



Your Guide to ERP Selection
and Implementation for the
Apparel Industry

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Introduction/Chapter 1

Introduction: ERP for the Apparel Industry: What to Know, Where to Start and How to Move Forward

The apparel industry faces unique challenges. Standard software and technical solutions often fail to solve them, even if they've worked well in other industries.

We understand. As the leader in apparel ERP software solutions for distribution and manufacturing, we've been working for over 20 years to solve the challenges inherent in the clothing industry. We do this with a modular solution specifically designed for apparel companies that integrates multi-company and multi-currency accounting with costing, forecasting and purchasing, inventory, order management and EDI.

If you're looking to extend your platform beyond ERP, our apparel solutions integrate with our apparel-based e-commerce, designed for both B2B and B2C, as well as CRM, that offers customer sales information in real-time and a robust WMS that utilizes the latest in browser-based technology on touchscreen RF scanners.

All solutions are fully-integrated with streamlined processes. Additionally, each solution allows access to pertinent information in real-time via customizable executive dashboards. With real-time data, companies can make better decisions based on information from the present — not the past.

What Does It Mean to You?

If you're reading this guide, you likely have questions. You might be unsure what ERP means in the first place. Maybe you're frustrated with your current software tools and are wondering how to take your business to the next level.

Maybe what you need is more specific — like an ERP solution for clothing inventory or an apparel inventory management system. If this sounds about right, you've come to the right place.

This guide will touch on a little bit of everything. It will cover the basics of ERP and how it relates to the clothing and apparel industry. It will also cover finding the right solution for your business and information relating to steps for a successful implementation.

Purchasing, changing or upgrading an ERP system is a major decision with many implications. It's not something to be taken lightly. This in-depth guide will remove some of the questions associated with the process and provide insight that could be difficult to obtain elsewhere.

You should feel comfortable with the ERP system you select for your business. You should be knowledgeable enough to make the best decisions and choose the solutions that work best for your company as you move forward.

Enterprise Resource Planning for Clothing Apparel

For years, clothing manufacturers and apparel companies have been doing what “works” — or at least what seems to work. They've used accounting solutions like QuickBooks or Sage and inventory solutions that older ERP systems provided. The work has always gotten done, so the process repeats time and time again.

The problem is, when systems continue as they always have, there's often a lack of growth. ERP systems sound intimidating — there are plenty of horror stories about

expensive, failed implementations. However, if implementation fails, it just means your ERP isn't being used the way it's supposed to be — it doesn't mean it's not effective.

If your transition isn't working, it means your ERP wasn't implemented by industry-specific providers who understand the needs faced by industry business owners and executives like you.



If your transition isn't working, it means your ERP wasn't implemented by
INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC PROVIDERS.

The bottom line is that ERP solutions that are designed specifically for the clothing industry can save your business time and money. We understand the challenges that are unique to the apparel industry. For example: The management of clothing inventory can create additional issues and a single style can have countless colors and sizes that all need to be tracked individually or at the style level.

These ERP systems, when implemented by a company familiar with your industry's challenges, allow your business to experience expansion and can lead to an impressive, measurable ROI. The potential benefits of implementing a new ERP solution, which will be covered in detail in this guide, include:

- Greater efficiency via access to information in real-time

- Error reduction and accuracy of inventory record
- More controlled inventory management
- Shorter order-to-shipment cycle
- Cost savings due to more efficient planning
- Better labor tracking, fewer overhead expenses through our Decoration Module
- Greater efficiency via a Matrix style/color grid
- Improved accounting control through integrated financials

If you have questions related to potential ERP solutions or finding and/or implementing a new system, browse the chapters below to find the information you're looking for and the answers you need.

Ready to move forward? [Contact FDM4](#) for a demo.

Chapter 1: ERP as an Industry-Specific Solution

What is ERP software and what are its benefits? You may already know the answer to these questions. If not, we think this is a great place to start.

What Is Enterprise Resource Planning?

What is ERP, then? Why exactly should it matter to you? It allows for the streamlining of processes and information between multiple units across an entire company.

ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING (ERP)

is software designed to integrate critical business functions into a single, complete system.



