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Minutes on  
Modern Finance  
**Midsize Edition**

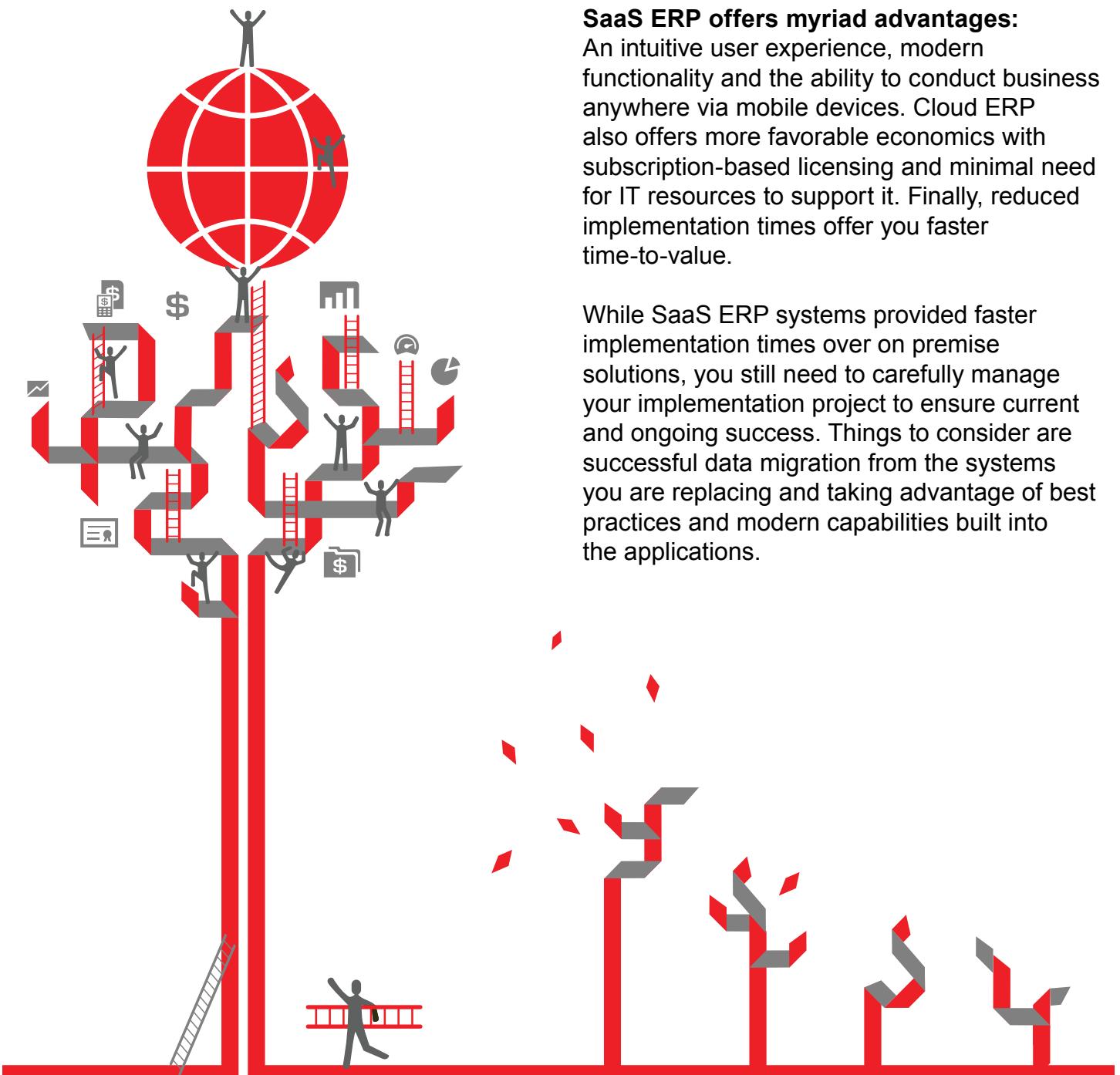
## Roadmap to a Successful Cloud Implementation

5 Steps to Consider for Ensuring  
a Successful Implementation



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If you are a growing midsize organization, chances are you are or will soon outgrow your entry level accounting system. As you look for solutions to replace your legacy system, more and more companies are turning to cloud ERP systems – namely software-as-a-service (SaaS) – to modernize their current systems and lay the foundation for future growth.



