

Why It's Time to Reassess Your System and Process

Even though the Einstein quote is well known, far too often we go about our daily business doing the same things over and over and expecting different results. Many companies don't realize that what made them competitive five years ago may be the very thing that's holding them back now. Technology and process development continue the move forward. That proverbial wheel keeps turning out system enhancements targeted to increase productivity, efficiency, visibility, customer service, ease and flexibility. In order for a business within the supply chain to use technology as a competitive advantage, it is essential to reassess both your system and process at a minimum of every 2 to 3 years.

In the last 5 years no ground breaking hardware technology like the computer or cellular phone has been introduced. No new paradigm that fundamentally changed the game like the Internet. Yet the rate of change has not slowed, if anything it's increased. The Internet may not be new, but through the emergence of social media, the way we interact and benefit from it is. Does your web page still say "Under Construction?" If your technology and processes are more than five years old, how can they possibly accommodate new business drivers that didn't exist when the solution was implemented?

Now you may ask yourself what is the concern if my system continues to work for me, my team and my customers. The real question is "how long will it continue to work?" We are emerging from a time of great shrinkage and stock elimination, when logistics slowed to a crawl. Have you failed to review your system because it was fine or perhaps just fine for now?

Recent studies have proven that most customers invest in technology solutions to meet the following criteria:

- Support corporate growth
- Improve customer service
- Increase return on investment
- Provide a competitive advantage

*Insanity: doing the same thing
over and over again and
expecting different results.*
Albert Einstein

Some warehouse management software systems that are more than 5 years old can hinder your business progress more than they can help. Keeping in mind the top 4 technology investment criteria mentioned above, as time moves forward and technology advances, a change is often more practical to achieve these goals.

Constantly fixing or tweaking your existing systems is like fixing your five year old cellular phone. You can make in and out calls and add on extra features from your provider but at the end of the day you're still left with an old phone that can't perform and simplify the way the latest technology can. There's nothing more frustrating than watching your peers utilizing the latest mobility, communication, and productivity features of a smart phone with ease, especially when they paid less now than you paid 5 years ago and their maintenance is similar to or less than yours. Sometimes you just have to make the change.

Fear Factor

Intimidation plays a big roll – Accepting change is never easy. Sometimes we get into a comfort zone with what we've already got. You're aware of the costs incurred 5 years ago and the aversion to change you had to overcome to roll out a new system. Now you see a fancy new system with all the bells and whistles and it's intimidating to look and hard to believe that it could be within your budget, scope, grasp, and reality.



When it comes to technology are you frozen in the past, out in the cold, or cutting edge?

Consider these questions:

- Is your software vendor's strategy still in-line with your company's goals and objectives?
- Can your needs be met by simply reconfiguring your system or does your provider have to rewrite or code enhancements to meet your needs and will this effect bringing on new business?
- Are your systems integrated or do you have to re-enter data between systems?
- Does your technology give you an advantage over your competition or do your customers ask for service only your competition is providing?
- Are you able to use the latest technologies, processes, and standards such as real-time, activity-based management, automated processes, workflows, and customer visibility into inventory?
- Is your system compliant with the latest government requirements and documentation?

Which are you more afraid of, implementing or fixing a system, or not doing anything at all?

Call to Action

This first step to solving a problem is recognizing the problem. Before the economic recovery strains your system, take a long hard look at the process you have in place and see if your system is supporting or interfering with your business. Make repairs while you have the extra resources to fix the problem and test new solutions, not when you are under pressure to perform. This will ensure that as new business and customer requirements come your way, you can easily adapt and keep your profits. While the economy is still soft, you can typically receive more flexibility from vendors who are also feeling the pinch, especially for soft services like a business analysis or site survey. If you wait too long, you'll be competing with all the other businesses that waited until the situation reached a critical stage. Not only will vendors be less likely to make deals, they'll also have less flexibility in terms of scheduling and you may find yourself waiting at a time when you can least afford to – when you are losing money.

Now ask yourself, "If I always do what I've always done ..."

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