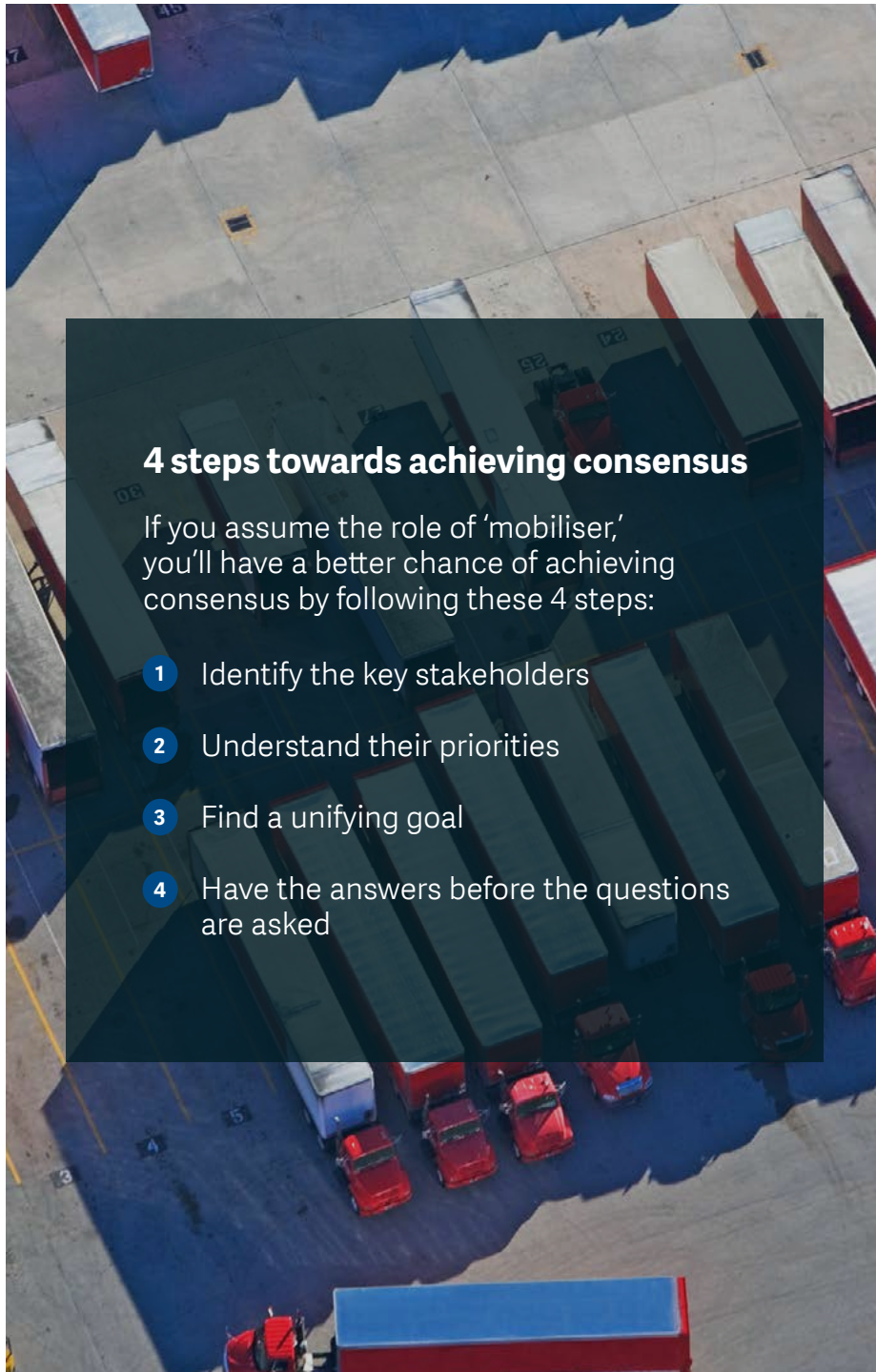




sage

4 steps to build consensus to future-proof your business.

How to build your dream team to evaluate the right technology investment.



