BELLWETHER

A **BLYTHECO** MAGAZINE

BESTBATH
PRESIDENT **TAMMY HARRIS**
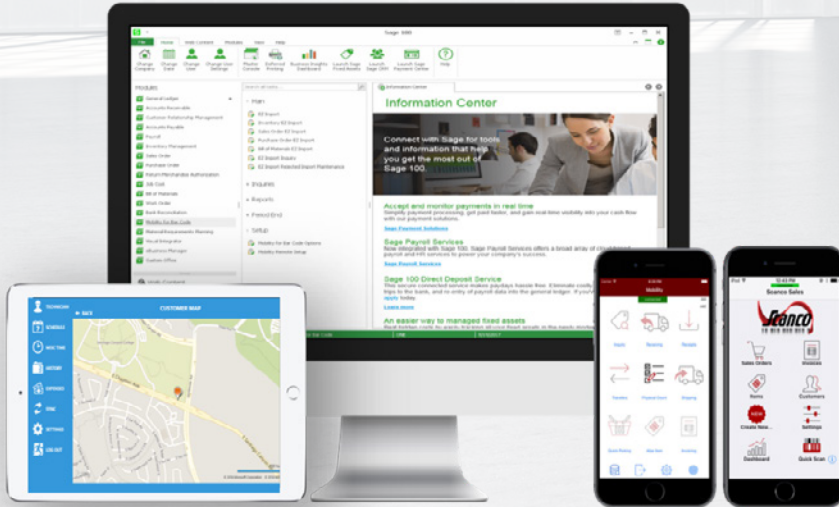## TALKS **TRANSFORMATION**

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THE
TRANSFORMATION
GUIDE

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MEET THE TEAM

The ragtag group of people who make this magazine possible. Opinions are their own.

Jessica Valenzuela
Editor-in-Chief

While it's no guarantee, Jessica is (mostly) certain 2018 is the year the boys in Dodger blue will bring that World Series trophy back home to Los Angeles. Her obsession for all things baseball is rivaled only by her love for dogs—she currently has four…so far.

Samantha Goniea
Content & Advertising

A self-proclaimed nerd who dabbles in bold coffee and traveling the globe, Sam often relishes in the idea of uncovering newfound places. She found this stream, claimed it as her own, and the rest was history. Sam, Queen of Streams and Marshes.

Greg Went
Content & Advertising

As the resident marketing veteran at Blytheco (18 years and counting), Greg is full of superb ideas. For example, take his latest outing to SunTrust Park to see the Braves. He figures the best way to catch a foul ball is to out-mitt the competition. Ingenuity!

Jennifer Vo
Art Director

Sporting a wicked sun hat, Jennifer recently schlepped the family to San Diego's LEGOLAND for some fun in the sun. Rollecoasters provided cheap thrills, but it was building a functional robot out of LEGO bricks that truly kickstarted the family vacation into high gear.

Kyleena Harper
Editor

On the off chance Kyleena isn't busy writing anything and everything, she takes to the high seas to pillage and plunder for treasure. So far she hasn't found any gold doubloons yet, but that doesn't mean she's going to stop trying. Her persistence is bound to pay off.

Brooks Huber
Content Manager

When temperatures reached critical mass—triple digits here in Southern California—cooling off became top priority. Seeking refuge from the heat, Brooks decided dogs know best. Using Jack's fluff as a pillow, the shady side of the house transcended into a welcoming napping spot.

Brooke Sapp
Solutions Coordinator

Contrary to not-so-popular belief, Brooke's professional looking headshot is not the result of stock photography. Windswept hair and a dashing Colgate smile come standard for this girl, who rounds it all off with 6-inch heels. Stop making us look bad, Brooke!

> "The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."
>
> — Phil Jackson

Six Advancements in
AI Machine-Learning
Worth Noting

by Brooks Huber

When artificial intelligence collides with tried-and-true business practices, it's only natural to feel apprehensive. After all, acceptance of AI is a mixed bag. Tech-savvy followers openly embrace the impact AI is poised to make on our daily work and personal lives, whereas others grimace at AI's advancements with nervous trepidation. Regardless of what side of the fence you land on, AI has already infiltrated the workforce in shades—and it's only gaining traction.

Need further proof? At a recent "Microsoft Inspire" event, Satya Nadella—the tech conglomerate's CEO—stated advancements in AI have so far been "pretty stunning," only to drive the point home that the best is yet to come. Every day new AI announcements arrive in waves, with veteran companies and startups vigorously competing for the next big breakthrough in AI. Lucky for you, we've weeded through the many offerings. We've handpicked six ways AI aims to shake things up for machine-learning in the process.

1. Smarter Sales Process

Clari, based out of Sunnyvale, California, is seeking to obtain a more streamlined approach to the way companies analyze sales data. This will, in turn, net a more productive process to closing deals faster. How exactly? Using AI, Clari applies a software layer that sits on top of Salesforce and/or Microsoft Dynamics. This AI-driven layer then proceeds to develop a process that predicts and prescripts insight. Once Clari analyzes the data, it's capable of comparing deals and observing sales histories for more accurate reporting. Most intriguing of all, Clari recommends actions to help representatives be more productive and close deals faster.

2. Better Data Collecting

Anyone who crunches numbers, analyzes data, or creates arduous spreadsheets can attest that something, somewhere, inevitably slips through the cracks. CognitiveScale, based in Austin, Texas, aims to fill those cracks. How? By preventing them from occurring in the first place. CognitiveScale implements machine learning, or a "cognitive" computing layer, which analyzes all data that's fed through a company. This even includes the so-called dark data, or data that usually goes uncollected and unanalyzed. That way, nothing falls through the cracks, and companies will be able to get the full magnitude of their production.

3. Advanced Record Keeping

Gong.jo, based out of San Mateo, California, has been a major player in the AI game since 2016. Their SaaS-based "Conversation Intelligence" platform is bound to shake things up for those in customer service and sales. Not only does the platform automatically record calls and video conferences, it also fully transcribes them. Who wouldn't want an accurate written account of all that transpired? But that's not all. After the transcription is complete, the platform taps into its AI software brain to analyze the data (hundreds of parameters, mind you) and produce statistics that would normally fall by the wayside.

4. More Efficient Data Entry

Why pester your sales team with the laborious task of manually inputting a slew of administrative work directly after speaking with a client or landing a sale? Data entry slows down the sales process and ultimately steals time that can be better served facing clients or chasing leads. SalesDirector.ai aims to eliminate the data entry headache almost entirely. By working in conjunction with Salesforce, NetSuite, and Microsoft Dynamics, SalesDirector.ai layers over these applications to automate the deal pipeline with optimal forecasting and fill in that nettlesome paperwork.

5. AI Building Blocks

Manifesting AI-based principles in the workforce is the easy part; building the actual infrastructure is where things get tricky. Luckily DataRobot, based out of Boston, Massachusetts, has a solid solution. In a world where data wizards (scientists) are scarce, DataRobot uses AI principles to help existing scientists build and deploy predictive analytics faster than ever. The platform builds upon the knowledge, experience, and best practices to help fill in the code-building gaps. DataRobot also scours through millions of possible combinations of algorithms to ultimately deliver the best possible data sets and predictive targets for companies—deployed in the cloud or on-premises.