As technology becomes more capable, ERP systems are becoming more critical for companies looking to enhance efficiency without adding program after program to their processes. ERP is designed to simplify complex processes while increasing functionality and capabilities.

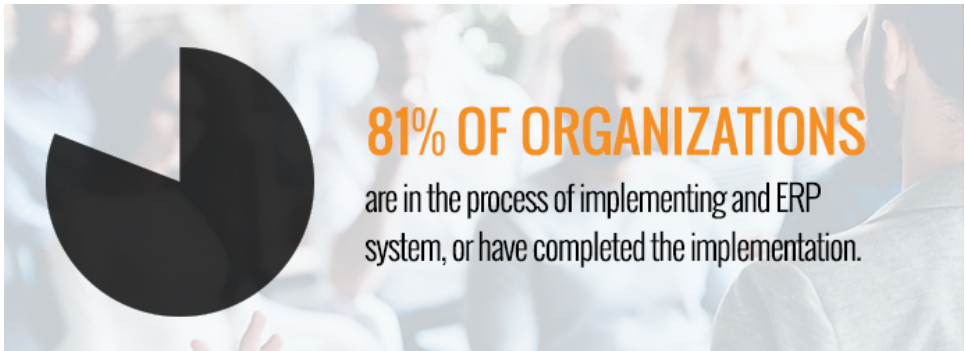
ERP is not new, but its importance has grown rapidly over the past few years. The term was coined by Connecticut-based Gartner, Inc. in the 1990s and is described as “an application and deployment strategy that expands out from ERP functions and achieves integration of an enterprise’s key domain-specific, internal and external collaborative, operational and financial processes.”

Today, ERP is more than just a system. It’s a process designed to improve businesses across all industries. This makes it absolutely necessary. According to Gary Forger in “Modern Materials Handling,” ERP “acts as a planning backbone for a company’s core business processes.”

Because its capabilities are almost limitless, businesses are catching on. According to the latest Panorama study, 81% of organizations surveyed are in the process of implementing an ERP system or have completed their implementation. The reasons for

implementing software vary from one organization to another, but they include:

- Replacing out-of-date software (49%)
- Replacing homegrown systems (16%)
- Replacing accounting software (15%)
- Starting from scratch with no existing system (20%)



The bottom line is that ERP solutions are necessary and critical for staying competitive, accurate and efficient in today's marketplace.

One ERP Solution Doesn't Fit All

Just because a solution seems like it could work in any industry doesn't mean it's right for yours. Based on this, some companies offer customization of ERP software solutions on an item-by-item basis, which can be time-consuming and costly to implement and maintain.

Due to this challenge, companies in the apparel industry are often left wondering where to begin. The solution lies in modular-based ERP solutions. When apparel-specific ERP software is put in place, it adds functionality while reducing manual processes and

isolated spreadsheets.

Examples of **ERP Software for Apparel modules include:**

- **Order Processing and Returns Management:** When order management is streamlined, the order life cycle — from receiving quotes and orders through fulfillment and invoicing — is more efficient. This leads to more on-time deliveries and improved client satisfaction. Thanks to an apparel matrix, order entry and purchasing can be simplified. The matrix enables users to enter specific quantities based on variations in products, like color and size. The matrix also makes it easy to view which products are available, in real-time, to give the customer an idea of whether an order will be fulfilled right away or backordered.
- **The Decoration Module:** Decoration Modules take order entry one step further by streamlining the process specifically for the maintenance of decoration orders. The right Apparel Software will manage the entire process, including receiving an order with one or multiple art records that need to be applied to the garment, handling the proof approval process and managing the work order flow for applying art records, either internally or at a third party.
- **Purchasing and Forecasting:** Determining what to buy, when to buy and how much to buy is the key to an integrated Forecasting System. The automation of Purchase Orders from the forecast and having the P/O's ultimately tied to the Accounts Payable is a must for any Apparel Solution. Forecasting by style/color and style/color/size allows Apparel Companies to forecast at the top level by style, ensuring Apparel Companies can predict their apparel inventory needs more accurately.
- **Accounting and Financial Management:** Many Apparel Software solutions say they are a complete ERP, but they don't have a native Accounting and Financial Management solution. Most Apparel ERP Solutions integrate to an Accounting Solution. Because the Accounting Solution helps drive the financial success of Apparel Business, why would you want to integrate to an external solution?