4 steps towards achieving consensus

If you assume the role of 'mobiliser,' you'll have a better chance of achieving consensus by following these 4 steps:

- 1 Identify the key stakeholders
- 2 Understand their priorities
- 3 Find a unifying goal
- 4 Have the answers before the questions are asked

Your management software is due for an upgrade

Regardless of your industry, you're intimately aware of the many market and industry changes—along with increasing competitive threats—that challenge your organisation's continued success.

Perhaps you're in the distribution sector, where the pressure is always on to expand your market and control costs. Or maybe you're in manufacturing, in which your mandate is to achieve greater efficiencies in inventory management while consistently delivering high-quality goods. Services? Attract new customers and keep them satisfied.

You're hardly alone if you realise that it's time to implement a new enterprise management solution in order to improve how your business operates. A vast majority¹ of 215 executives experiencing similar issues as your business have either recently implemented new management software or are in the process of it.

The time is right; the question is how

The reality is that it's no longer a matter of if or when your business will upgrade. The question is how. And the fact of the matter is that those involved in the decision-making process represent different interests depending on their department, all with their own priorities.

Therefore, one of the critical hurdles is forming a committee of key stakeholders that will agree on the best solution for the entire company. Once you've built that consensus, the purchase decision will quickly follow. If you follow the 4 steps to the left, you're in much better position to make the right choice.

"Top-performing organisations approach the ERP selection process with a clear plan and come away with solutions that are easy to implement and help drive business immediately."²

1. Identify the key stakeholders

The larger the organisation, the more stakeholders there are in the evaluation and selection of an enterprise management solution. In general, purchasing committees are growing in size, with an average of five or six decision-makers involved per business.³ That means it's important to engage your C-suite along with legal counsel and procurement executives—all of whom will benefit from a solution that considers their specific needs while simultaneously aligning with the overall objectives of the enterprise. For example:

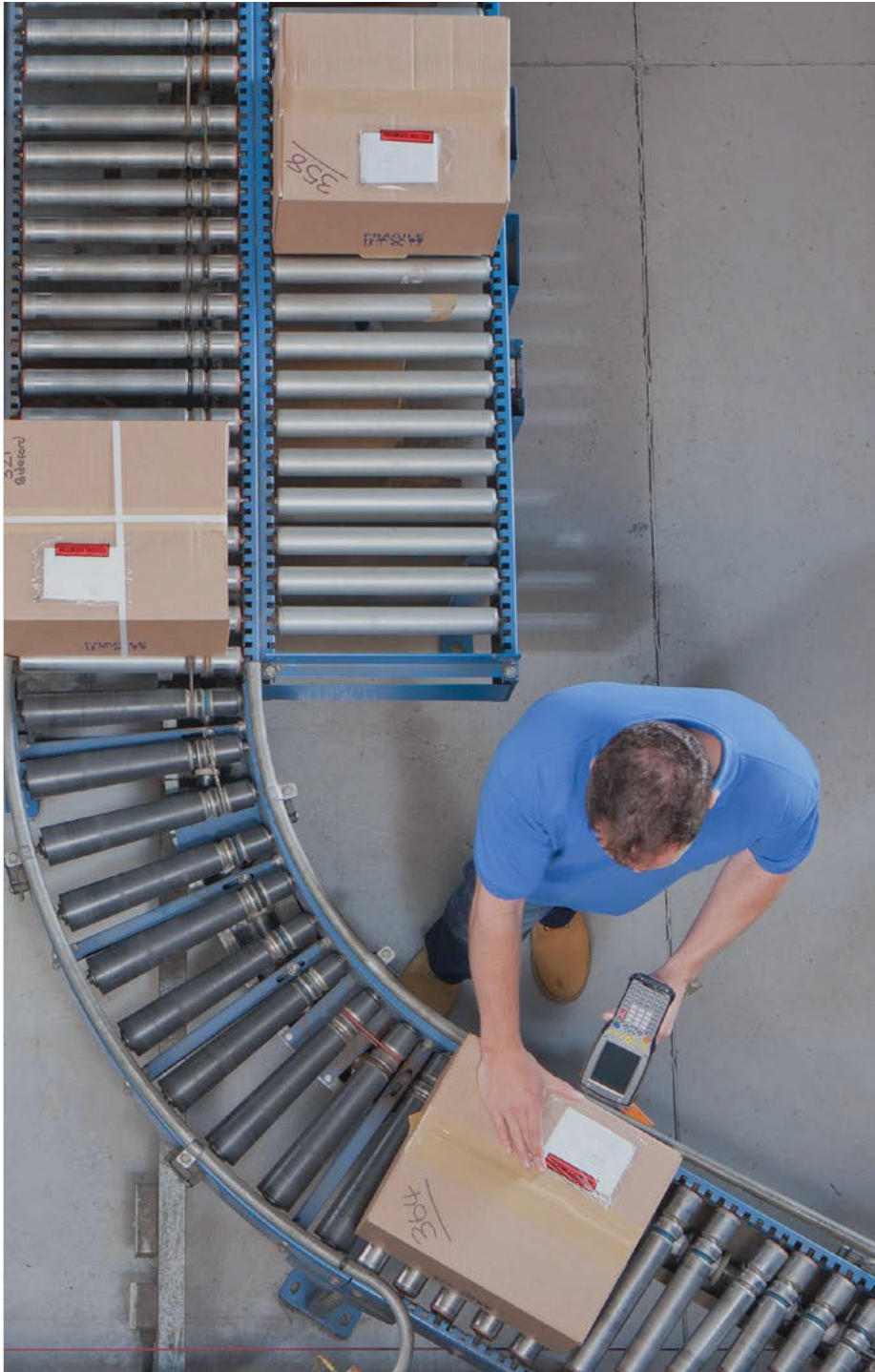
- The CFO will want a solution that includes financials, personnel, ROI calculators, value assessments, TCO scorecards, cost and budget accounting, and fixed assets.
- The CMO will need real-time sales figures, reporting and analytics, social media and mobility capabilities, and CRM data.
- The COO will want streamlined and connected business processes that accelerate collaboration among business units and provide real-time insights into costs and operational performance.
- The CIO/CTO—not to mention the CEO—will want a solution that's easy to implement, deploy, and integrate with existing systems with minimal investment and resources.

