

A guide to business software: The benefits of a unified business system

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Companies across the globe grapple with sprawling data, complex processes, and rapidly evolving markets. In this dynamic environment, the utilisation of business software has become a cornerstone of success. Sophisticated, integrated software solutions empower businesses to streamline operations, enhance data accuracy, foster informed decision-making, and ultimately, drive competitive advantage.



Businesses, particularly those dealing with complex processes, have traditionally relied on a range of standalone systems to manage their operations. These include sales and customer relationship management (CRM) systems, separate estimating and quotes systems, production systems, accounting systems, and often an offline business intelligence (BI) or reports system. While these systems have their strengths, they also pose significant challenges when it comes to integration and cohesion.

The current landscape of standalone systems

To understand the current landscape, it's helpful to consider some of the popular standalone systems businesses use.

Sales and CRM

Most sales and CRM platforms offer a wide array of features.

- **Contact and account management:** A complete view of your customers, including activity history, key contacts, customer communications, and internal account discussions.
- **Sales forecasting:** Its sophisticated sales forecasting tools offer a real-time view of your entire business.
- **Collaboration:** This allows users to bring colleagues into project discussions, no matter where they're located.
- **Sales analytics:** This provides pre-built analytic templates, dynamic dashboards, and reports to help track business performance.

Estimating and quotes

This specialised software is used for creating sales quotes and proposals.

- **Quote creation:** You can create detailed, professional quotes in minutes.
- **Integrations:** It can integrate with your CRM and accounting systems to simplify quote and proposal processes.
- **Electronic signatures:** This offers built-in electronic signature functionality, so your customers can legally sign documents electronically.
- **Supplier management:** It lets you manage your supplier's details and performances.
- **Estimating and quoting:** It offers tools for quick and easy estimating and quoting.
- **Job tracking:** With these platforms, you can track job status and store documents in one place.

Production and MRP systems

There are versatile platforms that teams use to plan, track, and deliver their work.

- **Work OS:** It's a customisable system that helps teams create their own workflows and manage their projects and tasks.
- **Automations:** Automate routine work and focus on what matters most.
- **Integrations:** You can integrate with your favourite tools and centralise your data in one place.
- **Shop management:** It helps manage every aspect of your shop from quoting, order processing, and scheduling to real-time data collection, quality, and shipping.
- **Flexibility:** It allows customisation to fit your needs and workflows.
- **Real-time data:** It provides real-time data for better decision-making.

Accounting

There are many comprehensive accounting solutions.

- **Invoice generation:** It helps create professional invoices and keep track of them.
- **Expense tracking:** It simplifies expense tracking by connecting to your bank accounts and credit cards.
- **Inventory management:** It helps keep track of what's in stock and what's selling.
- **Online accounting:** See your cash flow in real-time with online billing, banking, and accounting.
- **Inventory management:** It allows you to track the quantity and value of your inventory items.
- **Invoicing:** You can create and send professional invoices and get paid online.

BI or Reports

There are suites of business analytics tools.

- **Real-time dashboards:** Get a real-time view of your business with live dashboards.
- **Data integration:** It allows you to connect to hundreds of data sources, simplify data prep, and drive ad hoc analysis.
- **Reports:** Publish reports and share dashboards.
- **Data connection:** Connect easily to nearly any data source, be it corporate data warehouse, web-based data, or Microsoft Excel.
- **Data visualisation:** Create interactive dashboards to uncover hidden insights.
- **Collaboration:** Share dashboards with your entire team and make data-driven decisions together.

Integration seems fair

With all of these great features, it makes sense that each of these fills a vital need in a business. Why not use multiple stand-alone systems and just integrate them?

Challenges of manually integrating standalone systems

Each of these systems may perform excellently in isolation. However, the main issue arises when they need to function

cohesively as a unified whole. Manual integration of these systems brings about several significant challenges:

- **Data integrity loss:** When data is transferred from one system to another, there's a risk of information loss or corruption. This can result in inaccurate data, leading to poor decision-making.
- **Delays:** With multiple systems, data transfer isn't always instantaneous. Delays can slow down the decision-making process, leading to inefficiencies and lost opportunities.
- **Cost:** Maintaining multiple systems and manually integrating them can be expensive. These costs include not only software and hardware expenses but also the human resources needed for managing and troubleshooting these systems.

The alternative: All of the above in one system

The good news is that businesses don't have to face these challenges. And, they can still have all the functionality – the contact management, automation, quoting and estimating, supplier management, job tracking, inventory control, flexibility, accounting, and reports, without breaking a sweat.

