

# HORIZON

## ACCELERATING ERP SUCCESS

STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT & IMPLEMENTATION IN  
THE CLOUD ERA



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## INTRODUCTION

ERP systems are central to modern business infrastructure, yet over **55% of ERP projects fail** to deliver on time, budget, or promised value.

With pressure mounting from boards and stakeholders, **organisations must move beyond outdated selection models** and embrace a modern, agile procurement process that aligns platforms and partners to business outcomes.

This whitepaper synthesises practitioner insights from Melanie Humphries (CEO) and Natascha Polderman (Senior Consultant), two seasoned ERP procurement leaders focusing on **how to buy ERP smarter, avoid common pit falls, and deliver value faster.**

"55% to 75% of ERP implementation projects fail to meet their objectives—whether measured in terms of cost, timelines, functionality, or expected business benefits."

**Gartner 2025**

# THE C-SUITE PERSPECTIVE

## STRATEGY OVER SOFTWARE

**Today's ERP projects are increasingly led from the top.**

The appetite for digital transformation has returned, and boards are excited again, but they're also cautious. This renewed interest comes from a belief that modern ERP systems, particularly cloud-native platforms, can finally deliver the automation, insight, and agility that businesses have been promised for years.

**But expectations have changed.**

Executives want ROI in **months, not years**. CFOs and COOs, not just CIOs, are demanding systems that can scale, comply with regulatory demands, and integrate seamlessly with their existing data stack.

**One common misstep** is that too many organisations jump straight to choosing a platform before understanding what business problems they're solving.

Instead of leading with a technical RFP, **successful projects start with a business-led "North Star"**-a shared understanding of what success looks like, what's broken today, and what risks must be mitigated.



# COMMON PITFALLS

## WHAT GOES WRONG AND WHY

Despite new technologies and better tooling, many **ERP implementations still fail** due to avoidable missteps.

There are a handful of **key recurring mistakes** and challenges observed across the industry, these issues typically emerge early during the procurement phase and compound over time.



### 1. Choosing a Platform Too Early

Many companies believe that selecting a platform is the first step, however, in reality at this stage organisations are often not ready.

Natascha and Melanie have seen this many times **“If you don’t know the outcome you’re driving toward, any platform will look good in a sales demo.”**

The result? Features are purchased that don’t align with the organisation’s real needs, and delivery becomes a game of chasing scope rather than achieving value.

The right approach starts with business alignment.

**“You need to know why you’re buying ERP-not just what you’re buying.”**

## 2. Misjudging the Role of the Implementation Partner

In traditional models, the platform and partner are often sourced together, but as often experienced by the consultants at Horizon 7, this can create a **false sense of security**.

Each should be approached as two distinct decisions.

**The platform is the foundation, but the partner builds the house.**

The partner must bring more than just manpower. They must:

- Understand your industry
- Bring accelerators and tools tailored to your platform
- Fit culturally with your team
- And commit to outcomes, not just hours.

## 3. Running a Slow, Paper-Heavy Selection Process

Shockingly many procurement processes remain outdated and **unfit for purpose**, organisations are still spending 6 to 12 months gathering requirements, running RFPs, and reviewing slide decks, only to discover that the original business need has shifted.

With the **introduction of AI** within the bidding process, buyers are often not evaluating real delivery capability but who can write the slickest generic proposal, designed to score maximum evaluation points.

# BEYOND TRADITIONAL PROCUREMENT

## AGILE ERP SOURCING (S-FAST®)

Cue Horizon 7 and our agile sourcing methodology **S-FAST®**, developed by our team of procurement practitioners and SMEs, **S-FAST®** sets the standard for the modern way to source technology.

Instead of relying on paperwork, **S-FAST®** champions live, sprint-based evaluation models focused on real demos, workshops, and joint planning.

This approach not only speeds up procurement (**typically under 20 weeks**) but also engages internal stakeholders meaningfully.

Traditional ERP procurement methods typically centred on long-form RFPs, static scoring metrics, and months of paperwork, **are increasingly unfit for today's fast-moving digital agendas.**

These legacy approaches often create more confusion than clarity, they prioritise documentation over dialogue, theoretical fit over practical delivery, and process over progress. The result?