6. Have it Your Way

Imagine a software company that works directly with your organization to build customized applications specifically tailored for your businesses' immediate needs. Now imagine that same infrastructure is endowed with advanced artificial intelligence. Sound like an episode of Black Mirror? Element AI, based out of Montreal, narrows the gap between real life and science fiction by applying these principles to companies looking to shake things up. Through their offerings, Element AI enables enterprises to quickly deploy intelligent-based apps without the need to recruit internal AI teams, saving money and resources in the process. It's a win/win.

Parting Thoughts

It's safe to ignore Hollywood's overglamified interpretation of artificial intelligence for now. Industry experts are quick to defuse the notion that machines will take over the workforce—a common fear among blue collar workers. Granted, there will still be structural changes—it's unavoidable—but machine learning will redesign rather than replace good ol' fashioned work.

About the Author

Brooks Huber is particularly fond of all tech-related matters and news appearing in the business and entertainment industry, which he habitually "geeks out on." His words, not ours. When not aspiring to consume all that media, he's busy creating marketing materials for the Blytheco brand as the Content Marketing Manager. Connect with Brooks on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/brookshuber.

Your Guide to CMS
What It Is and Why You Need One

by Samantha Goniea

In the finance realm, we are no stranger to acronyms. But, there is one acronym rapidly gaining market traction that needs to be added to your vocabulary: CMS. CMS, or Content Management System, is a web platform or software that allows you to easily create, edit, and publish content to a website or blog without advanced coding or HTML knowledge. In today's competitive market, a good website is crucial to your success. Unfortunately, many businesses have relied on the "set it and forget it model" with their sites due to costs or lack of resources. The reality is, if your website is not working for you, then it's working against you.

This is a mobile world. It is estimated that in 2018, shoppers will spend upward of $400 billion online. It is common for consumers to do their research, evaluate potential product purchases, and make shopping decisions right from their mobile devices. Your website is essentially your first impression with these potential buyers, and a good website could be the difference in a sale. In addition to staying in front of your customer, there are also plenty of other advantages of having a CMS platform:

- Reduce reliance on coders, developers and/or marketing firms.
- Save substantial time, money, and effort on web-related updates and content changes.
- Drag and drop functionality and web apps allow you to become a website expert.
- Easily modify the look and feel of your website to keep up with trends and changes in technology.
- Browse thousands of pre-designed themes, templates, and widgets to create the exact look and feel you want for your site and change them with the click of a button.
- Add eCommerce functionality, credit card processing, or even customer service functionality for thousands of dollars less than a standard site.
- Create responsive layouts and mobile friendly websites with the click of a button.

What are some popular CMS options?

- Drupal
- Joomla
- Magento
- Shopify
- Squarespace
- Wix
- WooCommerce
- WordPress

Tips, Tricks, and Items to Consider

Take a test drive—most modern CMS platforms allow a free trial run before you commit. These trials range from 2 weeks to 30 days and allow you to test the editing functions, browse templates, explore apps, as well as add your own photos, logos, and content.

For ERP Integrations, explore third-party connectors, integrations, and shopping carts available to you before you commit. Be sure that the data gathered on the website can be easily transferred into your accounting software. Customer orders, sales orders, and inquiries are crucial to your day to day. Make sure the platform you select is compatible with your accounting platforms to reduce manual efforts down the road.

Although a majority of design work can be done in house by your team, it never hurts to get a second set of eyes on these projects to ensure ease of use and good design execution. There are plenty of freelance designers and marketing resources who can step in to help as needed for a fraction of the cost of developers and coders. There are also plenty of free YouTube tutorials and online resources available to you should you need assistance.

Take your website into the 21st century with a modern CMS; increase your sales potential, save time, reduce efforts, and (most of all) save money. If you have questions or would like to talk through your options, feel free to reach out to Samantha Goniea at 949-583-9500 x1168 or samantha@blytheco.com.

About the Author

Samantha has been working with Blytheco for over 4 years with a sole focus of helping to better serve the clients. With over 8 years of marketing knowledge and experience working with start-ups & small businesses, she's able to generate content that is both informative and relevant. She is passionate about helping growing companies reach their business goals through the use of proper software and processes. Connect with Samantha on LinkedIn at https://www.linkedin.com/in/samanthagoniea.

HAVING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY TO

CAPTURE MARKETING DATA

by Jessica Valenzuela

The importance of data is not limited to any one team in an organization. However, the need to gather, analyze, digest, and use data informs everything marketers do and is now much easier to come by. Most marketing platforms and channels have individual analytics platforms built directly into the software program itself. KPI dashboards are built through the downloading and compiling of this data from various resources. Even with all available reporting tools and software, how sure are you that you have the right technology and platforms needed to use marketing data for your teams? Here are 5 steps to help you ensure you have the right technology to capture the marketing data you need to make your team successful.

Step 1: Understand Your Goals

Before you can begin with any analysis of software platforms or data technologies, it is important to partner with your leadership teams to develop your goals for the company and the marketing department itself. Easy enough, right? Oftentimes marketers find themselves dealing with competing goals from various departments in the business. Therefore, it is critical to take the time to sit down with the entire leadership team to develop the main yearly goals. Agreeing upon these goals will inform all other decisions for the marketing department and will be critical to understanding what data is important.

Equally important to developing these goals is communicating them to the marketing team and ensuring they also understand the goals. Make sure these goals are written down and saved somewhere that all team members can access. Discuss these at your weekly meetings and make sure the team can recite these goals at any time. Finally, brainstorm and agree upon how you will reach them.

Step 2: Determine Your Marketing KPIs

Now that you have your goals set and they are understood across your organization, it's time to set your Key Performance Indicators, or KPIs. KPIs are highly dependent on your goals. After all, to understand if you are hitting those goals, you'll need specific metrics and indicators which inform you of your progress. For example, if your lead generation goals are centered around providing qualified leads to the sales team (which help the larger goal of hitting sales revenue for the company), then some metrics which may be important to track are total number of leads, number of marketing qualified leads, and number of sales qualified leads. It may also be important to understand lead sources to help you optimize your marketing campaigns.

Take the time to sit down with your marketing team and discuss all your goals and potential KPIs that you would need to track to stay on target to your goals. From there, it will be important to outline your KPI Dashboard and what will be included. Finally, also note where each KPI would come from. For example, are you tracking leads from your marketing automation platform, your CRM system, or perhaps both? Will you be tracking PPC metrics and are those coming from Google Ads, Bing Ads, or both? This step requires some time to complete and its important to not rush through.

Step 3: Analyze Your Available Technology

Next, it's time to analyze your current technology and software. Make a list of the current systems you use to capture marketing data. Compare this list side by side with your KPI Dashboard. Ask yourself: Are you using your technology to its full potential? Do you understand how to capture data using your current systems? Are there gaps in my data capturing capabilities? This last question is a critical one. This process often uncovers several gaps in key areas of capturing and analyzing your data. For example, you may find that your current marketing automation software is not set up to correctly capture the information you need, or that it lacks a certain reporting capability completely. Notate these missing pieces and use this to move onto the next step of researching additional options to solve for these gaps.

Step 4: Research Options

After determining where you are lacking in your current technology and software needed to capture and analyze marketing data, it's time to start to research options for filling these gaps. It's important to note that a gap may also occur if you have access to marketing data but are not fully trained on using the platform. For example, you may have

Google Analytics but are unsure which reports are the best or how to pull them to use in your KPI Dashboard. In these instances, solve these training issues first. Most large analytics tools have free training resources available.

