awareness and engagement across the business as the project progresses

2

Tailor your messages based on the audience

Open and ongoing communication will erode resistance and ultimately eradicate it. To pinpoint where barriers exist, it is important that the questions you ask are of direct relevance to people's roles:
- What are their goals and how do they align with the Cloud ERP project?
- Where are they in their personal change journeys?

3

Assess the impact of the change

How process changes will affect your end users:
- How will it change day-to-day tasks and responsibilities?
- Will it change their roles?

4

Create a structured change journey

A change journey depends on the stakeholder group.
It should outline:
- The stakeholder's state of mind prior to the change management process
- Your ideal destination (how do you want them to feel, think and act?)
- Any potential hurdles that may be encountered along the way and how you plan to eliminate them
- Any activities required to keep people engaged
- During this stage, you should create change journeys tailored to each stakeholder group.

5

Create a training strategy

A wide-ranging training strategy should account for local nuances, locations and testing prior to ERP go-live. End-user training should be ongoing and include classes, workshops and practical sessions right through to the implementation process. In other words, it should be organized early on in the ERP project, not only after go-live.

6

Create a data strategy

To gain a comprehensive understanding of why and how you intend to inform and drive improved business outcomes through data, start by assessing your existing data.

This exercise should be through the lens of improving its quality in readiness for maximizing the benefits from your investment in the new system; cleansing, and standardizing key data elements to form the backbone of one single view of the truth for every identified data entity (as related, for example, to forecasting, order-to-cash, procure-to-pay, and supply chain).

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The power of planning

"The efficiency of the project can be explained with the fact that we set a project plan and kept it in full and accurately, both in terms of time frames and costs.

Columbus brought considerable expertise and experience to the project and combined with our own team, the entire project group became a powerhouse which drove successful implementation".

Henrik Ljungdahl,
CIO, Jula

Checklist for the holistic change management approach

① Plan
- Understand the business context and change agenda
- Develop a tailored plan for people and business change
- Align the mindsets and intentions of your leadership team

② Execute

Once you understand the impact of change, you're ready to proceed with the following:
- Build change networks
- Execute the change journeys
- Measure effect and progress
- Set up Control Rooms to connect the business and delivery teams

③ Engage

Conduct stakeholder analysis and management:
- Align mindsets by working with process owners and key stakeholders
- Consider how you'll bring your change vision to life. You could use rich pictures, journey maps or other forms of media
- Build awareness and engagement across the business as the project

④ Create

This is essentially the 'roadmap' that will define the route to be taken, the destination, and how to mitigate any hurdles in between:
- Create change journeys for each impacted stakeholder group
- The aforementioned change journeys should outline the activities required to support the stakeholders throughout the initiative
- Your change journeys should also be easily converted into change plans that lay out

⑤ Assess

Assess and analyse the impact of change on the business via the following activities:
- Collaborate with key stakeholders from across the business
- Understand the change(s) and capture high-level change impacts by holding workshops
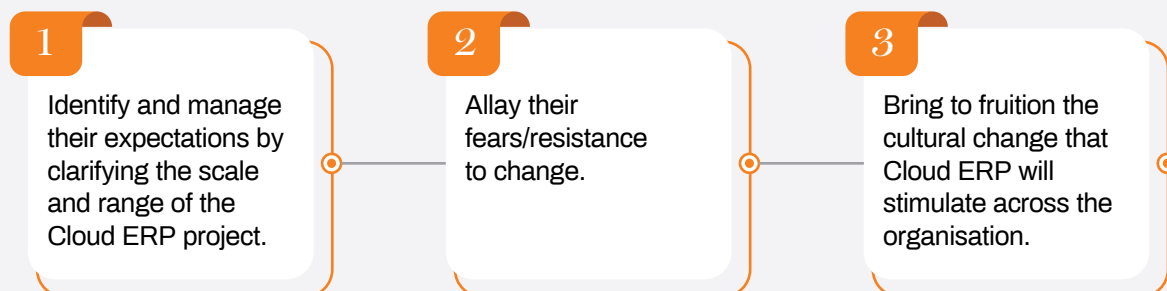
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People management

The foregoing considerations are incorporated into an overall change management strategy. It outlines the story you will need to tell to the business. It is the reason why.

70% of major change management 'don't achieve the objectives they set out to achieve'.

Of those that fail, the source of the problems lies in human issues.

[McKinsey Company]

The next stage is to open broader discussions with the stakeholders affected by change. This is a target audience that will range from the C-suite to LoB directors, and across all users in the departments affected such as finance, procurement, logistics, sales, customer support, and production to:

1
Identify and manage their expectations by clarifying the scale and range of the Cloud ERP project.

2
Allay their fears/resistance to change.

3
Bring to fruition the cultural change that Cloud ERP will stimulate across the organisation.

These goals will encompass two further key directional exercises. One is to identify the value, and the other is to ensure that change is embraced throughout the business. They are detailed processes, for which time and skilled resource is required but is not always available in-house.

This is a key area in which a trusted partner can ensure the smoothest and most proven path to implementation and across the complete lifecycle of your project. Taking advantage of such external resource will accelerate your progress and reduce your costs.

- **Identify and follow the value: Draft value dependency map.**
  This is an essential exercise that will help you be specific and targeted in defining the anticipated value, and then measuring it and sustaining it. The best practice approach brings in the use of dashboards at this stage to

provide transparency in sharing and communicating progress or stumbling blocks to progress. This stage is fundamental in mapping the direction of the technology.