It's also important to make sure that all those involved are aware of each other's needs and priorities—and that each one is focused on moving the organisation forward. Keep that in mind as you finalise your list of people to include in the process.

Nearly 80% of top-performing enterprises involve cross-functional teams in their selection of an enterprise management solution.⁴



“Organisations are best served by a chorus of input and perspectives from individuals across multiple departments. No single person is aware of all the needs of an organisation or the idiosyncrasies of its infrastructure.”⁵



2. Understand their priorities

As noted in the first step, different lines-of-business (LoB) leaders will have different reasons for wanting a new enterprise management solution. Knowing and understanding those priorities will facilitate the appropriate conversations. You can gather details about their priorities by asking them to rate the importance of key business functions on a sliding scale and compare responses. Here is an example to start the conversation:

Rate the importance of each of these business functions for a new enterprise management solution:

- Tracking purchases and inventory.
- Ensuring financial compliance across regions.
- Accessing real-time data and business insights.
- Growing operations and/or business unit in new regions.

Once you have started the conversation with each member of your buying committee, bring everyone together to think about the priorities from each line of business in a workshop setting. But be wary of 'personalising' individual conversations, because that could actually highlight individual differences instead of promoting common goals. Focus instead on connecting stakeholders by sharing their perspectives with each other and communicating in a common language. The priority should always be ensuring the health and ongoing success of the business.

Helping stakeholders see their shared interests will set the stage for consensus and make it easier—and less risky—for mobilisers to advocate on each individual's behalf. ⁶