If you have determined that you do not have the technology at all to capture the marketing data that is important to your goals and KPIs, then it's time to research your available options. Search online and be sure to compare your requirements and budget to what is out there. Ask other industry experts what worked for them. Read reviews and be sure to set up demos and discussions with the provider. Have a list of questions ready so that you are thoroughly vetting the platform against your needs.

Step 5: Determine When to Go Custom

After going through the first four steps, you may realize that you still haven't found a solution to capture the data you need. In instances like this, it may be time to consider other options, such as custom integrations or development. For example, you may capture basic information through multiple platforms, but you do not have an easy way to compile this data into one system. Or, you may find that you are not able to follow your lead data all the way through the sales cycle because of limitations of current software integrations. These are often indications that it is time to explore out of the box options.

Start by having meetings with your current software support teams to see if there are any ways to capture this data that you may not be aware of. Also discuss the potential for developing custom integrations. I have found ways of making data work for my team using custom development which is often worth the one-time expense. The results are lasting and the value of having the right data is immeasurable.

Summary

Don't give up on the possibility of having the right data. If there's anything I've learned from going through this process multiple times, it's that if there is a desire to have the right data and understand it, there is a way to capture and use it. And if you get excited about data analysis, spreadsheets, and having the visibility into as much data as you can get your hands on, welcome to the team!

About the Author

With over 13 years of experience, Jessica Valenzuela has expertise in digital strategy, marketing, and web design. She designs successful strategic marketing content and specializes in marketing operations. Connect with Jessica on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/taivalenzuela.
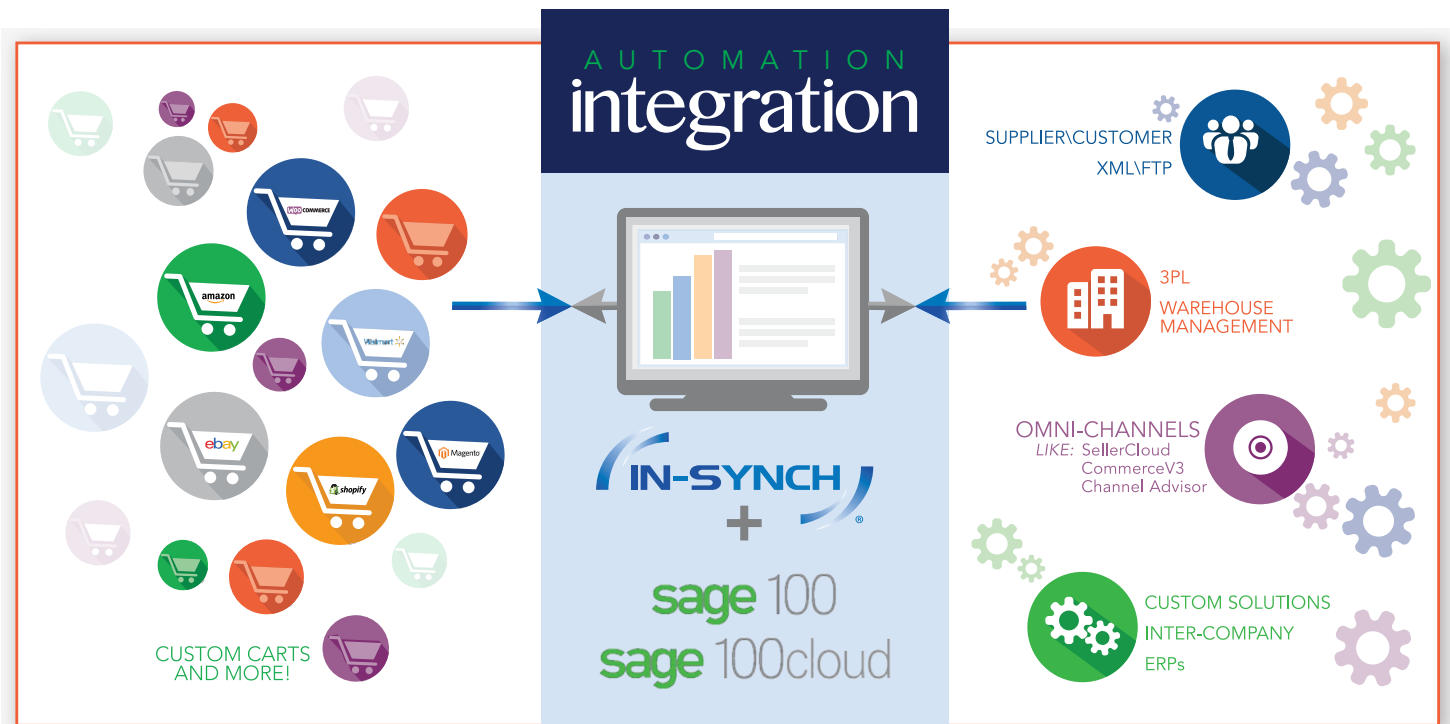
Good news: your business is growing

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FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO **PERFECT** YOUR
SMB EMPLOYMENT BRAND

by Bob Greene

Employment branding means different things to different employers. If you're a small to mid-sized business, you don't have the budgets to do some of the higher profile employer marketing that a larger business would. But for SMBs, your choice of branding emphasis will be influenced by many different factors: your geography, your industry, your size, your competition for the best employees, and even by various budgetary constraints. But no matter what choices you make, paying careful attention to your employment brand is necessary for your company to attract and retain the best and brightest workers.

In addition to collaborating with marketing on the strategic aspects of employment branding, there are many tactical details to successful branding as well. Marketing will be able to guide HR on the use of its style guide which will include logos, tag lines, and fonts and colors that reflect a unified look and feel between an organization's careers site and the rest of the organization's web presence.

Step Two: Decide and Deploy

There are many ways to distinguish an employment brand. Step two involves choosing one or two bases on which you want to appeal to the employment market at your door and what your ideal candidates would like to see. Here are some of the most popular employer branding concentrations:

Superior compensation or benefits. Do you benchmark your salaries, benefits programs, and/or other compensation to be in the upper 25% of your market? In some industries and/or geographies, this may be the single most effective basis for capturing candidate attention.

Employment flexibility. In certain industries (health care and hospitality are good examples), the ability for an employee to set their own schedule, work part time, job share, or even to associate themselves with the firm as an independent contractor, might be very important.

Perks. Do you offer an on-site gym, dry cleaning, or a medical office? Free snacks or lunches? Bring your pet to work policies? Student debt restructuring programs? Depending on your primary target candidate pool, these additional perks may not only be unique and valuable, but they could form a key ingredient of your branding.

Paid volunteering. In some industries or communities, the ability for employees to take time off—paid or unpaid—for a day or service or a month-long sabbatical, may be one of the most meaningful perquisites an employer can offer.

Third-party recognition. Today, there are more "best places to work" types of lists than ever before. Many prospective job-seekers will see these as representing independent validation of an employer's overall brand. The specificity of some of these lists may also help organizations target a specific desired sub-set of candidates.

Step One: Leverage Your Marketing Department

A marketing team's expertise is often key to executing on a successful employment branding campaign. For this reason, a strong alliance between HR and marketing leaders can yield powerful results.

When discussing employer branding with your marketing leaders, the first key objective should be an honest comparison of the corporate brand and the desired employment brand. Marketing departments can offer a standardized toolkit comprised of key messages, value propositions, and competitive differentiators for this purpose that align with the corporate messaging.

Great recruiting, based on great employment branding, involves doing precisely the same thing; it should answer questions like "why work for our company?" and "what can our company offer in employment that no one else can?"

