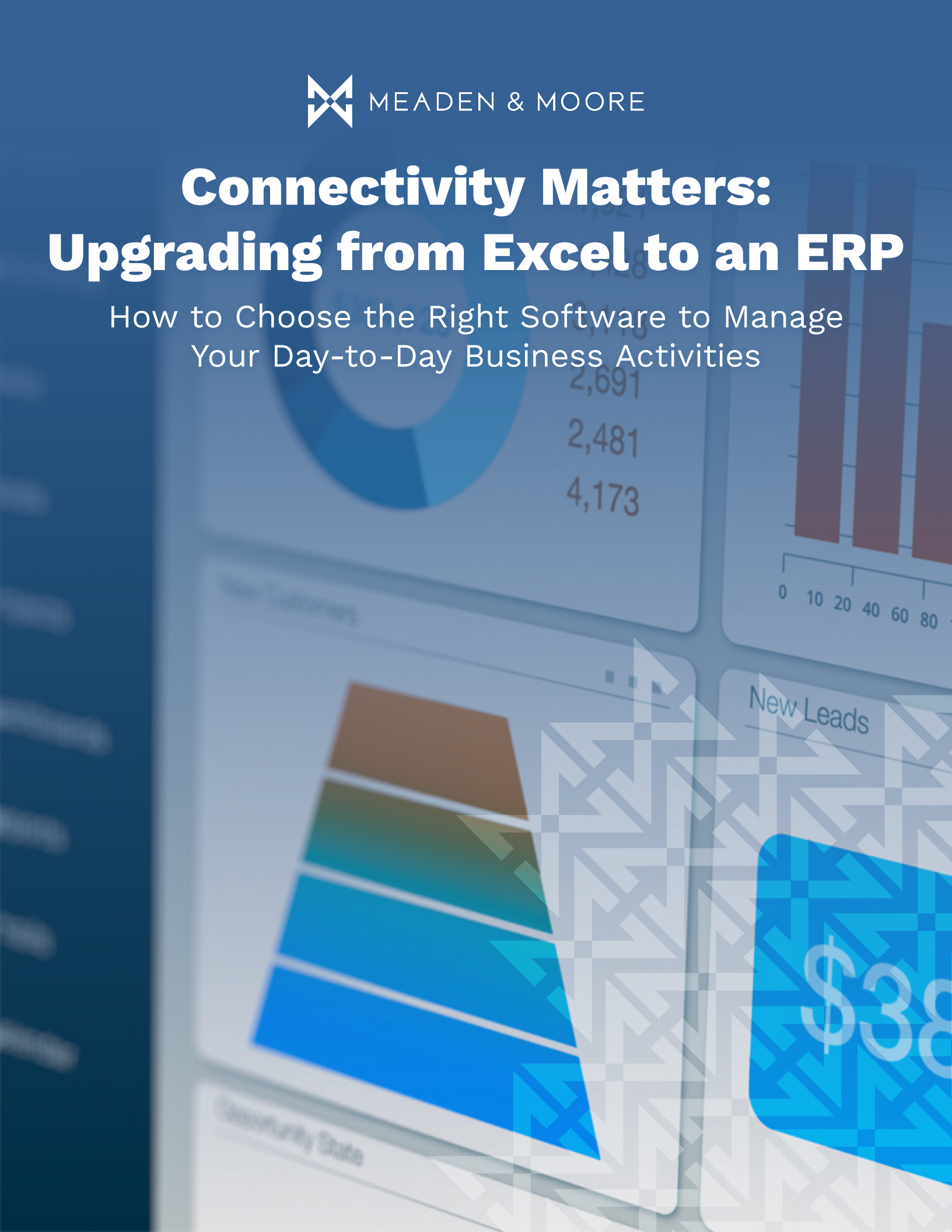# MEADEN & MOORE

Connectivity Matters: Upgrading from Excel to an ERP

How to Choose the Right Software to Manage Your Day-to-Day Business Activities

*A*re you ready to level up from spreadsheets and disconnected software products to a more sophisticated business management system? Many organizations use homegrown solutions that combine various software, spreadsheets, and an accounting program like QuickBooks to track their financials, inventory, supply chain, maintenance, and more. The problem is these tools don't communicate with one another.

Once your company reaches several million dollars in revenue, it's time to consider selecting an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to scale your business profitably rather than relying on spreadsheets like Excel or Google Sheets.

ERPs integrate many processes needed to operate a business into one comprehensive platform. ERP functions typically include planning, purchasing, inventory, finance, human resources, sales, marketing, and more.

The right ERP system, implemented correctly, has the power to help your business grow, streamline processes, and improve productivity over the long term in ways that are nearly impossible with a traditional disconnected spreadsheet software.

Before you begin your search for an ERP, it's important to know that adopting one is a major undertaking that requires a significant investment of time and money.

In fact, choosing the wrong business management software can do more harm than it does good for your business. The wrong ERP could drive up costs, frustrate team members, and create inefficiencies, which in turn leaves your customers dissatisfied. It's important to get your ERP selection and implementation right.

Benefits of ERPs vs. Excel

There are numerous benefits of using an ERP, even in a small or midsize business, when compared with using Excel and other siloed software solutions.

