LS Retail
an **aptos** company

7

tips

to successfully implement cloud ERP and management software

So you've decided to move to a cloud-based ERP and business management system. Smart decision!

Cloud-based software has become so popular among businesses of all types for many valid reasons: it's always automatically up to date (which means you can always use the latest functionality without ever having to go through an upgrade project again), and your ERP vendor, rather than your IT team, takes care of hosting the software and managing security, data backups, and updates. It's also much safer than in-house software, and at a much lower price. For example, the cloud-based, or software as a service (SaaS) version of LS Central, being hosted on the highly secure, intelligent Microsoft cloud, benefits of all the investments Microsoft has put into its cloud business.

Although you know that moving to the cloud is a smart step, you may have concerns about undertaking your first cloud-based ERP implementation.

No need for worries!

In terms of implementation, cloud-based software reduces both costs and timeline compared to traditional on-premises ERP. While you still have to go through some of the typical steps of an ERP implementation, your team will have **much more time to focus on other key steps** such as data migration, redesigning business processes and training employees.

On-premises ERP

Traditional on-premises ERP is installed on your servers and hardware. Your team needs to take care of updates, upgrades, and security.

Cloud (SaaS) ERP

Cloud-based software is not installed on your hardware. You can access the software "as a service", that is by logging into it. It updates automatically, and security is managed by the ERP provider.

Here are seven key tips from the LS Retail team of cloud experts to ensure your project is successful.

1. **Get the executive team on board with clear goals and plans**

2. **Create a strong project team**

3. **Focus on low complexity**

4. **Work on change management**

5. **Train your people**

6. **Test and re-test**

7. **Adapt and improve**

1 Get the executive team on board with clear goals and plans

Build a clear business case, and show it to the key stakeholders in your company. If you cannot get your key executives on board with the project, you probably need to step back and reassess whether

a) The way you measure success matches the rest of your organization

b) You are communicating the benefits the right way.

Before you get started on the project, set a clear definition of what **key business benefits** your organization expects to get from the ERP implementation. Once the steering team agrees on the goals, you can move onto the next step, and develop a **plan** to achieve them. This is also the right moment to set some metrics and KPIs, so you can track your progress along the way.

"Get the buy-in from all stakeholders from the start, and make sure that the goals, objectives and expected end results of the project are clear and communicated to all parties involved. It never pays off to sell a dream you can't deliver on."

Eric Miller
Regional Director, LS Retail

2 Create a strong project team

A successful implementation requires a **committed project team** to steer it.
To create the ideal team, select people who:

Belong to several departments within the company. An ERP change affects everyone in the organization, and it will pay off to have users with different needs and daily routines in the team.

Have different **expertise** and skillsets.

Are **willing** and eager to take on a new challenge.

Have an **innovative** approach and are open to try new solutions. A new ERP may require you to change your workflows in order to better reach your goals.

Are **respected** by their peers.

Make sure you prepare your team thoroughly. They will need to

Have a clear understanding of the project and be confident in its value.

Be informed of all aspects of the process in advance.

Understand their duties, responsibilities, and role at each step of the process.

Believe in the project. Confidence and enthusiasm are key for success.

3 Focus on low complexity

Your on-premises system may have been custom designed, and integrated to a multitude of separate software solutions. When you move to the cloud you need to **change your mindset**, and focus on **reducing complexity** as much as you can. This means you'll need to **limit custom and integrated solutions to the bare minimum**. This simplification will pay off in the long run: you'll reduce maintenance and overhead, improve usability, and simplify future updates.

By reducing customizations, you may have to make compromises on ideal functionality. However, you need to consider that you are moving to a much more modern solution than your old one, and that when you use SaaS you will **always be on the latest version** – which means **that more functionality will be added** to the software even after you have implemented it. When you review your new ERP and business software versus your requirements, look at its features and technologies, also focusing on **what's on the roadmap**.

The rule of low complexity also applies to the **data migration** process. You probably don't need to move all your old data to the new system. This is the right time to cleanse your data, and **get rid of what's not necessary**.

4 Work on change management

Employees are often only involved at the end of a new implementation project. However, **engaging staff late seldom brings effective results**. Instead, it's common for businesses to encounter poor adoption rates, low acceptance and strong pushback. To avoid this risk, you need to focus on change management from the start. Develop a clear plan, and specify how you intend to **keep the information flowing** among all stakeholders – which includes all relevant users.

Sven Vesik, Development Director at construction materials retailer [Optimera Estonia](#), says that from his experience, keeping all parties up to date contributes to the success of an ERP implementation. "All company employees must have a clear understanding as to **why** the changes are implemented, and **what good** they will bring. Then people will be more inclined to go along with the changes, and they will have **more tolerance for the workload increase** during the transition period," he told us.

Explain from the start what the new software will bring and what changes it will require from everyone, and keep everyone up to date on where you are in the process: you'll be less likely to meet resistance when it's time to go live.