Step Three: Know Your SMQ! (Social Media Quotient)

If your company has a social media profile, do you know if it's good, bad, or in-between? In addition to the comments that employees, job applicants, and former employees can post about you on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, there are, of course, dedicated employment review websites that employers need to monitor, such as LinkedIn, Indeed, CareerBliss, Great Place to Work, Comparably, The Job Crowd and, most notably, Glassdoor.

A predominance of indifferent or negative reviews can interfere with, or even ruin, an employer's brand. However, negative reviews can be overcome with a little effort. On most sites, employers can respond to negative reviews by posting comments on how they have addressed these concerns. To address candidate-specific complaints, employers can review and update their application processes.

It's easier to anticipate what an employer's social media quotient might look like if they understand how current employees feel about working for them, and key to this process is the administration of engagement surveys. Use the results of engagement surveys as your "early warning system" to address workforce engagement issues proactively, and the impact on your social media quotient will likely be very positive.

Step Four: Leverage Technology

With the right planning and decision making, the process of executing an employer branding or rebranding plan can be one of the easiest parts. These are the five areas in which organizations can leverage technology to simplify and automate employer rebranding efforts:

Recruiting—Since an employee's first impression of most employers is found in their online recruiting process, your brand should be clear from candidates' first view of your careers landing page and consistent throughout the application process. Your recruiting software should adapt to your branding rather than expecting you to adapt to the software's arbitrary or generic branding or style.

Benefits—If your branding revolves around benefits plan superiority among your peer employers, then a detailed and informative self-service open enrollment process is essential. It should feature and draw attention to the company cost of each benefit plan and option, to emphasize the investment you make into each employee. Additionally, a year-round total compensation statement should be a part of an employee's self-service experience.

Learning Management—Career development is an important concept supporting the idea of strong employment brand. But without an integrated learning management solution, most career development tools simply document plans as envisioned by the employer, employee, or both. To execute on those plans, the most important set of tools an employer can provide employees is a robust learning management system filled with available content tagged to the employees' career interests and/or performance deficiencies.

Engagement Surveys—It's not enough to simply monitor employees' engagement levels; HR professionals need to pay attention to trends and causes for emerging dissatisfaction among employees, and then address the underlying issues.

Empowerment, Millennials, and Bring Your Own Device ("BYOD") Policies—Millennials are an emerging generation of workers who expect that HR support will be self-service, 24/7/365, and accessible on whatever device they pull from their pockets. No matter what approach your organization takes to employment branding overall, it should be delivered through HCM automation to remain appealing to the latest generation of workers.

Step Five: Start Again (and Again, and Again…)

Employer branding experts tell us that an employment brand that stands still is dying, because the factors that animate and motivate both your current and prospective employees are constantly in a state of flux. Cutting edge technology, the latest innovations in benefits plans, and "best of…" employer recognition programs are constantly in flux. For this reason, employers wanting to make the most of their branding efforts review them on an annual, or at the very least, a biennial basis.

Build Your Employer Brand with Ascentis HCM Technology

Without the right strategy in place to find and engage the right candidates, organizations whom have already put thought, creativity, and investment into developing cutting-edge, unique employment programs will never experience positive ROI. When it comes to employment branding, the Ascentis HCM Suite of products has a lot to offer.

Ascentis Recruiting harmonizes a client's current careers page branding with our candidate self-service capabilities. And, our custom onboarding forms allow companies to reinforce their brand with new hires who haven't even started with the company yet.

Our SCORM and AICC-compliant learning management solution does so much more than merely track training courses. When populated with a client's chosen combination of authored, leased, and/or purchased content, our software acts as the definitive toolkit by which employees can build out their careers, not just "plan" them.

We've also added a new engagement survey capability which allows an organization to administer surveys on either an identified or anonymous basis. We even include extensive statistical reporting on the results of these surveys.

Ascentis solutions are uniquely positioned to appeal to millennials, particularly within the SMB community. It offers complete employee and manager self-service functionality, browser independence, mobile apps where appropriate, and a level of consumer-banking grade security that includes both multi-factor authentication and data encryption-at-rest rarely seen in other SMB-focused HCM software suites.

Our products allow you the opportunity develop and support an employer brand and the freedom to experience greater productivity while you develop and elevate your workforce and grow your business. Visit our website at www.ascentis.com to explore our easy-to-use and incredibly powerful tools and learn how we can help you build your employer brand through HCM technology.

About the Author

Bob Greene currently serves as Channels Manager and Sales Trainer at Ascentis and has spent 38 years in the human capital management industry as practitioner, consultant, and in vendor/partner roles. Bob recently rejoined the Editorial Board of IHRIM's Workforce Solutions Review journal as Contributing Editor. His experience also includes two years as Adjunct Lecturer in HRIS at Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois. Learn more about Ascentis at www.ascentis.com.

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THE
TRANSFORMATION
GUIDE

G rowing businesses often go through many periods of transformation both large and small. Transformation can be very granular, happening within certain departments and teams, or widespread, happening across an entire organization. Enterprise Resource Planning software is often at the center of transformation for companies ranging in size from small to large enterprises. The need for transformation revolves around similar themes, such as the need to evolve to meet the needs of a growing business or companies overwhelmed by their faulty current methods.

No matter the reasons, understanding the need for transformation is a small feat when compared to going through the transformation process. The thought of this may be both daunting and overwhelming for many executives. However, the benefits and rewards companies receive from going through this process can change the course of any organization for the better.

To help you navigate through this process, we've developed this annual **Transformation Guide**.

In this 2018–2019 edition, you'll find useful articles which discuss transformation processes at all levels of the business. This includes everything from how Human Resource transformation happens by putting the right people in the right seats, to evaluating the right ERP solutions to help you grow. You'll also hear the story of Bestbath and how Tammy Harris, their President, was able to help her organization through the transformation process and why implementing a new ERP system was the right move for that business.

Take some time to digest and read this Transformation Guide and determine if now is the time to consider your own transformation. If you feel you are ready to take the important next step, reach out to your Blytheco transformation partner at 949-268-4371. With a proven selection process, Blytheco guides companies in the software selection process using a thoughtful approach and offering guidance at every stage. Our passion at Blytheco is to help companies grow, transform, and to be their trusted advisor. Enjoy this Transformation Guide. Blytheco is here to answer any questions you may have.

PUTTING THE
RIGHT PEOPLE
IN THE RIGHT SEATS

by Kyleena Harper

E veryone dreams of having the perfect job. The job that makes you happy to get up in the morning and go to work every day. The job that you excel in. Just as each person has this goal for themselves, companies have the same goal of making sure they have hired the perfect person for each position in their business. Successful companies frequently credit their success to having "good people" in place. At the end of the day, the best way to make sure companies are successful and employees are happy is to put the right people in the right seats.

Finding the Right People

Finding the right people for your company is no easy feat. Someone that was a perfect fit with their last company may not be the best fit for yours. The right people are the ones who share your company's core values in addition to having the proper skillset.

First, your company needs to have clearly defined core values—guiding principles that dictate behavior and can help companies to determine if they are on the right path and fulfilling their goals. Then, a baseline of performance expectations should be set for each role. For example, if a leadership team is rating each team member on a scale of 1–5, does every single team member need 5s across the board to be successful? Or, are newer team members given more flexibility in certain areas than those in more senior positions? Kendra Silva, Director of Talent Management at Blytheco, clarified the importance of assessing each position individually.