3. Find a unifying goal

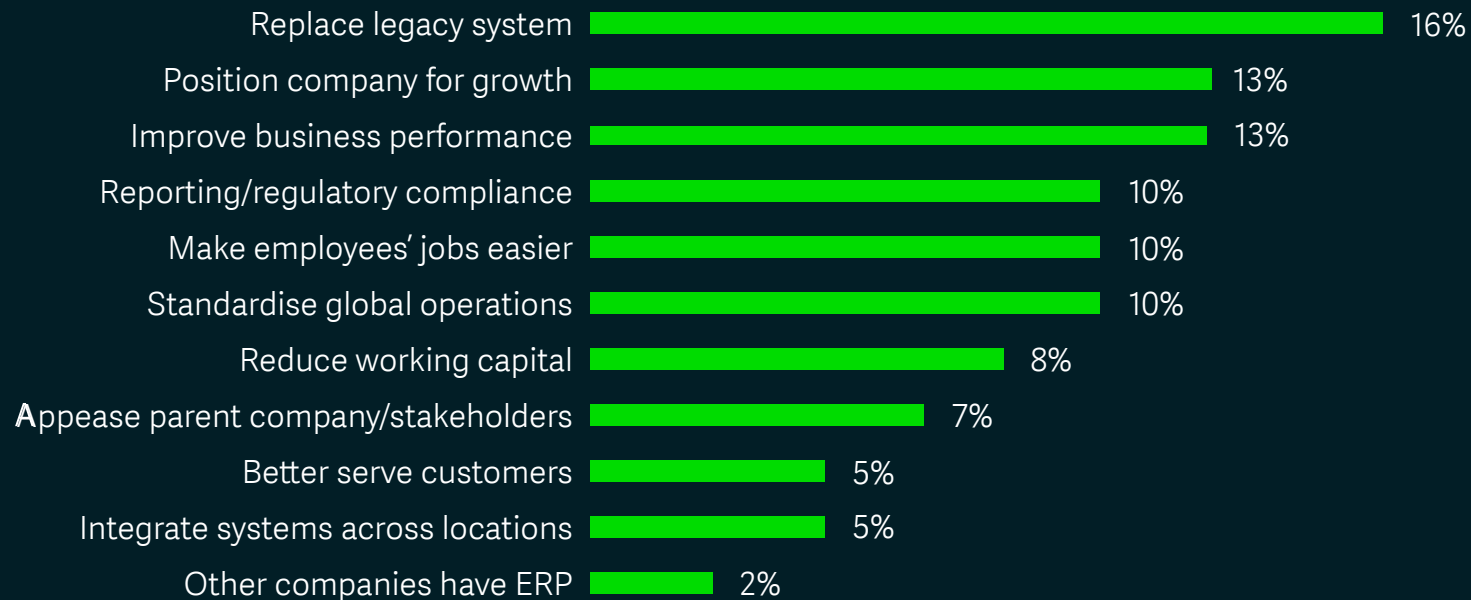
If the common goal is to keep the business successful and competitive, what are the best ways to get there? First, look at your current management system and identify your pain points. The most common ones associated with outdated enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions or inefficient accounting systems include:

- Inefficiencies undermining profits and growth potential.
- Lack of customisation.
- Inefficient access to insights and real-time data.
- Layers of loosely integrated tools and solutions.
- Lack of agility in reacting to complex business challenges and pace of change in the market/industry.

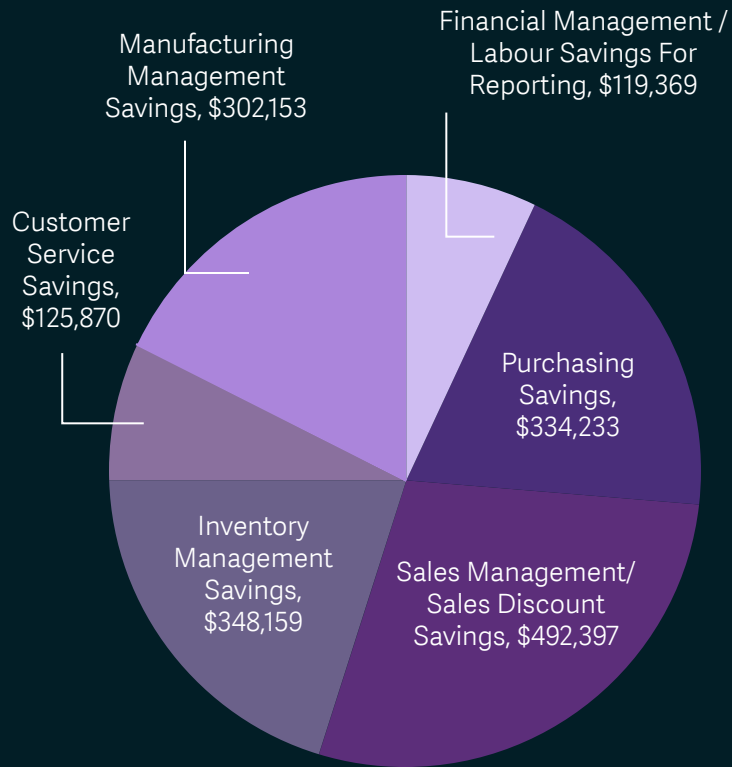
Those bullet points will probably resonate with committee members in a variety of ways. For example, poor visibility into data hinders finance and operations from being able to deliver accurate forecasts. Inefficient work processes that delay growth means the business might not be able to expand into new geographies and markets. Siloed tools disrupt collaboration and undermine operational efficiency.