- **Inventory Management:** Accurate inventory tracking is essential for the apparel industry. The right apparel inventory management system will be designed specifically to showcase inventory views by SKU, style/color or style. Additionally, ERP inventory software for apparel manufacturing allows key inventory information to be shared across the system for more efficient management and increased product availability.
- **Manufacturing:** The manufacturing modules will automate supply chain processes from inside FDM4, improve visibility and accounting of external and internal costs, more accurately plan material requirements and easily interface to external systems. With the unique needs of the Apparel industry in mind, the workflow process was designed to handle multiple types of manufacturing workflows, even within the same production of a style, with multiple bills of materials and workflow design by style.

All the modules mentioned above are designed specifically to be textiles manufacturing ERP solutions. The modules provide a way to mitigate item-by-item customization complexities and costs.

Challenges Specific to ERP for the Apparel Industry

To understand the benefits of an ERP system and software for the apparel industry, it's important to realize the challenges that make the industry unique:

1. Cost Savings

Cutting costs is critical for experiencing growth. When apparel companies work with an ERP system, they can expect to need less warehouse space, due to better and more efficient planning. This in turn can reduce operational and administration costs and lead to better business process management — a benefit cited by 82% of organizations that have implemented ERP solutions.



82% of organizations who have implemented ERP solutions say they have experienced better business process management.

2. Apparel Product Data Management

The Apparel industry has one of the most challenging product environments. With constantly evolving trends, styles with short lifespans and an enormous variety of styles, colors and sizes, it's no wonder Apparel Companies have issues updating their software database with all the new information.

The right Apparel Software Solution will address this need with an automated, easy-to-use Product Load module that allows users to load and manage styles and items, including colors, sizes, features, images, pricing, costing and all other pertinent information from Excel format. This ensures that once a new style is approved, all the required data is loaded without manual data entry and the complications — and delays — that often accompany it.

3. Relationship Management — Customers

Without customers, your apparel business will fall flat. Keeping customers satisfied ensures they remain loyal and your business remains steady.

ERP solutions for the apparel industry simplify order management from start to finish, in

a single database, without maintaining multiple systems — which can cause delays and frustrations on both ends.

Module-based ERP systems for the apparel industry are not optional. They're absolutely necessary for success.

Chapter 2: ERP Solutions for the Clothing Industry

Because each industry is unique, it's important to understand the importance of working with ERP solutions for the clothing industry, specifically. To learn how they could change the way you do business, read on.

Apparel ERP Software Enhances Inventory Management

To put it simply, ERP software improves decision-making.

By providing real-time views and tracking, apparel inventory management systems allow users to create accurate forecasts based on real-time facts and information instead of making "educated guesses."

Likewise, because the apparel industry software provides a consolidated overview of inventory in pre-packs, it becomes easier to unpack and repack that inventory without complications or hassles that often accompany the process.

ERP software also puts the control back into your hands. When the right system is in place, businesses are better able to analyze, diagnose and identify seasonal demand shifts. At the same time, order patterns, stock-out dates, lost sales, excess orders and other patterns can be analyzed in real-time to give more control to buyers and managers.

Supply Chain Management Improves With Apparel Inventory Software

If there's trouble in your business, you need to know about it.

Logistics are costly — the cost of U.S. business logistics alone is over \$1 trillion a year. ERP lessens this burden by streamlining the process and connecting all points — manufacturers, distributors and marketplaces — while allowing for process standardization and providing better insight into data, cost analysis and vendor performance.

Because systems can help identify trends, suppliers and manufacturers can work together to adapt to delays while minimizing impacts. When processes are smoother, each party involved sees benefits in the long run.

Product and Order Management Reduces Complexities and Complications

Regardless of your product, you understand the complication of working with multiple products that have similarities.

A single product — a shirt, for example — that has eight different designs and three sizes has 24 separate products as far as inventory tracking and management is concerned. This can complicate both the ordering process and distribution.