- **Embrace the change: Organizational change and value realization plan.** This can include:

    – Planning for the change by understanding the business context and project agenda

    – Engaging your key stakeholders by aligning their mindsets and building awareness across the business as the initiative progresses (this includes addressing the 'what's in it for me')

    – Assessing the impact of the change by working with your key stakeholders to understand the change and what it means for your organisation

    – Creating change journeys and plans, tailored to each impacted group of stakeholders

    – Building the ideal change management team from a combination of internal and external resources.

Seeing is believing

If IT professionals find the preparation stage a little complex, imagine how much more so it may appear to everyone else in the business.

Meeting user requirements from the start

"We had to choose between two paths when we started the process; either to just involve the project team to create the whole system and present it to the user, or to be inclusive, involving all the users help us create the system. Columbus guided us on the second path. As a result, we now have a system that everyone can relate to and know that it meets their requirements".
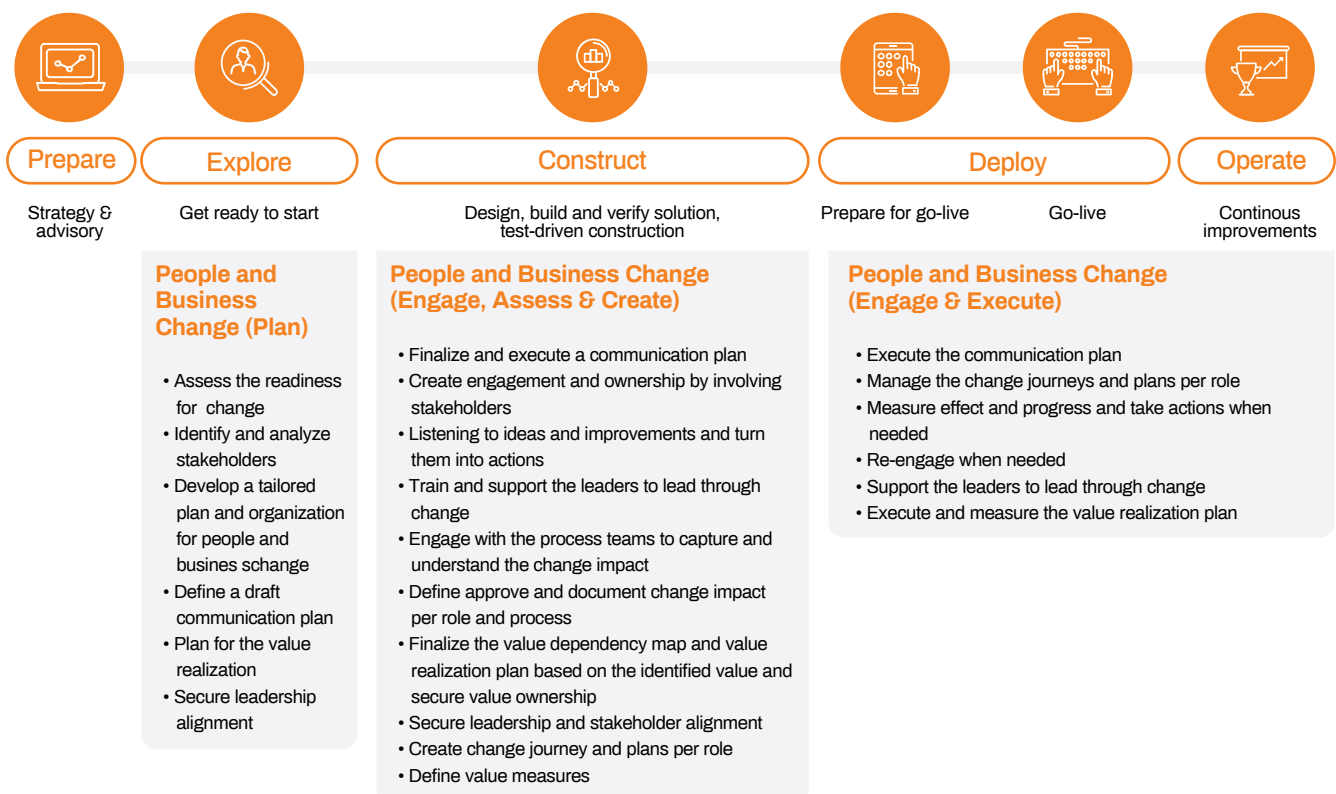
Anne Cathrine Larsen,
CFO and ERP project manager, Vestjyllands Andels

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To achieve clarity and stimulate enthusiastic participation, with everyone sharing a common understanding of where the business is going, 'rich pictures' (sometimes referred to as a route learning map) can help you explain the story in a simple and engaging way:

- Stimulating conversations across the organisation—every location, department and level of seniority

- Allowing people to be actively engaged and participate in discussions about transformation strategy, culture, values and reasons for change instead of passively listening

- Aligning people across the business and allowing them to share their experiences and thoughts

- Enabling managers to listen to employees, rather than talking at them

A 'rich picture' can be a picture-based workflow demonstrating the flow of information and products between departments or divisions of a large business. It can evolve by asking people to add post-it notes to it where they feel changes or add-ons would benefit the workflow. It can be pictorial or graphic, high in creativity or more naïve, depending on how you feel best to involve your people. That is the key—demystify the technology in the friendliest and most approachable way possible. A picture really can be worth a thousand words.