Now, compare the bullet points above against the most common reasons businesses are replacing their current ERP, listed in the chart below. Find out which ones are most relevant to your stakeholders—improve business performance? Make employees' jobs easier? Better serve customers?—and identify those that all can get behind. Then you will be better able to show them how they can reach those goals and address their other individual LoB priorities.

Reasons for Implementing ERP



Sage Enterprise Management benefits by category (risk-adjusted)



- Financial Management — Labour Savings For Reporting
- Purchasing Savings
- Sales Management — Sales Discount Savings
- Inventory Management Savings
- Customer Service Savings
- Manufacturing Management Savings

4. Have the answers before the questions are asked

As you evaluate various solutions to narrow your selections and discover the best fit, it's good practice to communicate directly with vendors to help you craft and crystallise the value and benefits of their solutions. Vendors who are truly trusted partners will gather the content to help you make your case.

- Have them provide you with relevant use cases, ROI reports, assessment tools, and economic impact reports, as well as case studies of customers whose needs are similar to yours.
- Request a demo or free trial of the product so all stakeholders can experience how it works to discover any potential red flags or issues.
- Invite a sales rep to visit your facility on a 'learning tour' during which they can offer advice and answer questions.

And again, always encourage the 'one for all, all for one' mindset by demonstrating how the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For example, take a look at the pie chart to the left, which breaks down the risk-adjusted savings benefits of Sage Enterprise Management Solutions by category. Individually, each department realised significant gains—with the entire organisation saving more than \$1.7 million.

However, as Aberdeen Group notes⁷, "cost should not be your primary concern." A survey conducted by the technology and services consultant group found that the top two criteria among enterprises were functionality (69%) and ease of use (56%)—and are "truly the key to getting the most value" from your enterprise management solution.

By getting vendors to work with you on your consensus-building endeavour, you'll be better able to demonstrate your willingness to satisfy stakeholder concerns.

“Choosing Sage meant a significant improvement in the automation of our business processes with customers, partners, and suppliers. This user-friendly tool provided complete integration of information, improved efficiency, and total control over costs.”