When an automated matrix system is in place, the inventory can be managed more effectively, which saves time and labor costs while increasing potential revenue-generating opportunities. A matrix allows users at all points in the process to enter orders in both grid and traditional formats, while giving you more flexibility for management purposes.

ERP solutions with this level of flexibility can help companies streamline workflow automation and tracking, which could reduce operating costs by 22% and administrative costs by 17%. Think of the long-term benefits of ERP solutions for the clothing industry based on these figures.

ERP SOLUTIONS

can reduce operating costs by 22% and administrative costs by 17%.

↓22%



OPERATING
COSTS

↓17%



ADMINISTRATIVE
COSTS

Cost Reduction via Textiles Manufacturing ERP Solutions

Traditionally, custom or transformational purchase orders have led to excessive costs, even though the growth potential is great. With an Apparel Decoration Module, this is a more plausible offering.

To provide this level of customization, manufacturers can allow customers to transform or decorate existing products either internally or by way of a third party. This customization could include adding a graphic, a logo or another element of design that wouldn't traditionally be ordered in bulk.

Because this adds cost — namely, to additional labor or the third party involved — along with the complication of the purchase order and drop-shipping process, it can be a challenge to offer. But when a module is in place that automatically handles these otherwise manual processes, the cost can be kept lower while the process remains efficient.

Because of the innate challenges the apparel industry faces, a one-size-fits-all solution isn't viable. For long-term success, apparel-specific ERP solutions are necessary and worthwhile. The tangible benefits are apparent from day one.

Chapter 3: Cost of ERP

Instead of focusing on the cost of ERP solutions or the bottom-line ERP price, which can vary greatly from one project to another, it's most important to look at the potential savings and growth potential an accurate, focused ERP solution for the apparel industry can provide.

ERP Cost Savings

When the right ERP system is in place, an organization can expect to see significant savings stemming from streamlined processes and better overall order and organization. In general, cost savings from ERP systems are associated with:

- Order to shipment times that are 23% faster
- Reduced operational and administrative costs
- Increased on-time deliveries
- Better operating margins due to a reduction in manual, repetitive labor



ERP ROI

ROI is complicated, depending upon the size of a project and its associated implementation. However, parameters that can be enhanced include:

- Reduced sitting inventory levels through improved planning and control
- Minimized inventory shortages and delays
- Increased user productivity due to fully automated repeating processes
- Improved financial management through access to more reliable data



The average ROI from ERP solution implementation is around
\$7.23 ON EVERY DOLLAR SPENT.

ERP Price

Because ERP systems are not a one-size-fits-all solution, the price can be difficult to quote without understanding specific details and pertinent information. The price of a project is dependent upon the needs of a company, and the greater the investment, the greater the potential for long-term savings in most cases.

According to the most recent study, the average implementation price is steadily decreasing. However, this varies based on numerous factors — especially the size of the company. Factors included in this cost include:

- **The number of users:** Depending upon the functions in use and the number of applications, the number of users will influence the price.
- **Third-party software integrations:** Integrations with third-party software solutions are important, as they allow custom operations that are needed for ultimate success. These are factored into implementation costs.
- **In-house implementation or consultant-based:** Costs are also influenced by which players are necessary for implementation and whether a business implements the software in-house or uses consultants who work with the software on a regular basis.

While the average cost may seem great, small to mid-sized apparel companies can expect a total cost somewhere between \$150,000 and \$750,000. A more specific average is somewhere between 1-3% of your organization's annual revenue. However, with the average ROI of \$7.23 per dollar spent over time, this cost is generally justifiable.

Chapter 4: Signs You Need to Upgrade Your Apparel Software

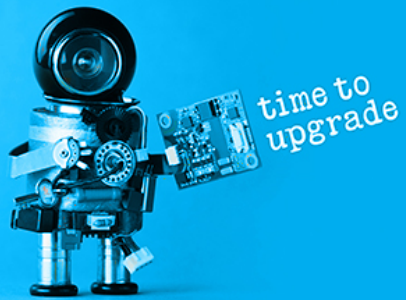
If you already have apparel software or even an apparel ERP system in place, that's great. However, it's important to understand the way ERP systems change over time.