Checklist for the people management

Prepare	Explore		Construct		Deploy		Operate
Strategy & advisory	Get ready to start		Design, build and verify solution, test-driven construction		Prepare for go-live	Go-live	Continous improvements

People and Business Change (Plan)

- Assess the readiness for change
- Identify and analyze stakeholders
- Develop a tailored plan and organization for people and busines schange
- Define a draft communication plan
- Plan for the value realization
- Secure leadership alignment

People and Business Change (Engage, Assess & Create)

- Finalize and execute a communication plan
- Create engagement and ownership by involving stakeholders
- Listening to ideas and improvements and turn them into actions
- Train and support the leaders to lead through change
- Engage with the process teams to capture and understand the change impact
- Define approve and document change impact per role and process
- Finalize the value dependency map and value realization plan based on the identified value and secure value ownership
- Secure leadership and stakeholder alignment
- Create change journey and plans per role
- Define value measures

People and Business Change (Engage & Execute)

- Execute the communication plan
- Manage the change journeys and plans per role
- Measure effect and progress and take actions when needed
- Re-engage when needed
- Support the leaders to lead through change
- Execute and measure the value realization plan

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Prioritizing value

"We are a global organization, and working across our entities was a challenge. But achieving a global way of working wasn't our only goal. We also want to maintain an element of localism to ensure we stay close to our customers. Columbus really understood this, ensuring their workshops aligned with our goals for total consultative selling. They helped us discover how to prioritize value, and overlay value realization on top of the software implementation".

Andy Jones,

Head of Sales Excellence & Governance, Watson-Marlow

Our Agile methology bring the future closer

Decisions made, investment undertaken, plans in place, so why wait to see it all come together?

Once the decision to invest has been made, you'll be looking for results and evidence of the difference within the shortest possible timeframe. It is not unusual for the post-planning pre-implementation stage to roll way beyond schedule, by weeks, and into months.

What happens during that time? Sometimes you simply don't know. Systems architects are architecting, developers are developing, coders are coding, and your costs are very possibly spiralling as 'scope creep' takes hold. This brings risk into the project that has no right to be there.

Columbus believes in showing you results fast, at every stage. From the outset we'll use your new system as the development platform itself.

We'll show you the look and feel of your Cloud ERP system early on and you will have every opportunity to help guide it. The more we share together, the more we'll make possible together. The essence of our Agile approach is flexibility; tailoring what the system does to exactly what you want it to do, looking for new ideas along the way, keeping you in control. We get you where you're going, with the knowledge that you'll get there faster.

Now you're ready to move forward, let's look at the source of the new capabilities you'll be acquiring as an organization through Cloud ERP. Let's turn to the data…

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It's good to know what happened, but it's better to know what will

How to feel great about your data, and make your business more intelligent—extending the distance you can travel on any digital transformation journey—with data, advanced analytics and AI. taking care of the data

Enhancing the value of data

Companies often speak of the 'hidden value' of their data. There should be no such thing. With the right approach to using data, all value should be evident, transparent, and connected; no siloes, no duplication, no omissions.

'Hidden' simply means of no value at all, or at least none until a later stage, after much effort, when the opportunity to inform decisions and actions has passed. 'When' is as important as what it is, where and how it's stored, and why you need it.

Data and long-term performance

"Our ability to digitalize the business by constantly working in a data-driven way is crucial to how Thortrans will perform in the long term.

I can only encourage all companies to turbocharge their digitization and use of data. This will be the most important competitive parameter in the future – and we've only just begun".

Jørgen Skov,
CFO. Thortrans

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Data strategy key success factors

Dig deep
In laying the solid foundations for any digital transformation project, 'excavation' work is required to ensure the complete removal of any lingering weaknesses in the data. Making any assumption that data can be quickly imported from previous systems will strip the project of its transformative potential.

Ensure high level sponsorship
Successful implementation and adoption of Cloud ERP flows from the scope and rigour of your initial strategy and change management approach as discussed in section 1: Planning. Throughout the journey, leadership and commitment to cultural change is critical. From the data perspective it is equally so. The organization should commit to being data fanatics; this is the driving force in a world where every business, regardless of industry or sector, is technology-focussed.

Include everybody
Your users and data owners should be consulted from the get-go since, in the first instance, they are the target audience for the launch of your new Cloud ERP system. As you explore Advanced Analytics and the use of AI which cloud makes possible, their immediate adoption and enthusiasm will be critical to success. Don't forget, people can find ingenious ways of working round the ERP platform if they have chosen to reject it. Look to ignite passion across the organization, demolish silos, and enable people to become data ambassadors. Increase the data literacy of your organization to trigger innovation within your people and bring discover more use cases.

Align with overall business strategy
Making sure that value is never allowed to lay 'hidden' in your data starts by accepting that if this does happen, it won't be the fault of the data. It will be due to the lack of association between the data and the clear use cases you intend it to improve. Make that association and all will be revealed.

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Bringing data and AI into the core of your business

Simply by referring to data as an asset, doesn't make it automatically become one. The value of data, and the insights it makes possible, must be embraced within the organization's culture, business, and business processes. This is how competitive differentiation is created and sustained. The focus is on business value delivery. Think always about data and AI as a combined discipline. Treat it this way, and the data will deliver.