"Do I expect job mastery from a newly hired team member? No," she explained, "But do I expect it from a senior-level team member? Absolutely. However, with attributes like collaboration and teamwork, I DO expect high levels from all team members at every level. With each value and attribute, you need to assess where the bar should be set for the role, not the team member. This helps outline the expectations and thus outlines where development can be sought in the position, and it defines a pathway for promotion for those looking to grow."

Once your performance baselines have been set against your core values and attributes, leadership can move forward with evaluating team members against them. There may be some areas where lower scores are acceptable and other areas where a lower score may mean they either aren't in the right role or they just don't fit your company culture.

If you find you have a team member with low scores, that isn't a cue to move to immediate employment changes. Each team member should be given the opportunity to improve. You hired them after all—you saw potential, so don't just throw in the towel! Discuss the challenge areas you are seeing and review the baseline expectations for their role. Partner with them on ways to improve. During your follow up, are you noting strides in improvement and effort? If you are not seeing the coachability and desire to grow, it may mean they aren't in the right seat or even the right fit for the company. Either way, you will be making headway toward a decision. As Kendra stated, "The right people have to have the right values. If you have the right people, you can then ensure you have them in the right seat."

Finding the Right Seats

Finding the right seat means that each team member is in a position within your organization that fits their skillsets and passions best.

Before a company can make sure each seat is filled properly, they need to make sure that the seats available are the ones that the company truly requires. To do that, the company should create an organizational chart listing every seat needed for the business to perform at optimal levels. This process should include defining each role's responsibilities and overall job description. Once that is complete, then leadership can begin adding in names under those roles, into those seats. This may mean that some names will be repeated in several boxes as they tend to multiple needs in the business. If a role has been identified as a needed seat in the business, someone now owns that process.

As the company grows and the seats require more time and attention, that is when you may consider adding in a resource and changing a name in that seat.

By defining a role before placing a person into the seat, you are making sure that the person owns the responsibilities of the role and is best suited for it. If you are bending the role based on the team member, you aren't putting the needs of the business first. Then, not only are you doing the company a disservice, but you are not helping your team member achieve success. However, just because the team member doesn't necessarily fit the defined role they are in doesn't mean they need to be moved out of the business. Sometimes, it may mean that the person has outgrown the seat and a promotion or transfer is a better option, if there is an open seat on your predefined organization chart that aligns with their skillset and passions. Kendra expounded on this, explaining, "Sometimes you have team members that have exceptional abilities and are an amazing cultural fit, but they aren't finding success in that particular role. Either it's not leveraging their skillsets to it's something that they're not passionate around, so their heart isn't in it. When you have open communication, these conversations often lead to a meaningful conversation where the team member and company can both align on a change." After all, she said, "If you find a diamond, you want to retain them."

Putting the Right People in the Right Seats at Blytheco

Blytheco prides itself on having a clearly defined passion, as well as core values. So, it was an easy transition to make sure that each team member within the company was representing these core values on a daily basis. Additionally, the Blytheco leadership team made it a priority to make sure all the right people were in the right seats. "At the end of the day, people and culture have always been a huge part of Blytheco. And our culture comes from our people," Kendra shared. "Industries are changing, and we're seeing that culture is a big drive for people looking for a job. Having a company that is philanthropic in nature and where you're treated as a person not a number is a big draw. And when we focus on our people fitting in the right seat, we're making the company stronger."

About the Author

Kyleena Harper is Blytheco's Marketing Writer/ Editor. She has 10 years of writing experience and a love for all things grammar related. Currently, she's discovering a new passion for software and technology. Connect with her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/kyleenaharper.

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Effectively Managing Change

by Samantha Goniea

The business world is constantly changing while technology and software evolve to keep up. But where does that leave you? As the landscape around you changes, you are required to adapt new processes, take on new challenges, and select software solutions and extensions to keep pace. No matter if you are automating processes, expanding operations, replacing outdated systems, or making enhancements to your business, the one important item to consider is change management.

Change in business is much like Kubler-Ross's, "Five Stages of Grief:" denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. We know change takes work, costs money, and makes more work for both you and your team. We also know that change is rarely fun. However, it serves as a necessary agent to help you reach your desired goals. Knowing it will be tough on your organization and managing this change effectively will help move your team from denial to acceptance as quickly as possible. Because in business, there is also a sixth stage to this process: growth. Once your team accepts the change, they can then begin to modify, make improvements, and grow your organization.

So, what is change management? Change management is a structured way of implementing change within your organization to minimize risk and ensure successful adoption. You can select the greatest software for your business, implement a state-of-the-art scanning and barcoding solution, or spend thousands of dollars on process enhancements. However, if your team does not embrace these changes, it is unlikely that you will be successful.

Here are a few tips to help manage change within your organization:

Understanding readiness: You know your organization best. Before you begin conceptualizing or implementing any changes, you must first take a step back and ask yourself a few key questions. Is my organization ready for this type of change? Will I encounter too much resistance? Do I have the resources and the team in place to provide proper guidance, training, and support?

Communicate with your organization: Before you begin to implement changes, hold an internal conference with your entire company. It is not enough to simply send an email about upcoming changes. If you want people to truly embrace the change for long-lasting results, you need everyone's commitment.

It is crucial to educate everyone on your motivation for making the change, be transparent around the potential risks and challenges, and make sure everyone has an opportunity to ask questions. This approach will help reduce departmental silos and individual resistance.

Measuring success: It is important to understand what "success" looks like. For every organization, that may mean something different. You must first identify key metrics and goals for your company around this project to know if your efforts are successful or not. This may sound simple, but without a clear and concise vision, it will be very hard for you to have a frame of reference to know if all this effort was worthwhile.

Identify your cheerleaders: You need to know that you can't create real organizational change on your own. Also know, physiologically speaking, there are some individuals who are better at accepting change than others. It is your job to identify the mangers and team leaders who will take charge of leading their departments to change. It is important that this manger/leader is on-board with the changes and will help guide the rest of their team to adoption. Keep in mind, these cheerleaders, or "change agents," will not only be the voice of reason to their team but will also keep the feedback loop open for continued improvements as time goes on.

Check back in: Real change can't be a one-time effort. It is important to actively seek feedback from your teams, keep an open line of communication with managers, and come up with an effective way of documenting team member concerns and addressing questions quickly. Identify team members who may be falling behind and be ready and willing to provide additional resources and training where necessary. Be patient with your team—change won't happen overnight.

Need expert help? For additional guidance or to schedule a free business review, do not hesitate to reach out to the Blytheco team.

About the Author

Samantha has been working with Blytheco for over 4 years with a sole focus of helping to better serve the clients. With over 8 years of marketing knowledge and experience working with start-ups & small businesses, she's able to generate content that is both informative and relevant. She is passionate about helping growing companies reach their business goals through the use of proper software and processes. Connect with Samantha on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/samanthagoniea.

Evaluating ERP Solutions:
What's Your Why?

by Alicia Anderson

In our work with companies, we engage in a lot of dialogue about how and when to explore new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. While nailing the timing and process is key, customers are most successful when they have a clear "why" before committing resources to an ERP evaluation process.