Is it time for you to upgrade your ERP system?

Textile Manufacturing Inventory Software Is Constantly Changing

Does your business look the same as it did 10 years ago? What about three years ago? Probably not.

In the same way your business changes from one year to the next, **garment software and ERP solutions change as well.**



The average lifespan of an ERP system is seven to 10 years. While upgrades may become available, at some point, implementing changes will become less cost-effective than replacing the system altogether.

The average lifespan of an ERP system is



7-10 YEARS.

If you're wondering if it's time for something new, you're not alone. On average, 25% of companies are looking to invest in new ERP systems, but it's possible more than that should be looking at options.

Technology is changing. Doing "what has always worked" doesn't push a business to the front of the competition. Adapting to industry changes and staying ahead of trends is the better solution.

Signs It's Time to Upgrade Your Textiles Manufacturing ERP Solutions

Typical signs that it's time for a new ERP system or upgrade include:

- The system in use doesn't integrate with other programs.
- Your current system no longer has new patches and upgrades available. This can affect performance and can be a security risk. It also indicates that the system has reached EOL, or its End of Life.
- Your business has outgrown the features available on your current system, which affects your ability to service your customers and compete for new business.
- You're entering the same data into multiple systems, which is costly, time-consuming and error-prone. It also stops you from accessing real-time information.

- Your company has a remote location with mobile users who aren't able to access your software in real-time, leading to delays.

If the above scenarios sound familiar, it may be time to upgrade or replace your existing ERP system.

Chapter 5: Finding the Best ERP Software for Your Business

You understand the need for specific ERP inventory software for textile manufacturing and you're ready to move forward. But where do you start? How do you find ERP software that's right for you? It doesn't need to be overly complicated.

Consider Your Company's Goals and Objectives

First, consider your current growth and target growth. Knowing where you stand will help you identify the apparel manufacturing ERP solutions you need:

- What is your target growth — year by year — for the next five to 10 years?
- How do you measure growth?
- Will your company be introducing new products, entering new markets, acquiring or merging with a new company?

Efficiency should also be a deciding factor in moving forward. Consider the following questions relating to your current operations:

- Do you see an overlap in your current processes and functions?
- Do you wonder if you can cut down on redundancy?
- How would you like to combine functions for greater efficiency?

When considering current goals and objectives, think about your existing product speed to market, as well:

- Is there a delay between manufacturing and getting the product to market?

- Would you be able to increase your market share by increasing your speed?

Answering these questions will not point you one way or another, but you will better understand what you should hope to gain by investing in new apparel manufacturing ERP solutions.

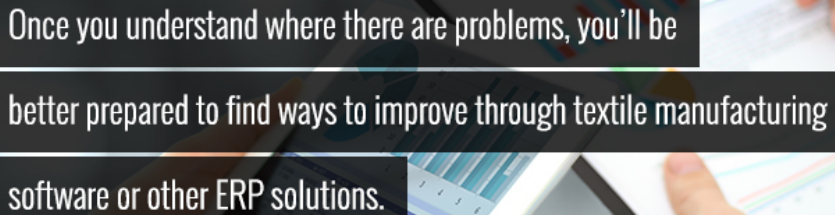
Know Your ERP Software Requirements

To better understand your specific needs, consider both the functionality you'll need in a new system along with existing pain points.

To begin, break down your business department-by-department. Look at the functions performed by all units and the involved parties each day. See whether they fall inside or outside the system you currently have in place.

At the same time, consider the programs you're currently using to accomplish daily tasks. Be specific — there may be room to combine these programs or integrate them into a single system going forward.

Next, identify existing pain points. The best way to accomplish this task may be to talk to each department to gather grievances. The process may not be enjoyable, but once you understand where there are problems, you'll be better prepared to find ways to improve through textile manufacturing software or other ERP solutions.



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Gather a Team

Regardless of the implementation team that will be in place once you select a system, it's important to have a team in place internally, especially during the search process.