[Enterprise resource planning \(ERP\)](#) systems offer a one-stop solution. Instead of the headache and costs involved with the integration of multiple standalone systems into one patchwork system, an ERP solution has all of these functions under one roof. That means it is truly integrated: one hand knows what the other hand is doing. In real-time. All the time.

Modular ERP vs integrated ERP

Just as we were about to heave a sigh of relief that you can get all of the above in one system, we need to expand a little bit on what many ERP systems offer.

Yes, you can get all of these in one system, however many ERP systems offer stand-alone modules that you need to purchase additional to the centralised database at an extra cost.

QuickEasy ERP is Authentically Integrated ERP

[QuickEasy ERP](#) is one of the more popular ERP software solutions that is 100% South African. It provides comprehensive solutions for businesses of all sizes and industries.

- **Finance and accounting:** BOS provides real-time data from the finance team, with full-stack financial reports, financial close, general ledger, invoicing, and bank recon, enabling a company to enhance its financial performance and make more strategic decisions.
- **Quoting and estimates:** Save time, reduce errors, and improve customer satisfaction with estimating and quoting functionality that automates much of this traditionally lengthy process.
- **Supply chain management:** The system facilitates end-to-end management of the supply chain, including procurement, inventory, logistics, and order fulfilment.
- **Human resources:** QuickEasy ERP provides tools for HR management, including time tracker, employee details and contact management.
- **Customer relationship management (CRM):** QuickEasy helps businesses manage their customer interactions, providing a single view of the customer for improved decision-making. Unlimited customer data listings allows sales and customer service staff to give personalised service. Service tracking and ticketing functionality is also included for helpdesks and customer queries.
- **Data analytics:** QuickEasy offers real-time analytics capabilities to help make sense of complex business data.
- **Supply chain and manufacturing:** QuickEasy offers tools for procurement, product lifecycle management, order management, and logistics.
- **Project management:** This solution enables project planning, costing, and billing.
- **Risk management:** The software provides automated controls to help businesses manage risk and ensure compliance.

QuickEasy BOS: Truly integrated at no extra cost

[QuickEasy BOS](#) is an integrated solution that's safe, secure, streamlined, astonishingly flexible, and easy to use. It combines sales, CRM, estimates, production, accounting, and reporting into one unified system.

1. **Integrated modules:** QuickEasy BOS' modules are fully integrated, ensuring seamless operation across all business processes. This reduces the need for multiple entries, saves time, and reduces the risk of errors. Sales, project management, stock control, production management, full-house accounting, and intelligent BI are all included with every subscription.
2. **Security and safety:** With advanced data security measures, QuickEasy BOS ensures your business data remains safe and protected.
3. **Simplicity and usability:** Despite its comprehensive features, QuickEasy BOS has been designed with simplicity in mind, making it user-friendly even for those without extensive technical expertise.
4. **Centralised database:** By keeping all your data in one place, QuickEasy BOS simplifies data management, eliminates duplication, and provides quick, easy access to essential information.
5. **Flexible and scalable:** This system is highly flexible and can accommodate your business's unique functionality requirements.

This is why companies use ERP systems like QuickEasy BOS: a unified system that has all the functionality of individual apps, combined into one.

Here are the key advantages of this approach

- **Data consistency and accuracy:** With one integrated system, all data is stored in a single database, eliminating the risk of data loss or corruption during transfers.
- **Speed and efficiency:** Real-time data access across all modules improves decision-making speed and operational efficiency. Businesses can respond more rapidly to changes and opportunities.
- **Cost-effective:** By consolidating various functions into one system, businesses can significantly cut down on both direct costs (such as software licences) and indirect costs (such as maintenance and manpower).
- **Streamlined operations:** A single, unified system enhances workflow, improves collaboration, and reduces the risk of errors, resulting in smoother operations.

Final thoughts

In conclusion, an integrated ERP system is a robust, effective solution for modern businesses. It helps avoid the pitfalls of manually integrating separate systems, or the costly modular-based ERP systems, and offers a streamlined, efficient, and cost-effective alternative. It truly embodies the principle of 'integrated, not just integration'.

These tools transform raw data into actionable insights, automate routine tasks, and seamlessly connect disparate business functions. By adopting the right business software, companies can navigate the intricate demands of the 21st century marketplace with agility, precision, and confidence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oosthuizen is the commercial director of QuickEasy ERP - the South African ERP system that has helped streamline operations of businesses for over 20 years.

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