Business

Data

Intelligence

Data & AI

| Data Store SPOT | Market Place |
| Data & AI | Reports |
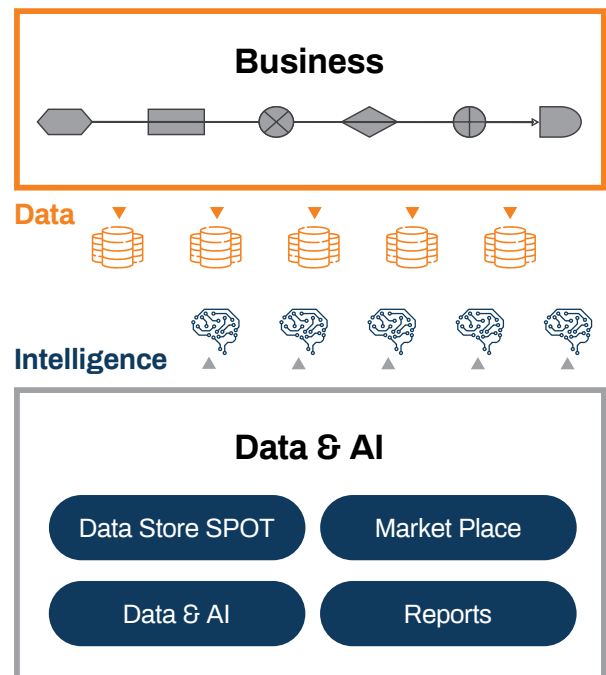
3 steps to make your business more intelligent with data

Clarify goals/ prepare the data
- Identify business priorities and activities
- Translate ambiguous requests into concrete, well-defined problems
- Check for data quality issues; misplaced entries, irregularities (outliers), semantic errors, etc.
- Perform data cleansing and data wrangling phases

Measure, improve, evolve
- Data quality management tools enable you to ensure data is always guided in its pertinence to customer experiences, business models, and business operations
- Enable business users to make effective data-driven decisions by democratizing data and providing intuitive self-service dashboards to extract actionable insights.
- Build scalable, future-proof data platforms customised to address your present and future needs. Support next-gen business intelligence tools, data and analytics advancements for economies of scale

Predict, innovate, enhance
- Uncover new growth potential and increase business efficiency to your competitive advantage by using rich historical data.
- Predict outcomes and trends, and prescribe actions through Artificial Intelligence/machine learning techniques.
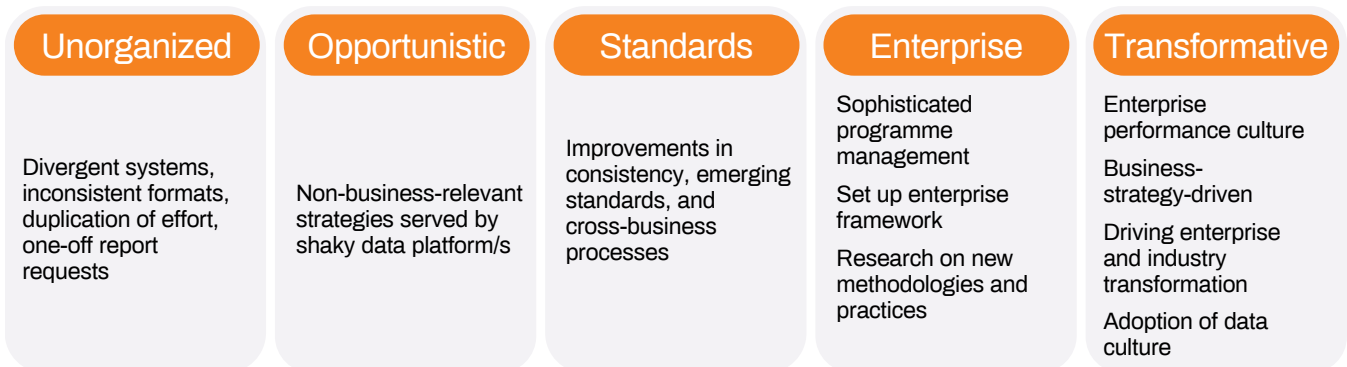
Set clear goals and measurable KPIs

Make sure your dashboards and KPIs are closely linked to your mission, vision, and strategy. This mindset feeds strategic, tactical, and operational activities. It creates a basis for you to gain insight into both current situations and new business opportunities/operational improvements/streamlining of processes. It also paves the way to possibilities that you can adapt, respond to, and test quickly.

Ready to go? The modern data platform

How to handle and reorganise the data, to move it smoothly to new Cloud ERP system, are challenges that many organizations have neither the internal resource nor the in-house specific skills to answer. How do you avoid losing data while moving to Cloud ERP? Will your current data structure apply for the Cloud ERP project or should you reshape it? If so, how?

With existing systems that have grown over number of years, it is often the case that various teams have created customised and/or often-uncoordinated changes. The common outcome is that data is unorganised, with no single definition of various key entities, duplication, and incomplete data. The data platform in such a state is best described as opportunistic.

Applying standards will provide that coordination and create the foundation for an enterprise data framework; the catalyst for, and enabler of, transformation:

Unorganized	Opportunistic	Standards	Enterprise	Transformative
Divergent systems, inconsistent formats, duplication of effort, one-off report requests	Non-business-relevant strategies served by shaky data platform/s	Improvements in consistency, emerging standards, and cross-business processes	Sophisticated programme management Set up enterprise framework Research on new methodologies and practices	Enterprise performance culture Business-strategy-driven Driving enterprise and industry transformation Adoption of data culture

The new system will provide better opportunities if the definitions are updated. Numerous opportunities appear when you start to modernize your data platform:

- **Intelligence** is added to core business processes by setting up a scalable and multi-purpose data and AI platform that not only works for today's needs but also enables **innovation** and business changes in the future [see Section 3: Ensuring longevity].