**SaaS ERP offers myriad advantages:**

An intuitive user experience, modern functionality and the ability to conduct business anywhere via mobile devices. Cloud ERP also offers more favorable economics with subscription-based licensing and minimal need for IT resources to support it. Finally, reduced implementation times offer you faster time-to-value.

While SaaS ERP systems provided faster implementation times over on premise solutions, you still need to carefully manage your implementation project to ensure current and ongoing success. Things to consider are successful data migration from the systems you are replacing and taking advantage of best practices and modern capabilities built into the applications.

What are the steps involved to ensure cloud ERP implementation success? The following overview describes the major steps involved so you know what to expect and what's required to ensure your success both at go live and well into the future

## 1

### Build a Plan

The old saying “if you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll never get there” is very instructive. Managing a SaaS ERP implementation involves selecting an implementation partner, developing a time line and establishing a project team consisting of your key employees to define your goals. This includes defining requirements, mapping out business processes and carefully weighing competing priorities. The team should include members of the finance organization who can advise on critical aspects of configuring the system such as its chart of accounts, compliance requirements, workflows and reporting. The latter includes statutory reports, if the organization is publicly traded, as well as management reports and analytics designed to deliver timely insights to managers in order to make better decisions in real-time. A factor that’s often overlooked is financial processes such as closing the books, order-to-cash and procure-to-pay where needs of the people who perform them, workflows, approvals and the systems they impact need to be carefully taken into account. Other considerations include how many data sources you have, what will need to be migrated and finally, the most critical success factor, how will users be trained to ensure timely adoption. You should plan very carefully on how



users will be trained on their particular functions so they can be fully productive soon after go live. “Our goal is to get the client thinking in the right direction about how they should properly design and eventually configure the system in advance of actually starting the project” says Scott Curry, former CPA and Senior Vice President, Consulting Services at Intelenex, a firm dedicated to helping companies achieve successful SaaS implementations and an Oracle Platinum Partner. “In our experience, if companies don’t spend the time carefully planning, they end up with a lot of re-work on the backend”.

# System Design

Planning your implementation requires careful consideration around how it will support your company's operations. Are you replacing a single accounting application? Are there manual "workaround processes" managed in spreadsheets? Are documents such as invoices manually keyed into the system? A major value-enhancing feature of modern SaaS ERP systems is that they are designed around business processes. Whether they are the previously discussed financial processes or myriad others involving broader company operations, modern SaaS ERP suites utilize best practices derived from the vendor's years of experience.

*"We want to establish best practice processes up front."*

“We want to establish best practice processes up

front" says Curry. "We really ask clients to rethink the way they conduct business, to carefully look at current and future requirements, think about what could be improved with an eye to processes that will scale with the business."

Built-in business processes help accelerate the implementation cycle so you realize value quickly after go-live. “We look at what the SaaS solution offers from a best practice perspective” says Curry. “We identify what works and doesn’t work as a starting point. For example, if we can leverage 80 percent of the best practices and only need to tailor 20 percent, then we’ve helped our clients standardize on leading practices and condense the timeline significantly allowing our clients to focus on user adoption.”