**Stalled decisions, underwhelming implementations, and mismatched expectations.**

**S-FAST®** replaces traditional, waterfall-style selection with an iterative, insight-driven model that aligns executives, accelerates platform and partner decisions, and builds momentum before contracts are even signed.



Each module of the **S-FAST®** methodology is anchored by internal collaboration and external engagement and desired outcomes, done in short, structured bursts:

1

## DEFINE THE NORTH STAR

Align business and technology leadership around key objectives.

- What does **success** look like?
- What **risks** must we avoid?
- What do we **need** from our platform and partner?

2

## SELECT THE IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER

Only evaluate partners authorised or experienced with the shortlisted platforms.

- Run live **workshops**.
- Speak to **references**.
- Ask how they handle **risk**.
- Finalise **commercials alongside delivery planning**.

3

## EVALUATE PLATFORMS

Invite a small number of suppliers to participate in structured demos based on real business scenarios.

Don't ask for 300 line requirement responses, ask to see how they solve a particular workflow or compliance challenge.

**Begin commercial conversations early.**

4

## SIGN ALIGNED CONTRACTS

Finalise both contracts (platform + implementation) with **clear success metrics** and **mutual accountability**.

Agree on a phased roadmap for delivery.

# DELIVERING VALUE FASTER FROM BLUEPRINT TO BUSINESS BENEFIT

Too often, **ERP implementations are treated like a marathon** with an ambiguous finish line somewhere years down the road.

The reality, however, is that modern businesses cannot afford long timelines, delayed ROI, or stalled momentum - **speed to value** is now a core executive expectation.



Gone are the days when ERP programs could spend 18 months in design before a single module went live.

**Executives are asking when they'll see results** before they've even signed the contract and this pressure is not just about impatience, it's about survival.

Market volatility, shifting regulations, and competitive pressure mean **organisations need tangible benefits early** to justify the investment and keep stakeholders engaged.

But delivering faster doesn't mean rushing. It means being more deliberate, focused, and agile in how implementation is approached. **Removing waste!**

Importantly, this approach also relies on tight collaboration between business and delivery teams.

The IT team can't do this alone; **business ownership is required from day one.**

There are practical ways organisations can shift from blueprint to business benefit quickly without cutting corners or compromising long-term scalability.

- **Deploy in phases**

Don't wait for a monolithic go live. Start with finance or procurement modules and show early success.

- **Use what's available**

Don't over configure. Partners often have accelerators and preconfigured templates, use them to your advantage.

- **Get the business involved early**

Assign product owners from the business side. Train users before go-live and build change champions across teams.

Perhaps most importantly, fund post-go-live optimisation.

**The project doesn't end when the system goes live - it begins.**

Users will need support, iteration, and improvement.



# AI, AUTOMATION & ERP HYPE

ERP marketing has evolved fast, **Cloud, AI, machine learning, and intelligent automation are front and centre** in supplier pitches but be warned against getting distracted.

To cut through the hype:

- **Ask suppliers for live demos** using your data or your processes – not generic walkthroughs.
- **Don't judge a demo on polish** - judge it on relevance and challenge claims with real scenarios and test cases.
- **Focus on delivery credibility** over slick marketing.

# A SMARTER WAY FORWARD

**ERP procurement is no longer about ticking boxes** on feature lists or choosing the most familiar supplier.

It's about **clarity of purpose, agility in selection, and discipline in execution.**

**Organisations that succeed treat ERP as a business transformation** and not just a tech refresh. They define what outcomes matter most, select platforms that support those outcomes, and engage implementation partners who can deliver on time, in scope, and with measurable impact.

## FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Start with the 'why?', not the platform.
- Break down procurement into fast, focused sprints.
- Select a partner that fits your culture and based on delivery strength, not just reputation.
- Keep the process lean, focused, and business led
- Ensure executive sponsorship and broad internal alignment.



**IT'S NOT ABOUT PICKING THE SHINIEST TOOL.**

IT'S ABOUT CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOL, AND THE RIGHT PEOPLE, TO  
GET THE JOB DONE.

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