Let's drop in on a typical ERP buying scenario:

Stakeholder at Company A collaborates with other leaders in the company to decide they need a new ERP system. Maybe they draft a requirements list based on a template the CEO got from a friend. They search the internet for a few ideas, call the top four to five providers that pop up, and start down a path of "discovery" with each—it's kind of a pain to repeat their list of pains to multiple vendors, but that's how the game works, right? Soon, they view demos of the shortlisted options, but honestly, they all look alike. Maybe there's a few more meetings—wow, we're really investing some time here. Then, they get a proposal. Yikes; this is real money we're talking about. Hold on—maybe we can do what we need with our old system for a while? The CFO's brother-in-law knows a guy who can get us a sweet deal and we'll implement it ourselves. Actually, let's just table this until Quarter 1 when we know sales will get better.

This is how a huge majority of ERP evaluation projects go: the road to nowhere. They end up in that pile of "we'll get to it someday" projects in the company, with stakeholders frustrated that they wasted their own time and vendors racing to the bottom at quarter-end trying to manipulate an emotional decision with little predictability in the cycle.

Seriously, don't let this be you.

Why does this happen? It boils down to clarity. If your team isn't 100% clear on the goals of a new solution, it's really easy to get stalled in the risk, the complexity, and the cost. For good reason—with only a fraction of these projects ending in success, each one is too big to fail.

Save yourself the time and energy next time you get that feeling that a new system is the answer. Focus on this question first: What's your "why"? Having a clearly articulated, compelling business reason for engaging in a solution exploration will help you find the right solution efficiently or enable your team to focus their energy on other key strategies.

One exercise we lead teams through is the "5 Why's" approach. Here's how it works:

We need a new system.

Why is the old system a problem?

Because our old one doesn't have a functionality we want/need.

Why is that a problem?

Because if we can't do it in the system, then we have to do it in Excel.

Why is that a problem?

If we do it in Excel, sometimes we get errors.

Why is that a problem?

If we get errors, we can't predict our sales, and every year we end up having to rush orders to save customers because we are understocked.

Why is that a problem?

Rush orders cost us money and squeeze out our margins.

You see how this can go on and on, but working your way through two or three "why" streams usually punches up either the urgency of remediating technology or calls into question the assumptions you're working with. Either is valuable.

If you're too deep into the business to conduct this exercise effectively, there's no judgement—this is the majority of cases. However, don't avoid the issue; simply ask for help. Pull in an advisor, a consultant, or a partner like Blytheco to bring an objective eye to the exercise. We respect our own and your time too much to drive down the road to nowhere if we don't find a compelling business case for a new system.

About the Author

Alicia Anderson is the Senior Manager of Business Solutions of Blytheco. She is responsible for the design and implementation of strategic lead generation campaigns, content development, public relations communications, and development of sales materials. Connect with her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/aliciakanderson.

CLOUD VERSUS
ON-PREMISE
SOLUTIONS

by Kyleena Harper

There's so many choices that come to mind when you are trying to select a new ERP solution for your company. One of the first decisions you'll have to make is: should you pick cloud based, or on-premise? This is a crucial decision, as your ERP is something you and your employees will be using daily. There are advantages and disadvantages to both solutions. But never fear—we'll review the pros and cons of each to help you decide what's best for you and your company.

Demographics

Both cloud and on-premise solution options are available for companies that have between 5–1,000 employees. But for cloud solutions, if a company has more than 1,000 employees, they can use a two-tier ERP model. Cloud solutions can have up to 4,000 employees using the system simultaneously, while on-premise solutions may only utilize up to 200 employees on average. When it comes to customer growth, on-premise solutions are great for companies looking to maintain or improve current operations, or who are interested in maintaining a server environment. Cloud solutions are great for growing companies focusing on business agility and have little desire to maintain a server environment.

Cloud solutions support multi-location and multi-national legislature, which means they are ideal solutions for businesses with many remote employees or those with global requirements. On-premise also supports a multi-company environment, although international legislation can be a challenge with it. Also, remote access requires a terminal server, which is not something you have to deal with for cloud.

When it comes to verticals, both solutions would work great for distribution and wholesale. For software and technology, professional services, eCommerce, and light manufacturing, cloud ranks higher. For manufacturing, food and beverage, and professional services, you may do better with an on-premise solution. However, it is always important to weigh your options carefully and work with a trusted partner to guide you to the right product.

Cost

Normally, cloud software is priced using a monthly or annual subscription model. In contrast, on-premise software is often priced as a one-time license fee. This fee is based on the size of the organization or the number of users. For both solutions, there will be recurring fees for support, training, and updates. Because of this, cloud-based software is considered an operating expenditure, and on-premise systems are considered a capital expenditure. The fact that the entry cost of cloud-based systems is so much lower is part of what has contributed to their widespread adoption. However, it should be noted that over time, system costs tend to converge.

Data and System Security

Data is accessible from anywhere with a cloud solution, and most are committed to minimum uptime of 99.5 percent. Many solutions even have free mobile apps available. However, individual performance may vary based on internet connection and workstation reliability. For on-premise solutions, uptime is dependent on the individual's server infrastructure and set up, and individual performance varies based on the customer's IT resources, environment, and hardware.

Most cloud solutions rely on geographically separated data centers to safeguard data and promote consistency. Data is replicated and synchronized across multiple data centers to facilitate recovery in the event of failure. On-premise solutions are usually maintained through Uninterruptible Power Systems, and data redundancy can be a challenge without consistent central storage for data. Employers using an on-premise solution establish backup procedures and schedule regular backups individually. Most cloud solutions offer disaster recovery (e.g., earthquake and fire protection) and maintain consistent heating, cooling, and backup power to prevent crashes or corruption.

On-premise solution users are responsible for safeguarding data and putting security practices in place to protect the end user. Cloud solution providers encrypt data according to the industry standards. They stay ahead of changes and ensure audit compliance and requirements. In addition, role-based user security and even field-level security is available for both options.

Customization

When it comes to customization, an on-premise ERP allows the client a greater ability to customize. However, these same customizations are what can delay implementation time and result in headaches when vendors need to update software. Conversely, there isn't a lot of customization you can do with a cloud-based solution, so if your business is looking for something specifically with a customization plan in mind, cloud may not be for you.

Final Thoughts

Overall, a cloud-based ERP is cheaper up front, stable, and easy to use. It offers a cheaper upfront investment because of the lack of server infrastructure. But don't let this fool you—you could end up spending more money over the course of the system's life cycle. The data security is in the hands of the vendor, which is both a blessing and a curse. Cloud isn't very customizable, but the lack of customization can offer greater stability as a result and take less time to implement.

On-premise ERP systems overall are more customizable and offer greater control over data. The upfront investment is riskier due to the associated hardware and IT costs. The data security is in the hands of the organization, and whether this is a good or bad thing depends on how adept the organization is with handling security protocols. On-premise solutions have a greater ability to customize, although the customizations can delay implementation times and vendor updates. Organizations have more control over the implementation process, although that does mean it takes longer.

At the end of the day, there is no right or wrong answer for choosing. The best thing to do is review what your specific company is looking for, and find a partner that can help guide you through the selection process.

About the Author

Kyleena Harper is Blytheco's Marketing Writer/Editor. She has 10 years of writing experience and a love for all things grammar related. Currently, she's discovering a new passion for software and technology. Connect with her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/kyleenaharper.

BESTBATH

PRESIDENT TAMMY HARRIS

TALKS TRANSFORMATION

by Kyleena Harper

Bestbath's corporate headquarters

Bestbath's warehouse

How Intelligent Software Enabled Bestbath's Intelligent Designs

When Bestbath first reached out to Blytheco, the company was struggling to work with their current ERP. It was not fulfilling all their needs for the company, and they were getting frustrated. While they knew they needed to replace it with a new ERP, they found the research, decision making, and implementation of an entirely new system daunting. How would they know which system was the best choice? What if they wanted a chance to experience the system before selecting it? Did they even know every available option on the market? Blytheco was able to step in and help transform Bestbath's ERP experience into one they finally enjoy utilizing.