Start by thinking down the chain. While upper-level management may have the final say, those closer to other units may be able to provide valuable insight. Consider adding department heads — or at least a representative from each of your company's main departments — to help during the selection process.

Then, move up the chain. Because upper-level management will be making the final decision, it will be important for the two groups to work together and to gain an understanding of each other's needs from the start.

Start the Search

Once your team is in place and you have a better idea of your needs as an organization, it's time to move forward by starting an actual search.

Starting within your industry. Run a general search for ERP solution providers within the apparel industry to ensure a smoother process that meets your specific needs.

Remember — finding the right fit is critical.

Proper research is essential. As of the most recent study in 2014, 22% of companies selected the first provider they found. One-third of them did not even demo the product. This laid-back approach to a major decision leads to long-term problems that include:

- Expressing regret over not selecting a more industry-specific provider (67%).
- Stating they would select a different ERP software vendor if they could restart the process (31%).



22% of companies selected

THE FIRST PROVIDER THEY FOUND;

one-third of them

DID NOT EVEN DEMO THE PRODUCT.

To be as thorough as possible, take the time to read marketing material and case studies from specific vendors. Do their past clients align with your current needs? Are they in your industry? If so, take part in demos and allow your team to do the same. The more familiar each team member is with various options, the more comfortable they will be moving forward.

Once you feel more confident, ask for references. Ask past clients whether deadlines were met, whether the budget was met and what concerns they had throughout the process. Most importantly, ask if they are satisfied with their operations post-implementation.

Before making any final decisions, review the features, available security and procedures before, during and after implementation. The fewer surprises, the better.

Make a Selection

When you've narrowed down your choices, you'll be closer to deciding.

Take the time to compare your top choices and ask questions. By becoming familiar with pricing options, support availability, timelines and overall procedures, you'll know whether you can make the implementation work for your business.

Make sure the new software will meet your needs and that you understand how it will fit into your business model and strategy.

Once you've examined your business and researched all available options, you'll be prepared to inform your team. From this point forward, for the project to be successful, it's important that your team feels involved and informed. Introduce them to the project, allow them to meet those who will be involved and make the timeline public.

Most importantly, let everyone know there will be ample education to ease frustrations during the process. By highlighting the benefits of the new software while letting them know they won't be alone during the process, the reception will be more positive.

Chapter 6: Customization and Integration ERP Systems: What's the Deal?

In Chapter 1, we introduced the module-based ERP integration model.

If you've done research on your own, you may have found other solutions that offer completely customized solutions.

Customization sounds like an excellent option,
however, for apparel ERP solutions,
THAT MAY NOT BE THE CASE.



The Trouble With Over-Customization

If you're spending a significant amount of money on an ERP solution, you want it to meet your needs. Because of this, customization may sound appealing. Why wouldn't it be a good fit to customize your software to get exactly what you're looking for?

The statistics sound even more promising: 90% of ERP implementations include at least a basic level of customization.

While a basic level of customization is to be expected — ERP solutions should be

branded to meet specific company needs — over-customization leads to trouble. Problems could include:

- **Added expenses:** It takes a lot of time and resources to program, test and customize code. This is a contributing reason why 57% of ERP projects exceed projected budgets.
- **Implementation delays:** Over-customization is a major reason why 57% of implementations take longer than expected.

More Common Areas of Simple Customization

Some customization is expected for a product to run smoothly without rewriting the interface from scratch. These include:

- Changes in the user interface to adapt the design of screens and dialogs for certain users or groups.
- Reports, documents and forms that are generated by ERP systems and are customized to include exactly what a client is looking for.
- Workflows — each business has a different process and sequence of events that require modification during implementation.

By selecting an ERP system that's designed for the apparel industry, you're already moving in the right direction. Small changes can be made to the system to reflect your needs in existing modules for specific functions, but fewer customizations will be required throughout the process, with a focus on minor configurations instead.

ERP Planning and Integration as a Solution

Instead of customizing systems from scratch or over-customizing existing systems, ERP integration may be a viable solution.

Instead of customizing systems from scratch, or over customizing existing systems,

ERP INTEGRATION MAY BE A VIABLE SOLUTION.