- You gain the opportunity to **cleanse and standardize** your key data elements

- You can create a **sustainable and governed data management solution** for appropriate governance, stewardship in managing the master data, monitoring and improving the master data and other critical data.

- Processes and decisions will henceforth be **informed and enriched** by trusted and right quality data.

Fresh insights

"This has been an exercise in change management. While we have always had a lot of data available about our businesses and projects, it has been spread across departments and platforms. Now, all data is consolidated and coupled at a level we have never seen before. It provides insight into a wide range of links and contexts."

Morten Storm,
ERP Manager, Haarsley Industries

Knowing more with AI and advanced analytics

Combining extensive industry and data platform expertise, Columbus understands the value chain across retail, food and beverage, and manufacturing. Overlaying this with our proven capabilities in addressing core business processes such as forecasting, order-to-cash, procure-to-pay, and supply chain provides customers with the ability to embrace all internal data points as well as data from other sources that may inform your processes and insights.
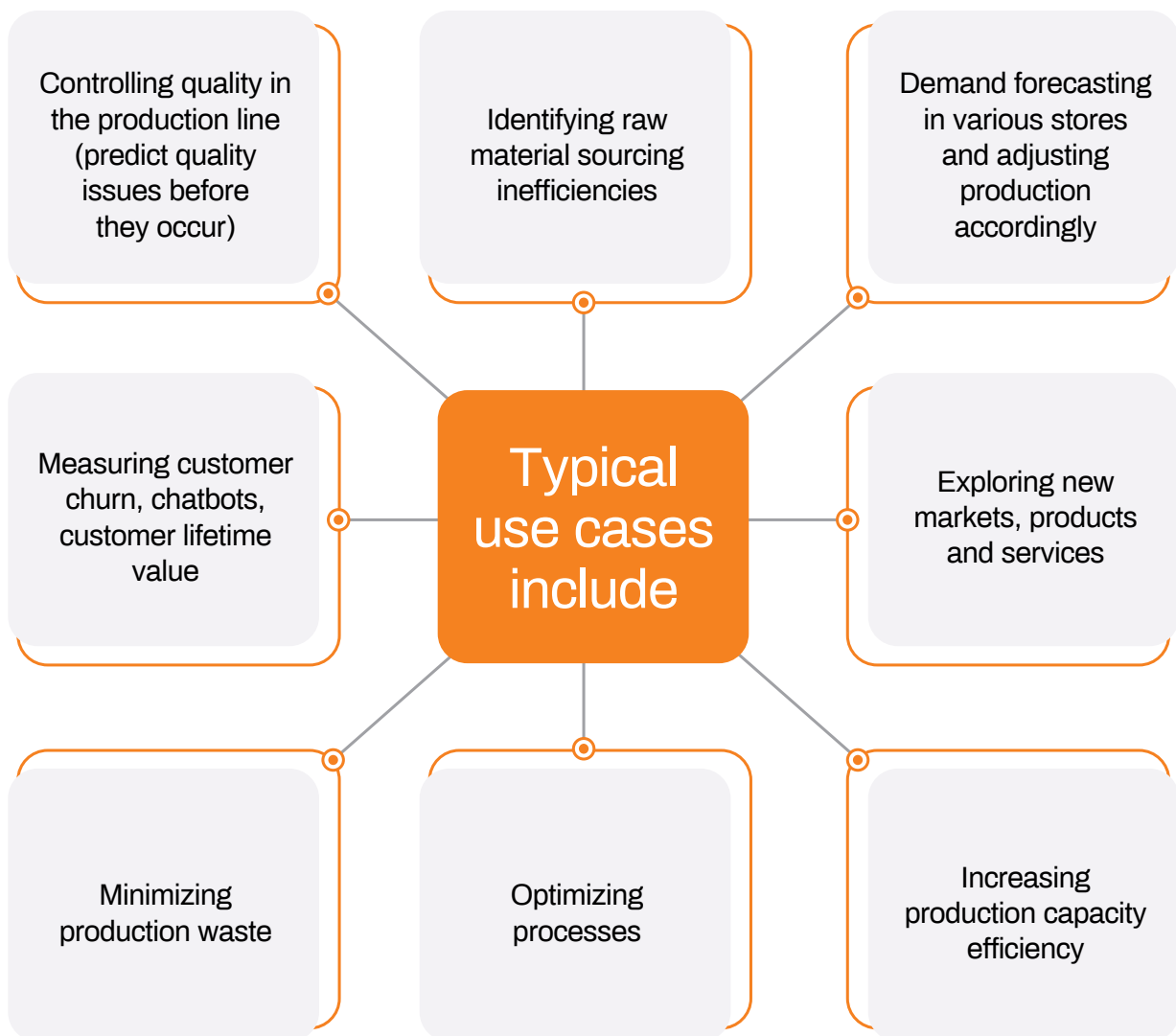
Even when you're in a good place with your data, confident with the new state it's in, and ready to bring more empowerment to the business, the question remains as to how you may best achieve such goals.