—Joao Andrade, Export Sales Manager, Novarroz

Now you can focus on the future

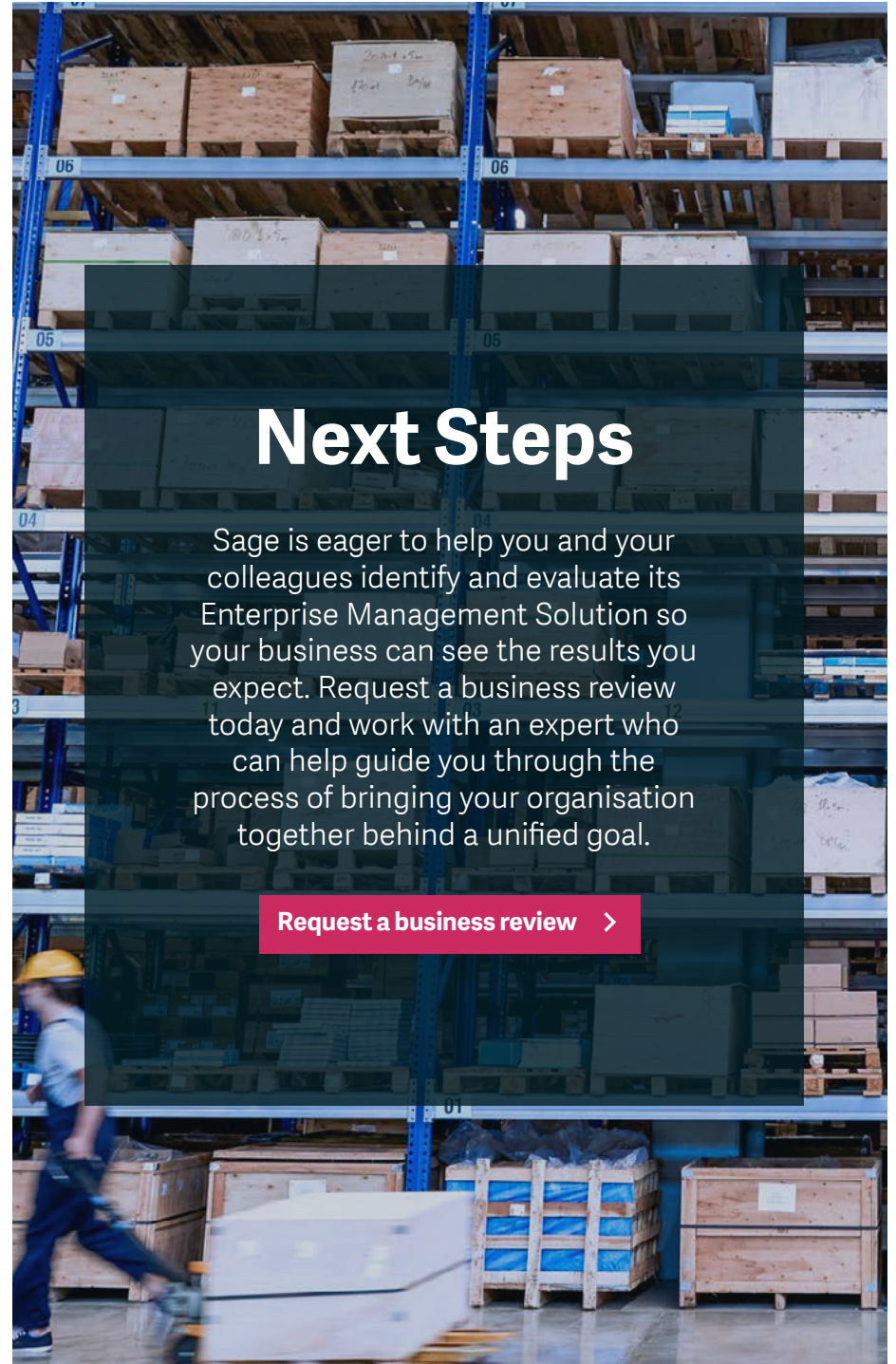
As you move through the process of reaching consensus among your colleagues, remember that all of you want to remain successful and grow profitably. The right enterprise management will be scalable, sufficiently customisable, and future-proof. Sage is here to help you deploy Enterprise Management, a Sage Business Cloud product, or its on-premises equivalent to ensure you have the right configuration to future-proof your organisation.

Ultimately, the right choice will reduce the complexity of running your business, enabling every stakeholder to say, “Now we can operate faster, now we can manage simpler, and now we can be more flexible.”

Next Steps

Sage is eager to help you and your colleagues identify and evaluate its Enterprise Management Solution so your business can see the results you expect. Request a business review today and work with an expert who can help guide you through the process of bringing your organisation together behind a unified goal.

[Request a business review >](#)



References:

¹ "2016 Report on ERP Systems and Enterprise Software," Panorama Consulting Solutions, 2016

² "5 Steps to Successful ERP Selection and Implementation," Aberdeen Group

³ "2016 Report on ERP Systems and Enterprise Software," Panorama Consulting Solutions, 2016

⁴ "5 Steps to Successful ERP Selection and Implementation," Aberdeen Group

⁵ "5 Steps to Successful ERP Selection and Implementation," Aberdeen Group

⁶ "Making the Consensus Sale," Harvard Business Review, March, 2015

⁷ "5 Steps to Successful ERP Selection and Implementation," Aberdeen Group