The process combines multiple systems or modules with each other to meet the specific needs of a business. Because this works with existing tools and modules, the need for customization is minimized, especially when working with providers who understand specific modules and third-party tools required for your industry.

By integrating existing modules and tools, less time is spent on customization and re-writing code, which saves costs and ensures easy upgrades in the future. The process leads to a longer-functioning enterprise resource planning system, which provides more value in the long-run.

Apparel ERP integration optimizes and centralizes business processes while ensuring a single vendor support team can handle any issues, which leads to increased growth potential and success.

Chapter 7: What Is ERP Implementation/ What Does It Look Like?

You've selected your software and provider. You have an idea of what the end-result will look like and your team is comfortable with moving forward. Ready for the ERP implementation process? Keep reading to learn more.

What Is ERP Implementation?

ERP implementation is the process of introducing the new software while phasing out existing processes.

Implementing ERP systems looks different depending on the project, but most implementations involve an on-site team with remote assistance. Generally, the process is managed by an internal staff or by a team brought in by the vendor.

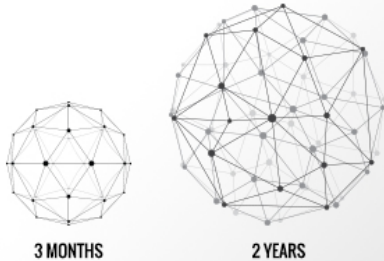
An ERP implementation methodology involves a series of phases that allow for a gradual, systematic transition in the evolution of your technology solutions. The implementation projects kicks off with an onsite operational review and analysis followed by system setup and configuration, initial conversation, system integration and modifications, training and conference room pilot and final conversation and "go live." This broad scope of services helps ensure a successful "go live," promotes continued user satisfaction and maximizes the long-term usefulness of the total system.

ERP software will be installed on-site, on your company's computers and servers. With an on-premise software solution, you have hands-on control over your hardware. You don't need to rely on an internet connection to access your ERP solution, and even though it requires a larger initial investment, it can be more cost-effective, since all the monitoring

and management services are performed by in-house staff.

Cloud-based solutions, on the other hand, are managed off-site by an ERP provider. This lowers up-front technology and implementation costs and allows hardware upgrades to be handled off-site, with fewer disruptions to existing workflows. With cloud-based solutions, companies can reduce or eliminate their data center altogether and provides a single point of contact and accountability for all hardware, operating system, software, monitoring application accessibility and database back-ups.

The timing of implementations varies depending upon the complexity of the project, but anywhere from three months to five years can be expected. To stay on track, it's best to determine a go-live date at the start so you can find out what's required to meet that date and take care of everything you can in advance.



The timing of ERP implementations varies depending upon the complexity of the project, however, anywhere from **3 months to 2 years** can be expected.

Common Challenges of ERP Implementation and Ways to Avoid Them

Like any business process, ERP implementations often have challenges. Below are a few of the more common issues, along with ways to avoid them:

- **Resistance to change:** When users are apprehensive, the process will be slower.

To overcome this, educate your team from the start. Share why you're making changes and answer any questions they may have. Education is key.

- **A lack of clear goals:** If you don't know what the software needs to do, you will likely need to add additional functionality as the implementation takes place. If these were not accounted-for from the start, there could be delays. Take the time to ask questions and fully understand the software you're selecting. Also, be transparent with your business to protect your investment.
- **Customization delays:** If more customization is needed than what is stated from the start, there will be delays. Just like setting clear goals, transparency is key.
- **Too many opinions:** While it's important to have input from key team members, one person should serve as the project liaison. By giving the vendor a single point of contact, there will be less confusion.
- **Customer impacts:** Even when the cut-over is scheduled after-hours, there may be a few minor inconveniences along the way. By understanding there may be some bumps in the road and letting customers know why they're taking place, you can mitigate the effects.

Your implementation will be an exciting time, but it could be stressful as well. Like all business ventures, preparation and flexibility are critical for success.

Chapter 8: Steps for a Successful ERP Implementation

You now have a better idea of the **benefits of ERP systems**, what implementation looks like and how to overcome common hurdles that may arise. Now it's time to put it all into action.