Blytheco believes in trusted relationships and mutual accountability. We guide our clients to thoughtful decisions, and we focus on client success metrics. These three principles are what helped Blytheco lead Bestbath to find the perfect Enterprise Resource Planning solution.

The Bestbath Story

Almost 50 years ago, Bestbath started as Component Structures, Inc., producing industry-standard bathing products. Soon, Gary Multanen joined the ranks of Bestbath as plant manager. Ten years later, he purchased the company and continued to expand its market reach and product line. One day, while visiting with his mother and hearing in detail about the difficulties she experienced in bathing, Gary realized there was a problem: The market was failing to provide quality, easy-to-access bathing products. He solved the problem by quickly adding a line of high quality, safe, and accessible bathing products to the company's existing line of traditional shower and bathtub options.

Over the years, Bestbath has continued to grow and prosper. About four years ago, Tammy Harris joined the Bestbath family as Chief Financial Officer. She loves the culture of her new company. It focused on their employees first, making sure that they felt like a family.

When Tammy started with Bestbath, the company was utilizing Sage 100 as their Enterprise Resource Planning software. She explained that while it was a great software solution, their company had outgrown its capabilities and they knew it was time to look for a new option. They were transitioning from using seasonal employees to full time staff and wanted to make sure their new ERP choice would be one that everyone loved to use. This is where Blytheco arrived, to help Tammy and the rest of Bestbath choose the perfect ERP for the company.

President Tammy Harris poses in Bestbath's warehouse.

Comparing Solutions

Bestbath executives met with a range of Blytheco consultants to review the many different software solutions out there. The first thing Blytheco did was discuss with Bestbath what they were looking for in a new software solution. When the conversation started around what solution would be best, Tammy admitted they hadn't considered anything beyond the current solution they were already using. Blytheco presented multiple options, which helped them realize that a better solution was out there for them.

Mike Fron, a NetSuite consultant that assisted with the decision-making process, commented that comparing solutions is one of the most important steps in the process. "It takes a lot of patience on our part," Mike explained. "We have to make sure that we're coordinating solutions appropriately, that we're bringing in proper people to demonstrate, and that we're helping the client stay focused and remember what they saw from one product to the next."

"Blytheco did an amazing job of pulling a team together and walking us through a discovery about what we needed. And a lot of it we didn't know. It's one of those things, you don't know what you don't know."

Tammy was extremely impressed with how organized the comparison process was while working with Blytheco. She said, "Blytheco did an amazing job of pulling a team together and walking us through a discovery about what we needed. And a lot of it we didn't know. It's one of those things, you don't know what you don't know." This can be a lengthy process when ensuring you are considering all options. Bestbath spent several months with Blytheco disucssing where the company was currently, and their goals for the future of the company. Tammy thought the overall discussion was "a really good experience for the company and it was also really good for the employees to talk about what was out there. We were used to using this one ERP system, and it was this great 'AHA!' moment of understanding that things have changed." She remarked it was at that point that "we said, 'You know what, it's time to make a change.'" With the help of Blytheco, Tammy knew the company was ready to make some big changes and move to a new solution. She realized it was "okay to change and make this investment." Bestbath realized that for the company to grow, they needed to find an ERP that would grow with them.

Making Decisions

At first, the company considered selecting add-ons and more modules to help fill the gaps of their current solutions. However, they quickly realized they wanted something more integrated. They had worked with SalesLogix in the past, but it didn't integrate well with their particular business. At the end of the day, the team was looking for one single solution. "We wanted one solution that would house all our data, provide good reporting, and provide all the tools for the employees. Just one thing," Tammy explained. But, which solution would be best for Bestbath?

Blytheco pulled in consultants from across the company to present multiple solutions to the Bestbath team. Mike Fron explained how helpful the Blytheco process is, saying, "We pulled together as a team by bringing in expertise where it is needed. These solutions are very complicated, and in this case, we needed to bring in other third parties that filled in certain gaps." He went on to add that it was helpful for Blytheco to have these strong partnerships with the solutions they carry to help serve the client well. Overall, Mike said, "Our process gives the client a chance to see that we were interested in finding the right solution for them. So, we took our time walking through their requirements and then mapping those requirements to the solution to fit best."

Rick Cobb, a Blytheco consultant, shared that he was happy to present multiple solution options to Bestbath. He commented, "It was good that we were able to represent [multiple] products because then we can give an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each product relative to one another…because we're trying to be objective. We don't have a preference other than finding the best solution for Bestbath." After reviewing multiple options, Bestbath ultimately decided on NetSuite. It was the solution that worked best for every aspect of the company, not just specific parts. And best of all, it was a solution that has the capability to grow with their business over years.

Similar Cultures

Tammy's favorite part about working with Blytheco was how similar their work culture was to Bestbath's. She was able to meet a multitude of Blytheco team members at events and was even able to visit Blytheco's corporate headquarters, located in Laguna Hills office. She said, "You can tell [Blytheco] is family oriented. When I visited the California office, it gave me good insight into the culture and employees [at Blytheco]." She believes that the partnership between Bestbath and Blytheco has been so successful over the years because of this similarity.

Another factor that strengthened the relationship between Bestbath and Blytheco was trust. Tammy explained, "The role of trust with our partners is everything. With the evolution of technology, it's tough for a company to keep up with that, and when a company doesn't really know what they need, they need someone to walk them through that and so it's such a huge endeavor for a company to go down that path of implementing a new system, so the partnership you have that's everything, because I have to rely on the partner to help us make the right decision and lead us to that decision."

Bestbath knew that Blytheco was less concerned about commission and more concerned about making sure they were implementing the best software solution for the company. "I believe that's why we've been successful as partners over the years, I feel that Bestbath and Blytheco both care about their employees, they care about their relationships with their vendors and their partners." She added, "They don't want a short-term partnership and I think that's really important for the two of us working together. I think that's part of that success that Blytheco has experienced over the years and it has definitely been a part of our success as well."

Bestbath team members gather in the warehouse to start their days.

Reviewing the Process

When asked what tips they would give to companies going through a similar process, Tammy encouraged companies to get their entire team involved in the discussion. Bestbath hadn't done this in the past, and Tammy believes that opening the discussion up to the entire company this time around helped them find the best solution. "You have more buy in, you have people excited about the direction you're going in," Tammy explained. At the end of the day, team involvement is "what drives the success of an implementation of a new system."

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Tammy is grateful that Bestbath went through the tricky process of choosing a new ERP system with Blytheco. While she emphasizes that a lot of the deciding responsibility relies on the company, it is so important to work with a partner that has your best interest at heart and is focused on making your company as successful as possible. "Working with the Blytheco team," Tammy explained, "was awesome. In the past Bestbath didn't always embrace what they were doing because we were so focused on keeping costs down." However, this time they understood that if they "did it right the first time, you can save so much money in the long run." Rick Cobb wholeheartedly agreed. Rick's biggest takeaway was to make sure to "stay true to the process. Taking the time to walk through the process with the client led them to decide which solution they wanted to pick. It turned out to not be a sales process but a relationship and sharing process with them, where they were able to make a decision and pick what was best for them."