5 Train your people
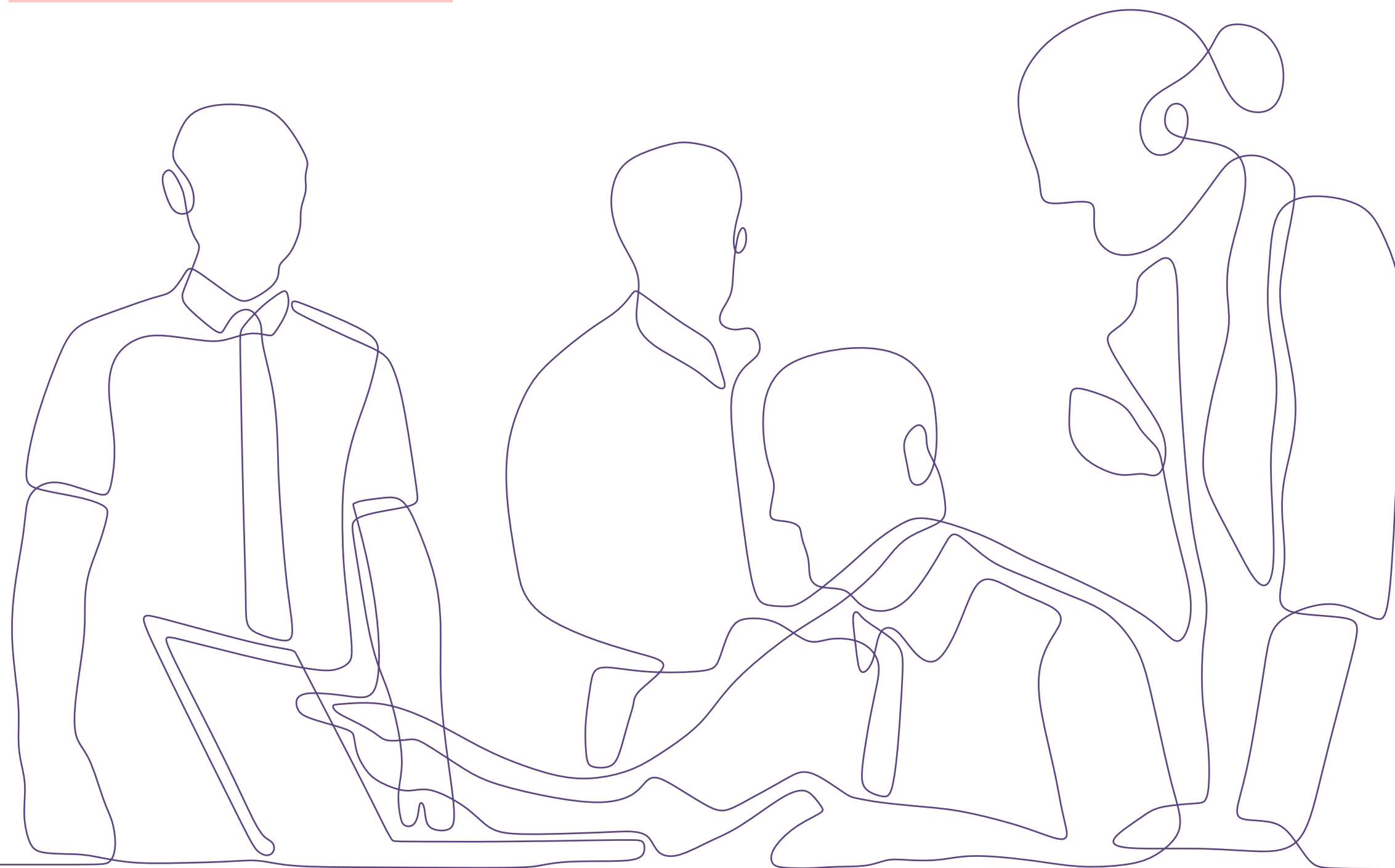
Moving to a new system always requires open-mindedness. The new software may have a different structure to handle data, and a different logic, and new ways to do usual tasks. Your staff may need to alter some of their routines and workflows – and not everyone will be excited about the change.

To prevent and limit resistance, create a **robust training plan**, focusing on how the **key business processes** in each key department will run on the new solution. Concentrate on **how** your employees can use the system to **achieve specific goals** rather than going into technical details (or, worse, screen-to-screen comparisons) of how the new system differs from the old one, and how much they'll have to change their habits.

6 Test and re-test

System testing is a fundamental step in any implementation. **The more accurate your tests, the likelier you are to achieve a successful implementation**. To minimize manual work and improve the accuracy of your tests, set up automations. "Always running the same automated tests will lead to higher accuracy than doing manual test" is the advice of Gua Olafsdottir, Product Director and Development Manager at LS Retail.

For effective testing:

Define the scope (both inputs and expected results) for each test case beforehand

Make your test environment as close to a real implementation as possible

Document what areas need attention

Review results versus expectations

Fix, adjust, and re-test.

7 Adapt and improve

It's best to **hold customizations** until after you have used the solution in a live environment. At that point, once your pilot store is live, you will have practical knowledge of **how** you are effectively using your new solution, **what** you still need, and **where** the gaps are exactly.

This is the moment to analyze the fit, and decide what should be adapted and where you may need to take a different direction. *"What was deemed to be the best approach initially may need to change – this might even happen after the pilot is completed. I have seen companies that went through multiple pilots before finding the right balance. It's a learning process, and it's never over,"* says Eric Miller, Regional Director at LS Retail.

"Many companies find the idea of a major ERP (or similar) implementation so daunting that they will stick to outdated technology for as long as they can, even if they are wasting time with manual work and losing competitiveness. The truth is, there is never a perfect time for a software update – the time just must be made."

Gunnar Ingimundarson
Chief Consulting Officer, LS Retail

Making a successful transition

If you have well-defined goals and follow best practices, the transition to a cloud-based ERP and business management software can be incredibly smooth. And after you have moved to SaaS, it'll all be easy sailing: you **won't have to worry about updates, upgrades or out-of-date integrations. Never again.** Imagine that!

About LS Retail
LS Retail is a world-leading provider of business management software solutions for retail, hospitality, food service and forecourt businesses of all sizes. Our unified commerce management systems power thousands of fashion boutiques, electronics stores, furniture giants, duty free chains, restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, gas stations, convenience stores and more.

Any questions? Contact our experts

http://www.lsretail.com/

You are not alone

Do you need guidance on how to move to SaaS software?

Are you using an on-premises version of LS Central and would like to move to the cloud?

Get in touch:
we can help make the transition easy and quick.