Steps to a Successful Implementation for Apparel ERP Software

To ensure your apparel ERP software implementation is successful, follow these steps:

1. Plan Strategically

Remember — effective planning will lead to a smoother process. During this phase, take the time to assign an internal team as directed by your vendor. Work with the vendor to set objectives and to develop a timeline/project plan.

2. Review the Software and Procedures

Get to know the capabilities of the software by taking part in all possible demos and gathering as much information as you can. During this time, become familiar with the processes that will change within your business and what they will look like at the end.

3. Work With the Data

What data will you need to provide for the implementation? You'll need to find that out, as well as in what format the data should be in. If clean-up is needed before handing it off, take the time to complete this up-front.

Once you pass the data to the vendor, make yourself available to handle needs as they arise. This is a major aspect of your implementation.

4. Enter the Testing Phase

Your software vendor, along with your internal team, will test the new system to be sure it's ready to go. In the beginning, this will mean working with test data and then, eventually, with live data during a final test.

5. Train Your Staff

Your employees will need to be trained on the new system in-house. Be prepared by setting up workstations the trainer can use to ensure all end-users are ready for the go-live.

During this time, be patient and be prepared for questions, pushback and frustrations — they all come with the process.

6. Get Ready to Go Live

Going live can be smooth, but it might not be seamless. Pick a date that's not during the busiest time of the year and have your best employees scheduled for the beginning phases.

If possible, make customers aware of the change to alleviate any frustrations.

7. Evaluate How It Went

As the go-live takes place, take notes about any issues that arise. Ask questions when you

have them and practice patience. Remember — the final outcome will be well worth it.

Going Live With Your New ERP System

Are you ready to go live with your new ERP system? Use the checklist below as a guide:

- All data has been entered/sorted appropriately.
- Physical inventory is complete and matches the system inventory.
- All known transition questions and issues have been addressed with thorough training.
- All processes have been tested to the extent that it's possible without going live.
- Training is finished — employees who have caught on quickly and are most knowledgeable have been identified and are prepared to provide help when possible.

If your checklist is complete, it's time to schedule a go-live date. Work with your vendor to select a go-live date during a slower period. Be sure the vendor will be on-site and that assistance is available for all staff members.

If you've completed the necessary steps, you may have jitters — but remember, you're prepared. It's time to jump in and move forward. As the go-live unfolds, be sure to keep a clear line of communication open between the team the vendor has put in place and project leaders within your company. Evaluate at the end of day one and at regular intervals after that.

As changes and modifications come up that weren't part of the original plan, understand that they are a part of the process and will help make your system the best it can be.

Chapter 9/Conclusion: ERP for the Apparel Industry – Ready to Go?

ERP doesn't have to be a term that strikes fear. It doesn't have to be intimidating. Instead, it can be a way to take your apparel company to the next level. It can enhance your business and allow it to grow in ways that just aren't possible using standard or dated software solutions.

Step back and reflect on your current processes. What are your key pain points? Where do you see unnecessary hours and labor spent? Is there room for improvement through automation? Are you ready to make a change?

If your answer is "yes," here's how we can help you.

Apparel ERP Software Solutions for Distribution and Manufacturing

We specialize in providing apparel ERP software solutions for distributors and manufacturers. We work with businesses like yours day in and day out. We understand the problems you face and we know how to alleviate them. As a leader in ERP solutions for the apparel industry, we're ready to tackle even the most difficult project.



As a leader in ERP solutions for the apparel industry, we're ready to tackle even **the most difficult project.**

Throughout this guide, we've touched on many points. You've received insight into what an upgrade or complete makeover of your current systems would look like. You know how to find the solution that's best for you. You understand the signs that you may be ready for something new and you know how important it is to work with a vendor who understands your industry.

You're more knowledgeable about ERP systems than when you started reading the guide and we hope you feel more confident about moving forward with us.

If you still have questions, that's okay — it's a big decision. We're here to partner with you through it. We know your business is important to you, which is why it's important to us, too. **Contact FDM4 today to set up a demo**, to ask questions or to get started on taking your business to the next level.

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