This is where the power of AI and advanced analytics make the difference between knowing everything and then continuously knowing more

AI is the use of algorithms and advanced technology, instead of humans, to solve problems. Under this umbrella is machine learning, which uses a trained computer model to create dynamic data and make sense of patterns.

Value rules

While AI will bring enormous value to your business, it needs some intelligent help from the business in the first place to identify where best to apply it. To set off on your advanced analytics journey, identify both 'quick wins', and longer-term aspirations.

Controlling quality in the production line (predict quality issues before they occur)

Identifying raw material sourcing inefficiencies

Demand forecasting in various stores and adjusting production accordingly

Measuring customer churn, chatbots, customer lifetime value

Typical use cases include

Exploring new markets, products and services

Minimizing production waste

Optimizing processes

Increasing production capacity efficiency

Find value fast by starting anywhere

Treating your approach to data as needing to move gradually through cumulative stages of maturity, or expertise, in a progressive 'linear' fashion will unnecessarily delay some initiatives. 'What's the best that can be done?', for example, does not have to follow on from understanding what happened, how often, and where.

Use cases don't have to be the most exciting and comprehensive ones, but should be prioritized in accordance with the value they bring to the organisation. By prioritizing each initiative, in relation to the business value it will deliver, and knowing how the applying of AI will drive the realization of that value, you will simply move faster.

The circular diagram segments, clockwise from top-right:

Statistical Analysis — Why is this happening?

Forecasting — What if these trends continue?

Predictive Analytics — What will happen next?

Optimization — What's the best that can be done?

Standard Reports — What happened?

Adhoc Report — How many, how often, where?

Query & Drilldown — Where exactly is the problem?

Alerts — What actions are needed?

Center: **Dial in on value**

5% increase in customer retention can increase profits by **20-25%**

16x – the cost multiplier in bringing a new customer up to the level of an existing customer

AI and customers analytics

'One single view' of the data conceals a complex supporting universe of interconnected threads, sources, and methodologies; ensuring consistency in dealings with customers; eliminating information siloes, duplication and confusion

Columbus enables you to deploy AI to gain far broader insight, predictiveness and responsiveness than will ever come from simply being efficient with data governance. Consider the perennial problem of customer churn. Here is the process that a machine learning analytics engine would bring to bear:

Learn

- Sociodemographic data (age, gender, location etc).
- Transactional data
- Consumer related loyalty programmes
- Contact centre records; customer support or service calls
- Customer relationship variables such as tenure, and consistency

Dissect

- Classification: Propensity to/likelihood of churn or not.
- Regression: Predict timeline of potential churn occurrence
- Segmentation: Clustering or segmentation of customers based on churn prediction

Apply

For retention of customers by understanding reasons for churn and address them using different marketing campaign to:

- increase customer satisfaction
- more deeply understand the target market in reducing the customer churn
- build the competitive advantage in the market

AI and supply chain route optimization

The supply chain directly impacts an organization's ability to bring ideas from conception to consumers, through factors such as demand versus capacity, or materials costs along the supply chain. Depending on your company's requirements, constraints and restrictions, Columbus can guide you in programming the criteria into your AI algorithm, which will then find the best arrangement/solution.

For example, if you're considering sustainability, we'll show you how AI can find the best balance between energy usage, waste and cost, and then we'll apply it for you. Simply add new constraints, and the technology produces a new optimized plan for that situation:

- Maximize revenue subject to demand/production constraints
- Streamline product delivery processes
- Reduce or eliminate waste and human error
- Target delivery to predicted demand

Better ways of working

"Columbus works at the intersection of BI, ERP and Data, they are skilled at understanding the challenges our business faces, and translating those insights into better ways of working".

Per Kongstad,
IT Manager, Broen

Columbus

'Go-live' is not an end state,
it's a new beginning

How to make sure that your Cloud ERP deployment evolves, driving continuous improvements, and demonstrating and consolidating your competitive advantage.

With your strategy and change management addressed, your organization ready to embrace its new capabilities, and your data in great shape to enable the business to achieve expected outcomes—and new ones in the future—the transformation journey begins. It does not have a final destination.

Your Cloud ERP implementation is a gift that will keep on giving, long into the future. To realise its value and its return on investment, you have to make it so. This means ensuring the continuous availability of system and applications and their relevance.

The Evergreen approach | How to ensure continuous system availability

Being evergreen in your approach to controlling and managing your Cloud ERP solution means making sure it is always up to date and always on.

The Evergreen approach is the solid foundation of continuous improvement. 'Continuous' involves ensuring that downtime simply does not occur. Uptime, 24/7/365, becomes the fulcrum of value. It needs always to be front of mind and central to extract business value, maximizing it, increasing it, nurturing it.

When your Cloud ERP system is up and running, it follows that any attention it requires in terms of software updates will need to be made in this 'live' state, in the cloud. You will be both operating and further building your solution in parallel. This is where risk may creep in. This 'juggling' act requires skilled technical input, usually best sought from a specialist external partner.

2 key considerations to address at this stage

1 Do you have adequate resource to ensure that the solution and business applications remains always on and always up to date?

2 Are you optimizing the benefits your new system offers?

76% of IT professionals say the complexity of the IT landscape is the biggest barrier to productivity among IT operations teams.

[Fujitsu]

20% of companies manage to capture more than half the projected benefits from ERP systems.

