

# Optimization:

## The Often-Missing Piece in ERP Implementation

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Since the advent of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, organizations have sought to achieve four key benefits:

- **System Integration** – Creating seamless connectivity across departments and systems.
- **Data Consistency** – Ensuring a single source of accurate information.
- **Robust Functionality** – Leveraging a wide range of tools for operational effectiveness.
- **Business Process Optimization** – Streamlining workflows for maximum effectiveness.

While the first three are often achieved, business process optimization remains an elusive goal.

## Why Is Business Process Optimization So Difficult?

Business process optimization refers to redesigning workflows to eliminate inefficiencies, reduce costs and improve user experiences. It assumes that getting the most out of a powerful new ERP system likely requires adjusting workflows as well. It requires organizations to:

- Align with best practices instead of maintaining outdated, legacy-driven workflows.
- Adapt workflows to align with standardized processes rather than customizing software around existing, inefficient practices.
- Achieve behavioral change among employees — often a significant challenge.

Historically, organizations have tended to take the easier route of customizing the new software to fit existing processes rather than establishing new, best-practice workflows and modifying user behavior to align with those. Ironically, this approach is enabled by ERP customization and configuration tools that make it easier to tweak software rather than to rethink operations.

However, with the rise of cloud-based ERPs, excessive customization leads to negative consequences, including:

- Increased complexity and technical debt.
- Higher maintenance costs and upgrade challenges.
- Reduced agility in adapting to new features and innovations.



# Who Leads Business Process Optimization?

As they say, it takes a village. Effective business process optimization requires strong leadership from a variety of stakeholders:

- **CIOs and IT Directors** – Overseeing ERP strategy and ensuring alignment with business needs.
- **Process Owners (Finance, HR, Procurement, etc.)** – Defining how technology supports operational goals.
- **Project Sponsors and Leadership Teams** – Advocating for change and enforcing accountability.
- **Change Management and Training Teams** – Ensuring end-user adoption and process adherence.

**The key takeaway:** Technology is only as effective as the processes it supports. If business processes remain inefficient, even the most powerful ERP system will fail to deliver maximum value.


## How to Make Business Process Optimization a Priority

To embed process optimization into an ERP implementation, organizations must start early and remain committed throughout the project lifecycle.

### Prioritize Optimization Before the Project Starts

- Conduct a pre-implementation assessment to identify processes that need improvement.
- Ensure leaders understand that ERP is not a replication of old workflows but a transformation initiative.
- Engage key stakeholders early to define goals and expected outcomes.

### Identify Standardization vs. Customization Opportunities

- Assess which processes can be standardized to align with ERP best practices.
  - Allow customization only for mission-critical processes that create competitive advantage.
  - Maximize the new system's effectiveness by using vendor configuration tools rather than custom coding whenever possible.
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## Integrate Optimization Throughout the Implementation Phases

- During system design: Compare current workflows with best practices and challenge unnecessary customizations.
- During testing: Validate that redesigned processes support operational goals, not just system functionality.
- During training: Ensure users understand why processes have changed and how they improve efficiency.

## Drive User Adoption and Behavioral Change

- Communicate the “why” behind process changes to gain buy-in from end users.
- Create a structured training program focused on new workflows, not just system navigation.
- Monitor and measure adoption post-go-live, providing additional support where needed.

## Final Thought: The Role of Leadership in Driving Optimization

Without strong leadership commitment, business process optimization will not happen.

Organization leaders must demand a focus on process improvement before, during and after ERP implementation.

The bottom line: ERP success isn't just about technology. It's also about how well organizations change their processes to maximize its value.

**Key Question:** Is your ERP implementation focused on real process transformation, or are you just recreating old inefficiencies in a new system?

If your organization isn't realizing the full benefits of your ERP system, perhaps it's time to look at the processes rather than the software. Synexis Consulting has 30 years of experience helping organizations maximize the impact of their ERP platform. We'd be happy to talk about what we've learned along that journey and how we might be able to help you realize the full potential of your ERP solution.

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