

SIX ERP PREDICTIONS TO EXPECT IN 2021

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Although most years are shaped by growth and challenges that change how we do things, 2020 seems to have set the bar quite a bit higher with a global health crisis, rapid and mass-scale remote work and learning, cybersecurity breaches, software outages, supply chain and distribution hiccups, and more. 2020 has also accelerated the adoption of innovation and advancements, including cloud-enabled software to keep businesses effectively running and teams connected, widescale mobile and e-commerce capabilities that give consumers incredible hands-on purchasing power given the shift to online shopping, CRM and email marketing applications to drive new business, purchasing tools to accurately monitor inventory, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to predict sales forecasting.

These significant technological advancements that shaped 2020 are rooted in ongoing

developments in enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. As such, what can be expected as we head into 2021? The following predictions offer insights into the future ERP marketplace:

There will be a continued shift to running ERP in the cloud. The shift to running ERP in the cloud continued to increase in 2020 and it's anticipated that it will carry over into next year. With remote work periods extending and employees spread out geographically, the ability to access data far and wide via the cloud is crucial. Employees can work seamlessly, easily accessing enterprise applications in one central solution, reducing productivity halts and location restraints. Additionally, running a cloud-based, ERP solution eliminates the need for many workers to go to a physical location to perform maintenance for on-premise equipment. This keeps workers safer, and allows companies repurpose IT resources from maintenance of systems to

business growth. Security will remain a top priority for ERP providers and customers. With many business and operations being conducted increasingly online, keeping data safe and secure will remain among the top priorities list in 2021. As businesses continue to migrate to the cloud, implementing additional or even new safety measures will occur simultaneously, especially when we consider that data breaches and cyberattacks may always be a threat, and businesses know that keeping company and customer data is critical for long-term success. Customer self-service solutions in mobile and eBusiness will continue to soar. As businesses adopt to servicing their customers with fewer face-to-face interactions, mobile and online business capabilities are increasingly necessary. With many companies planning to continue a work from home structure in some capacity, employees need to operate and manage daily business functions



via mobile and e-business applications. From ordering materials and coordinating deliveries, to overseeing distribution of product, mobile and web access will continue to drive the supply chain and impact businesses' bottom-lines. ERP systems need to leverage CRM and email marketing to drive new business. In the new normal, face-to-face selling will be limited, so businesses need to leverage the tools available to help them nurture existing customer relationships and attain and develop new customers through online marketing. Online marketing tools allow businesses to send professional emails to customers and prospects, and automates follow-up emails based on the actions and behavior of subscribers. Integrated customer relationship management (CRM) tools will help sales representatives get instant insight into the content that a lead or customer has consumed, what links they have clicked on, and what web pages they have visited. Businesses will need to leverage these tools to adapt to the new normal of online

selling. Automated supply and demand planning will become critical for businesses. Many companies continue to rely on human intelligence for procurement. But when procurement personnel leave, get let go, or retire, their knowledge leaves with them. It can take new employees a number of years to get to know suppliers, let alone the suppliers' demand requirements. Supply and demand planning can be resource intensive, extremely difficult, and very time consuming if done manually. Automated purchasing systems are a key tool in helping businesses react to changes, reduce inventory, and increase sales. ERP Systems will continue to use AI to improve processes and customer service. With the wealth of data being collected today, AI can combine sales data with outside unstructured data including sales trends and even weather situations to predict demand patterns. AI can also aid in warehouse automation by improving speech recognition

for voice picking technology and hands-free operations. Overall, AI will continue to play an important part in enhancing ERP systems and allowing customers to improve logistics, profits, and customer service. With 2021 on the horizon, we can speculate that many unforeseen variables are yet to come, yet we can also be certain that we'll see an even greater increase in digital transformation and technological adoption, especially with ERP applications that will help companies stay ahead of any challenge happening around them. 2020 has forced many companies to reevaluate their business resiliency and rapidly invest in technology to survive and even thrive. Those who were prepared are now reaping the benefits. Those who were not are realizing that 2021 needs to be the year to boost business sustainability by leveraging technology such as cloud computing, mobile and eBusiness applications, CRM/ online marketing tools, automated Supply and Demand Planning, and AI capabilities.