[McKinsey]

64% of IT executives cite talent shortages as the most significant barrier to the adoption of emerging technology (compared with only 4% in 2020)

[Gartner]

Reactions such as those above put the spotlight on IT Operations for managing the cloud solution. While software vendor updates may promise easy management of updates, ensuring their smooth assimilation within your own ERP solution requires IT support. It can lead to a drain on internal resources.

To avoid such time-consuming tasks, and the associated risks they bring, you can assure the ongoing quality of your system through automated testing.

The agile advantage

"Our challenge is in bringing digitization across all of our work processes. The size and scope of such projects far exceeds our in-house resources.

We wanted to engage with an external partner we could trust, providing the many skills and competences in one place. Columbus does exactly that; bringing a pragmatic, agile approach to tasks and possible problems".

Steen Elsborg Pedersen,
Semler IT

Columbus

Quality assurance

With quality assurance (QA) controls in place you'll be able to ensure uptime. Reliable QA comes about through automated testing across the core solution, your business applications, the customizations and modules you add as the system evolves, and any associated integrations required.

If not automated then you will be in the highly challenging world of manual testing. It's typically time-consuming and expensive. The accuracy of manual testing is also not always consistent and introduces significant risk of errors.

Most applications you use will require system updates at regular intervals. Before these updates can be released into the production environment, they need to be thoroughly tested. This is a highly technical and intricate IT task which demands solid testing expertise.

The complexity of testing critical processes and integrations, defining test cases based on critical functions, can lead to even a minor error hindering vital operations or even impacting your entire business.

Higher-quality business system applications that support your business priorities will be more robust and attained faster, with automated testing, enabling you to:

- **Save time and money:** Manually testing numerous aspects of the software, through its various developmental stages, involves considerable time and cost. Automated testing reduces processing time and costs.

- **Increase testing accuracy:** The monotonous nature of manual testing may result in mistakes. Automated testing brings precision and efficiency to repetitive testing activities, giving your manual testing experts more time to spend on value-adding and productive tasks.

- **Extend your test coverage:** Manual testing has a limited scope. Automated testing enables you to expand scope and conduct multiple tests, increasing the length and depth of testing to enhance the software quality.

- **Enable stress testing:** Automated testing can create simulations with a heavy workload, and many users, to check the quality and functionality of the software under extreme stress. This type of testing can help you determine your application performance in peak or busy seasons when the workload is more than usual

Innovation and solution optimization

Managing your applications is essential to ensure the business capitalizes on its new capabilities delivered through your Cloud ERP implementation. It's still only part of the story. The other part is about harnessing those capabilities as a 'springboard' to higher levels of business value, keeping up to date with market trends, regulatory requirements (compliance and security), improved business development, and emerging technologies.

The Columbus Solution Optimization team can ensure that your solution constantly supports your business, optimizing your processes and opportunities. Everything is aimed at providing tangible, up-to-date, relevant input for continuous development, guaranteeing that you capitalize on your ERP investment.

The answer to "how?"

"We have mastered the art of being proactive instead of reactive. I don't think we could have done that if our IT had been handled in-house. Working with Columbus as our external partner makes us faster, and more agile. It enables us to focus on the things that are important to our customers. We want to be the best in the world to answer our what and why, but the answer to how is something we leave to Columbus".

Henrik Henriksson,
CFO, Eton

Why your business needs a well-structured AMS solution

At Columbus, we provide help and advice to our customers across the entire application portfolio. Our Application Management Services (AMS) help them maximize the return on their IT investment. We enable them to competently address hidden inefficiencies, improve performance, prevent and tackle incidents, and scale without hiring new resources, thereby increasing the value of the investment.
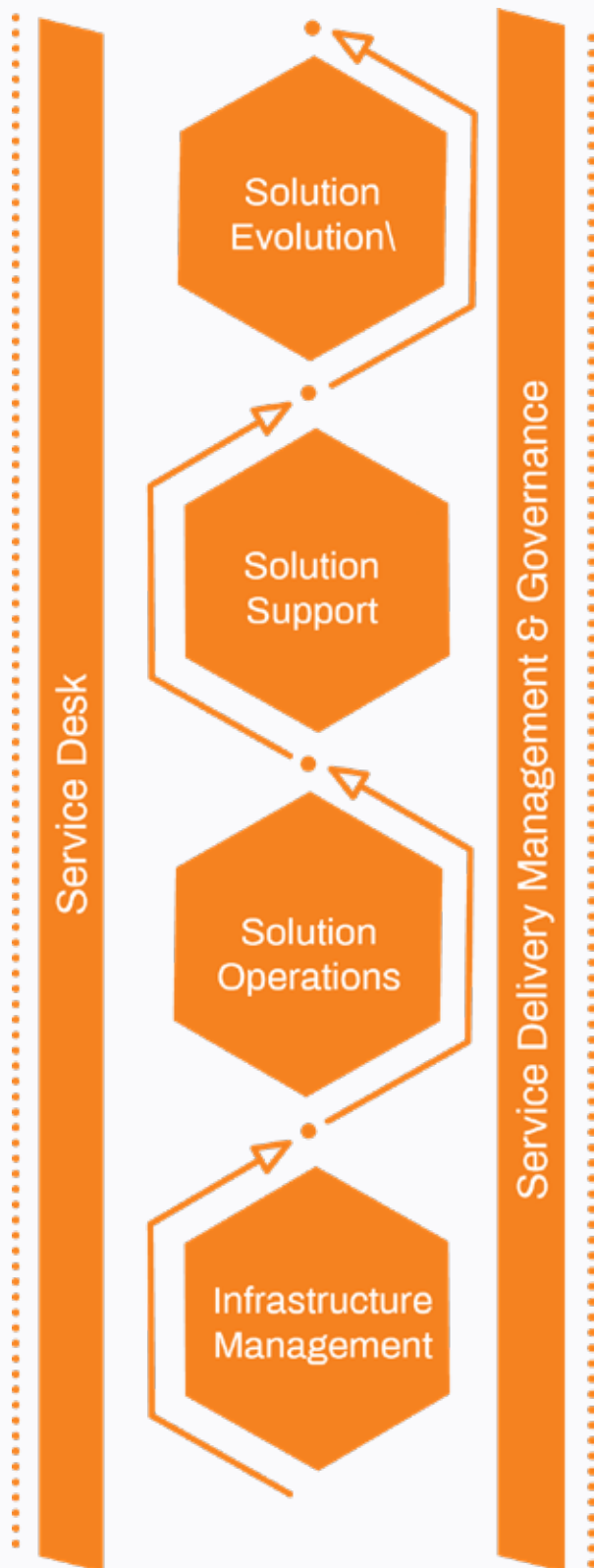
With a dedicated team of industry, technical and functional consultants, Columbus AMS provides standardised building blocks that can be combined and customized depending on your business needs. We already enable over 500 enterprise customers globally to free up their resources to innovate and add value. This is the pure and focussed goal of our application managed services (AMS).