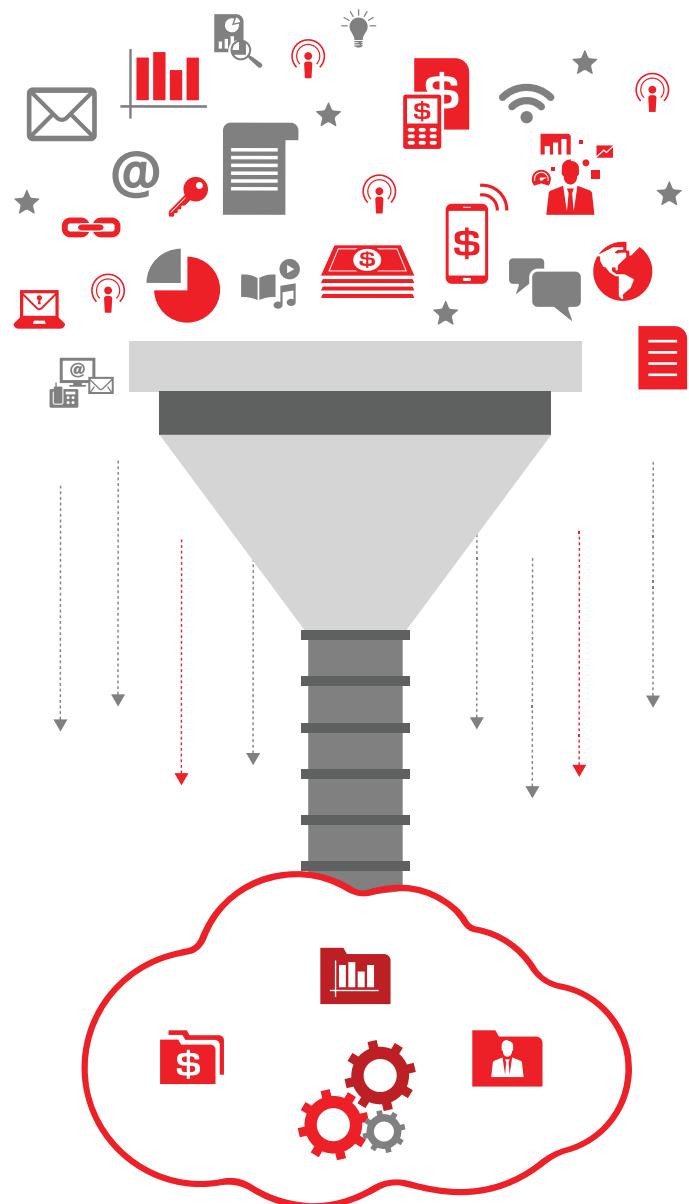
## Data Conversion

“ Prior to implementation, I recommend seriously taking the time to really clean up your data and simplify your processes. This is really the only time you'll have to go in and clean up your chart of accounts and make sure your data is exactly the way you would like it to be. Obviously the new software is going to have much more capabilities than your previous one. Take advantage of it to get the most out of your investment.”

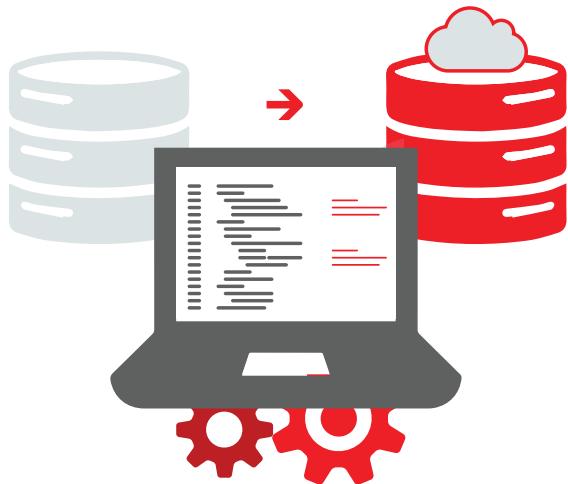
**Michael McLaughlin**  
CFO and Controller, Tower Ventures

Every company has data that needs to be migrated to the new system. The data may reside in legacy accounting systems and be in a structured format or it may reside in spreadsheets which can be difficult to migrate. In the worst case, “data” may reside in paper documents such as purchase and sales orders or vendor invoices that may need to be manually keyed into the new system. Key factors in deciding what data to migrate should include assessing what is critical for reporting and compliance. Particularly for publicly-traded companies or those who plan to go public soon, you need historical financial data to report on past performance. “Data conversion is always the long pole in the tent. In my 15 plus year

career, I've never seen clean data from a client” says Curry. “We get clients ready in advance by carefully analyzing their data and helping them define a migration strategy that meets their business objectives but also looks at the value versus cost of bringing the data into the new system. Most clients underestimate the effort involved in cleansing the data prior to import and then having to reconcile the data afterwards.”



