

Going to the Dentist: Regular Maintenance Avoids a Reimplementation

an eprentise white paper



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When is the last time you went to the dentist? Do you stick to a rigid 6-month visit cycle? Did you need braces when you were younger to manage your growing, changing teeth? Just as with your teeth, regular maintenance of your Oracle® E-Business Suite (EBS) avoids much pain. You can avoid having to replace or reimplement, extend the life, and reduce the total cost of ownership of your EBS by evaluating and changing those areas that no longer align with your growing, changing business. What does your maintenance schedule look like? How long will your ERP system last until it needs to be replaced?

Getting Braces and Cleaning Teeth: Focus on Alignment

As you grow, your mouth changes, and sometimes braces are required to re-align your teeth to each other and to your mouth as a whole. Without them, many people would experience uncomfortable crowding problems that create difficult places to reach and clean. Routine trips to the dentist for a cleaning help to eliminate plaque, decrease the probability of developing cavities, and increase the chance of extending the functionality of your teeth.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems like Oracle EBS are similar. It is often necessary to change your original configurations to re-align your EBS to keep it in an ongoing position to support a changing business. It is also necessary to perform routine maintenance to eliminate data and structures that introduce redundancy or bad data and make running your business more complex. Routine maintenance is one of the highest contributors to the total cost of ownership (TCO) of an ERP system and must be planned for and factored into the initial purchasing decision. You have a few choices; either you can hire consultants to set up new configurations to make changes (if those are changes that Oracle allows), you can use software tools to update your existing system, or you can do nothing and wait until you need a major overhaul because you are no longer getting value out of your EBS.

Just like your teeth, in order to maximize the value of EBS, you need to build in a regular cycle of evaluating and updating your environment, your configuration, and your data to continually re-align your systems. You would not think of running a mission-critical system on hardware or an operating system that you haven't updated in 10 or 20 years. There is no reason to think that you can continue to run your EBS efficiently without updating your data. Whether it is redesigning your chart of accounts, consolidating database instances, or merging or splitting up operating units, you need to evaluate how well your current configuration supports your business. If your current setup is a barrier to getting the right information, or if it introduces complexities like maintaining thousands of spreadsheets or manually adjusting and consolidating entries to reconcile different parts of the business, then you are spending time and money that is not value-added. An on-going remodeling of your EBS is critical to the success of your business by providing assurance that end users will get maximum productivity and that management will improve business value, reduce TCO, and minimize business risk from use of the system.

The Root Canal: Ignorance is not bliss

It's hard to build a correlation between flossing your teeth every day and needing root canal work. We all think that it's ok to miss a day or two here and there and that we can make up for it later. The consequences are small. But if you miss too many days, miss a cleaning, or don't wear your night braces, eventually you will have cavities or need more extensive dental work. Unattended plaque causes your

teeth to decay, plain and simple. If you ignore the problems for too long, you might end up having to endure painful surgery due to a root canal.

Business changes that fail to be correctly addressed within the ERP system pose similar threats. It is hard to build an independent value case for just changing the dates on a calendar or moving a legal entity from one set of books to another. It is common to deal with changing business processes by resorting to other activities including spreadsheets, new data warehouse dimensions and cubes, additional systems, or by creating customizations and enhancements without dealing with the root cause of inconsistent information or data that no longer meets the business requirements. Reports that were taken straight from the ERP system for the first few years after the initial implementation are no longer accurate because too much of the information resides outside of the system. The in-system data gets put through the gauntlet of multi-departmental spreadsheets that touch a variety of employees who aren't always aware of changes made by others. Additionally, the spreadsheets have hundreds or thousands of internal cell references, each carrying the burden of accuracy else becoming a multiplicand of the incorrectness of the data. At the extreme, entirely new homegrown systems are created and custom-programmed to handle extracts and imports of data that should have never left the original system in the first place. There is a lack of governance, silos of information, and an ERP system that becomes unmanageable, costs a lot to maintain, and doesn't provide value.

If these band-aid approaches are ignored, the ERP system is on a dead-end path for a root canal. Major projects like data migrations and custom third-party integrations are the result of ignoring the root of the problem, and the TCO of ERP runs rampant in the form of additional hardware and software licenses required to integrate with the system, decreased user utilization, and skyrocketing personnel expenses.

Without remodeling and re-aligning your EBS on an ongoing basis, it is much harder to derive value from the seamless operations ERP systems were designed to support. Some companies have so much complexity in their existing EBS and the surrounding work-arounds that it makes it difficult to upgrade to the next major release of the application software. An ongoing evaluation of the application portfolio and a look to simplify the corresponding operations is required on a regular basis to continually re-align configurations and support the changing operations of the enterprise. Ignoring the potential hazards you might run into because of poor ERP lifecycle management and lack of governance and control has far worse consequences than missing a dentist appointment.

Resorting to Dentures: What once was functional becomes a legacy

In some cases, the teeth have degraded to the point that they are unable to perform their function, and dentures are used as a replacement to restore functionality to the mouth. Similar to the need for dentures, once an ERP system no longer performs the function of running the business, it needs to be retired. The only option for many companies who have not made continuous improvements to their EBS is to start from scratch and reimplement or set up new ledgers, legal entities, and operating units and leave the history behind. That is an expensive, time-consuming process, often costing millions of dollars and more than a year of effort. It adds to the total cost of ownership, but doesn't add value, and even then, there is no guarantee that the reimplemented system will continue to change and meet the business needs without any further on-going re-alignment. If the company needs access to the historical data in the original system but opts not to bring it over in its entirety to the new system or new structures, the obsolete instance is left "sun-setting" as a modern legacy system. Even after a reimplementation, changes

to the system and its configurations are necessary if the data is to correctly represent the business and its processes. There is no way around it.

A common misconception companies have is moving from legacy EBS systems to cloud in order to become more functional. Although moving to the cloud does have advantages and it is practice eprentise recommends, it is often the case that there are other business challenges that simply will not be solved by doing so. Eprentise aims to provide solutions to change these existing legacy systems in order to improve functionality before moving on from Oracle EBS.

Conclusion

Sadly, both teeth and ERP systems meet their end at some point – when that occurs depends on the care taken to manage changes that happened along the way. Improvements in dental care over the last 75 years have been drastic. In 1945, it was not common for a 65-year old to still have a mouth full of teeth, while many today do.

We are fortunate to have seen similar improvements in enterprise application technology. It is now possible to incorporate regular change into your EBS environment and extend the life of your systems. An extended usable life reduces the overall cost of ownership and makes your users more productive. If you can operate on a continuous change model for your ERP system, then you will be able to take advantage of new opportunities, reduce complexity, and take advantage of new functionality available in new application releases. Making changes to an existing EBS instance provides more functionality, a higher value, and puts the power to manage a changing business where it should be – in the hands of the business itself.

Curious?

For more information, please call **eprentise** at **1.888.943.5363** or visit **www.eprentise.com**.



About eprentise

eprentise provides transformation software products that allow growing companies to make their Oracle® E-Business Suite (EBS) systems agile enough to support changing business requirements, avoid a reimplementation and lower the total cost of ownership of enterprise resource planning (ERP). While enabling real-time access to complete, consistent and correct data across the enterprise, **eprentise** software is able to consolidate multiple production instances, change existing configurations such as charts of accounts and calendars, and merge, split or move sets of books, operating units, legal entities, business groups and inventory organizations.