Columbus AMS includes 6 core elements that organizations need to have in place to ensure they are well equipped to handle the criticality of operations, with a balance of control, agility, and a good return on investment.

What this all means is that you can rest assured that your Cloud ERP system will not only grow as the business does but, just as importantly, never lag behind latest releases. It will keep you as current as the competition, and as in line with customer and supply chain partner expectations as required.

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Checklist for evergreen Cloud ERP

User experience and training

Prepare the transition to operation early on in the project, to minimize risk of ending up with a solution that does not help your users create value for your business and your customers

Ensure Evergreen control of vendor updates

Being in the cloud puts you one step removed from control over your systems. Develop release planning, deployment, and change control processes to manage updates and maximize system availability. Ensure quality through automated testing, enabling easier decisions as to whether or not to implement new integrations.

Security and compliance

Constantly monitor health and reliability of application operations, and ensure continuous monitoring of databases, patches, hotfixes, and security updates for guaranteed uptime. Whole vendors may guarantee 99.7% uptime and accessibility, they only take responsibility for the infrastructure. You still need to take care of data, and of the configuration, monitoring and operation of your applications.

Business evolution and relevance

Enable adaptation of innovative solutions and enhancements for business growth; make sure you can be not only be reactive in IT support for your business but also play a proactive and leading role in your business evolution.

Service delivery and governance

Ensure certainty, quality, and performance of services delivered through customized governance models and a dedicated Success Delivery Manager to improve the deliverables' business value.

Where to now?

If this guide has given you a lot to think about, you might also be thinking that it has outlined rather a lot to worry about. No need. Everything discussed in the guide is an outline of how we approach the project. Every task is a task we undertake. Every concern you might have is one we address.

Consider the journey ahead of you not as complex, but as rewarding. It's the whole purpose of transformation. Consider also that the greater value will come out of the project in direct proportion to the time and effort you invest in understanding people's motivations and desires, their fears and hesitations. Make them companions on the journey. Demonstrate at every stage 'what's in it for them'.

Columbus is here to help, not just with best practice guidance for your transformation journey but also with involvement and support to help ensure you maximize your ROI.

We mitigate the inherent risks associated with planning, implementing, upgrading, and replacing legacy ERP systems.

We'll work with you through the entire Cloud ERP lifecycle, and for any stage that you feel would benefit from experienced support we will do the job for you; through planning to data preparation and onto proactive monitoring to keep you at the top of your game.

58% of the companies who implemented emerging technologies experienced faster revenue growth over a 36-month period

[Enterprise Strategy Group]

From shaping and guiding, validating and controlling a successful Cloud ERP implementation, Columbus works with more than 400 customers in more than 40 countries, digitally transforming their businesses and improving the value of their application investments. We mitigate the inherent risks associated with implementing, upgrading, and replacing legacy ERP systems.

The customer view: working together

"Transforming the jigsaw of disparate systems, processes and data into a centralized, streamlined dream is difficult when you're working across multiple ERPs. Especially if those ERPs have been implemented decades ago or you're also outsourcing part of your core processes to agencies who use their own platforms.

We wanted to work with a partner with whom we could build mutual respect and have an honest, open conversation. We got that with Columbus and have a close relationship now.

It was really appreciated because we were seriously under pressure. Everybody is working really hard and you matched the tempo, helping us all to work in harmony".

Kashif Mehmood,
Finance Director, Advantage Smollan

We'll help you though the entire lifecycle of your project

Reduced costs

- Guaranteed uptime
- Extended competencies form a global talent network
- Outsourcing IT resources

Continuous innovation

- Assisting with the latest IT trends and technologies
- Syncing them with your buiness objectives

Access to talent

- Deep understanding of your business systems
- Industry experts in retail, food and beverage, and manufacturing

Productivity and efficiency

- Operating, supporting and optimizing your business applications
- Constant governance

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Start here

For more information on Columbus, including case studies, videos and whitepapers, visit:
www.columbusglobal.com

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