## Systems Integration



Being a midsize business doesn't necessarily mean a lack of complexity. You may have systems, both SaaS and on-premise, which handle customer-facing processes such as ensuring that customer orders are properly processed, fulfilled, invoiced and accounted for. You may have procurement systems that need to reconcile purchase orders with vendor invoices in accounts payable. You may have specialized systems that manage interactions with your banks. Combined, these systems form the backbone of your business and connect your company to customers, suppliers and other trading partners. They need to be carefully considered in the implementation plan. "We approach integration by looking at the extended process flow which may begin outside of our client's ERP system and then architect the right framework based on the client's existing integration capabilities and business need" says Curry. "We not only look at the 'why' but also the 'how' by understanding what is needed to integrate those applications and then identifying the appropriate resources to perform the integration. This is typically a combination of the

implementation partner, the client's staff and third parties. Like data conversion, integration can significantly extend timelines so we advise our clients to consider integration requirements at the beginning of the engagement."

Of course, another option is incorporating your many fragmented systems and processes into a single unified SaaS ERP suite. This approach significantly reduces the costly up front integration work and minimize the ongoing cost of maintaining complex integrations in the future.

**“** Managing with disparate systems was a challenge. We'd kind of cobbled them together which meant someone had to download a file from another program, manipulate it, and then import it into our current accounting program. So there was always room for error, for something to go wrong. And now with Oracle everything is completely integrated into that product. We don't have to worry about manipulating data and errors that result from it”.

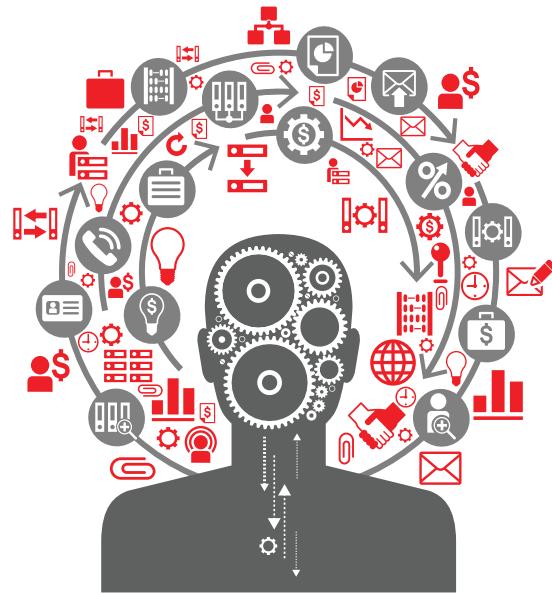
**Mark Dennen**  
CFO and Controller, Solairus Aviation

## User Adoption and Training

“ A key factor in the success or failure of SaaS deployments is how well the end users embrace the system. We involve key users throughout every stage of the implementation starting with the design stage and finishing with end user training. We continually solicit user feedback ensuring the system is meeting their stated business requirements but also improving their business process and end user experience.”

**Scott Curry**  
Senior Vice President  
Consulting Services, Intelenex

Often overlooked but critical to realizing fast time to value is ensuring your users are trained properly to take full advantage of the system's capabilities. Modern SaaS ERP systems accelerate time to value through their intuitive, easy-to-use user interfaces which helps your people become productive quickly. However, for knowledge workers who perform more complex work, their inclusion on the implementation team is critical to getting them up the learning curve. “User adoption is a key benchmark when looking at the success or failure of SaaS deployments.” says Curry. “Active user involvement is critical throughout the implementation. Not only does it



help validate that the system will meet the client's stated business objectives but their experience helps facilitate knowledge transfer and a sense of system ownership.”

User involvement is very important to ensure that knowledge transfer starts early and establishes a core group of experts who can mentor their colleagues. Modern SaaS ERP systems also feature embedded learning such as documentation and videos to help get users productive quickly. “The manner in which users want to be trained continues to evolve. Video tutorials and embedded learning tools are becoming standard on most engagements” says Curry. “These on-demand training tools help users find the answer themselves rather than depending on IT resources for help.”

Modern cloud ERP solutions offer many advantages over legacy on premise systems. They also feature quicker implementation times that ensure fast time to value. However, you still need to carefully plan and manage your implementation to ensure critical business requirements are taken into account in order to ensure maximum success at go live and well into the future.



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