ERP benefits include:

Embedded data: Having data centralized across your entire company resulting in less room for human error and less time spent entering and manipulating data across different spreadsheets and programs. It gives users throughout the organization visibility into accurate, real-time information to help them make better decisions.

Process discipline: An ERP system ensures team members operate consistently and according to standard operating procedures, no matter their department or location.

Scalability: ERPs grow with the business. Spreadsheets, on the other hand, become difficult to manage as volume increases. An ERP also automates routine tasks like invoicing, allowing the company to grow without adding administrative personnel.

Does moving to an ERP mean you have to say goodbye to Excel altogether? No. There are a few good reasons to continue to use spreadsheets in your company. These include data entry, project management, simple calculations, and viewing financial reports. But spreadsheets have their limitations and simply aren't the best tool for running complex organizations.

Comparing ERP Systems

The process of selecting an ERP for your small or midsize business begins with assessing your company's needs. General business considerations include:

- Industry

- Geography

- Business size and scope

- Growth projections

- Existing software systems, preferences, and biases

- Preference between a cloud-based or on-premise system

You also should factor your purchasing requirements and scheduling requirements into the selection process. Depending on your business, there may be only a handful of ERPs that would be suitable for you, or you may have a plethora of choices.

In any case, choosing an ERP is not a minor decision. It requires expertise and an in-depth assessment to ensure you make the right choice and see a return on your investment.

An experienced ERP consulting firm like Meaden & Moore can walk you through all the vital considerations when comparing ERPs, weighing which factors are most important for your business, and ultimately selecting the ideal ERP for your firm.

How to Choose an ERP System Guide →

When Should You Consider Switching from Excel Spreadsheets to an ERP?

There are several signs that indicate it's time to upgrade your company to a robust software program rather than relying on spreadsheets.

They include:

- ✅ You have multiple systems that are disconnected from one another, or you're entering data into multiple places.

- ✅ You want to eliminate data errors and inefficiencies as you grow, not multiply them.

- ✅ You don't have access to real-time information about your business.

- ✅ You should be able to see live data about your inventory, sales, and production rather than waiting a few days, weeks, or months to monitor your performance.

- ✅ You can't keep up with your growth, or your overhead can't keep up with your transactions.

- ✅ Your percent of overhead should go down, not up, as your business grows.

- ✅ Your system lacks accounting controls and is difficult to audit.

- ✅ You should have checks and balances throughout your processes, not siloed information that is difficult to track.

An Overview of Key ERPs

There are several tiers of ERP vendors on the market today. Options include cloud-based and on-premise solutions. Here's an overview of several popular ERPs.

EPICOR

An ERP system for manufac-turing, supply, distribution, and retail users, Epicor is investing in research and development to improve its product and cover more core functional areas.

Pros: Its modular solutions allow for flexibility.

Cons: Epicor was slow to adopt a cloud-based option. Some users find that it lacks a focus on implementation and support.

Acumatica
The Cloud ERP

Acumatica is a cloud-based ERP focused on small-to-midsize companies. Their architecture is focused on being low-code or no-code customization with modular implementation and open AIs to integrate into any platform.

Pros: Built entirely on open APIs creating many opportunities to customize to your specific needs.

Cons: High level of customiza-tions can mean a great deal of resourcing needed to implement and maintain your ERP.

Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central

Microsoft Dynamics 365 Busi-ness Central (formerly NAV) is a cloud-based business man-agement solution focused on small-to-midsize companies. They offer a limited "Essentials" package for smaller companies in addition to a more robust "Premium" software.

Pros: Integrates well with the Microsoft ecosystem including Office, Outlook, and others creating a single contact for many of your software needs.

Cons: Intended to be a standalone system for all your needs, it is created to have limited integration into other platforms. It also lags behind other software in terms of native HR and procurement functionality.

Whether you choose one of the ERPs above or others such as Sage or Microsoft Dynamics, your focus should not be only on the bells and whistles of the technology. All of the platforms are customizable (although there may be significant costs associated with customization), and any ERP can work if implemented and administered correctly. You should focus on your firm's ability to execute the technology. Can your team implement it and support it after it's in place? That's the real question.

*A*dopting an ERP is a large investment and a time-consuming project for any business. Selecting the wrong software for your organization could be detrimental to your operations, client experience, and your continued growth. An ERP consulting firm with proprietary tools, knowledge, and experience in the enterprise software marketplace can help you evaluate ERP options for your firm based on your requirements and capabilities. A qualified ERP consultant will work closely with you to understand your needs, conduct an in-depth assessment, and deliver a set of recommendations that will help you confidently choose an ERP system to set you up for success.

Are you ready to upgrade from Excel to an ERP? Working with software selection strategists at a consulting firm like Meaden & Moore can guide you in finding the right ERP for your firm and integrating it into your operations without it becoming a costly distraction. Our expertise is helping companies like you successfully move from spreadsheets to ERP systems to help them become more efficient, access real-time data, and make better business decisions.

Take the Next Step

Minimize risk and get expert guidance in identifying the best, most cost-effective ERP system for your business.

Contact Us Today