At Blytheco, our three principles are the backbone of why the Blytheco Brand has become so well known to those in search of a reliable business software partner. Bestbath was looking for a partner they could trust to help them through the complicated decision making of selecting a new ERP solution. Thanks to the support and hard work of the Blytheco team, Bestbath felt confident in their final decision. Since implementing NetSuite, Tammy says they've had nothing but good things to say about their new system. Overall, Bestbath was able to transform their company with a new ERP that best fits their needs and is helping them improve the company daily.

About the Author

Kyleena Harper is Blytheco's Marketing Writer/ Editor. She has 10 years of writing experience and a love for all things grammar related. Currently, she's discovering a new passion for software and technology. Connect with her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/kyleenaharper.

Recognizing Your Potential:
WHEN TO SAY
GOODBYE
TO YOUR
CURRENT SOFTWARE

by Samantha Goniea

Business management software is one of those topics nobody loves to talk about. For many businesses, it's a love-hate relationship and one where many take the stance "If it's not broke, don't fix it." This mentality can get you by for a while until the day comes when you are forced to move to a modern business management solution. For every company, that day is different. Here are a few reasons companies begin to look for new software:

- Software is no longer supported or is being discontinued.
- Business requirements have changed, and the software no longer meets their needs.
- Systems are dated and/or not compatible with other solutions used to run the day-to-day.

If you are in any of those boats, the signs may be obvious that you need to replatform to a new solution. However, for some, it may be less obvious. Many companies are not familiar with the capabilities of modern business management solutions and are unaware of the benefits that modernizing can bring to the business. Here are some other commonly observed signs your business may need a software upgrade:

Too Much Manual Entry: Your team spends more time in Excel than using your current ERP. You have separate spreadsheets for your suppliers, inventory counts, shipping schedules, or even your customers. You often find errors in your data and question the reliability of your system's information.

Lack of Visibility: You're missing visibility into order status, inventory levels, stock alerts, reorder points, customer history, product visibility, and shipping statuses. You're coming up short on having insight into errors before they cause issues. You know visibility is key to having a healthy and prosperous business.

No Real-Time Reporting or KPIs: You are spending too much time compiling reports which are often inaccurate. You lack the type of data and KPIs which would allow you to make effective decisions for your business.

Multiple Disparate Systems: Your current ERP is not able to handle your daily operations. Each day, you're facing disconnected systems, lag time between systems, integration challenges, lack of compatibility with useful third-party add-ons, and manual imports.

Your Growth Is Hindered: Your solutions capabilities do not match your business goals. You find yourself developing workarounds rather than having your solution work for you.

If you can relate to any of the challenges above and found yourself silently nodding along, then you may need a new business management solution. The next steps involve preparing a business case for this transformation. Replacing software is never a fun transition regardless of how necessary it may be. To assist you, here are a few steps to kick off the process and help your team get moving in the right direction:

Step 1: Documentation
Once you have acknowledged there are functional gaps in your current software solutions which are hindering growth, the first step is to document these challenges. Survey key team members and solicit feedback from various departments. Begin to outline existing challenge areas, ideal processes, and areas for improvement. To keep all team member feedback straight, start a spreadsheet to track and score feedback.

Step 2: Setting Realistic Expectations
Replacing software is a substantial investment when it comes to finances, time invested, and resources allocated to the project. It is important to select a time in the business when a project like this would be least disruptive to your organization. Account for busy seasons, staffing, and other organizational priorities to ensure the proper attention can be dedicated to a project like this.

Step 3: Organizational Alignment
It is vital to the success of a replatforming project that you have the support of upper management and most of your employees. Begin the conversations internally and begin to receive buy-in from other key decision makers. Change management and user adoption are important in a project like this; without strong organizational alignment, businesses are rarely successful.

Step 4: Budget
It is important to prepare a project budget. You must first document your technology spend, considering IT budgets, infrastructure maintenance, software subscriptions, annual software spends, and support budgets. From there, you can begin to document your soft spend or "lost income." Where are you losing money now due to inefficiencies? Where is your team spending the most time on manual processes? Those improvement areas are important to note and should be factored into this investment.

Need help? Blytheco offers free business consultations and software evaluations to guide your team through this process. We can help you prepare a business case for replatforming, explore software offerings, develop personalized financing plans, and help you understand the total cost of ownership of your current solution in order to see true ROI in your new system. Call today to take your business to the next level.

About the Author
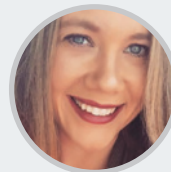
Samantha has been working with Blytheco for over 4 years with a sole focus of helping to better serve the clients. With over 8 years of marketing knowledge and experience working with start-ups & small businesses, she's able to generate content that is both informative and relevant. She is passionate about helping growing companies reach their business goals through the use of proper software and processes. Connect with Samantha on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/samanthagoniea.

Going Beyond Spreadsheets
WITH
BIG DATA

by David Winterhalter

Financial reporting has been the life-blood and focus of companies since the beginning. A few things have changed though, like the size of the numbers, the technology used to look at them, and how we share that information throughout an organization. But looking at what financials can tell us has pretty much remained the same.

And what is that? Financial data can tell us what happened (e.g., how many units were purchased last quarter and at what profit, what the spend was for a department versus what was projected, etc.). This is all important information, but it's data that looks backward and only hints at the future, so projections are essentially guesswork based on patterns. For financial reporting to move out of the past and become the foundation for data-driven decisions of the future, the information needs to be viewed in the context of the world in which it exists.

But spreadsheets and flat databases don't have the complexity or capacity to help us understand data that way. What is needed is a new technology that can pull in data from multiple, seemingly disparate sources to provide greater insight into a company's financial position and inform those forward-looking decisions.

This is where Big Data shines.

What is Big Data?

It's a buzzword that you've probably heard a lot of. But really, what is Big Data?

It's important to first understand the idea behind Big Data. It's a straightforward concept—the more information you have about something, the easier it is to not only understand it but to predict what that something might do or become. For example, if you have lots of data about the performance of pizza parlors in a specific city (how profitable they are, how long they operate before closing up shop, and so forth), you can predict the success of a new pizza restaurant in that city.

But if all you look at is a narrow set of information, like the success of a pizza restaurant in a certain city, your predictions will have limited accuracy. You might be able to predict how well a pizza parlor would do in that city, but be unable to predict how it would do in another city. You have no idea if other elements that affect the success of a pizza place exist in the new city. But with Big Data, you could.

Big Data pulls information from multiple sources and layers them to provide a more complete picture of what is happening. These data sources come from traditional places, like organizational data and demographics, and less traditional sources, like social media. That data is then joined to identify trends and patterns that would otherwise be missed.

If we go back to our pizza parlor example, traditionally you'd look at the success rates of restaurants in a city of similar size to predict how successful a new restaurant would be. Big Data, on the other hand, could pull in more information to create a more accurate predictive model. Instead of just using success rates for pizza restaurants, analysis of the data might include the number of local professional sports teams, other nearby businesses that help or hurt a restaurant's sales, the frequency of people posting pictures of their food on Instagram from the area, and local average temperature. All these elements may influence how our pizza parlor will fair but would be opaque without the use of Big Data systems and the analysis of that information.

What Does This Mean for Financial Reporting?

As you can see from the previous example, there are many factors that can affect the financial performance of a company, and some of those factors may not be immediately obvious. Just looking at the financial data for a region may not tell you that sales dipped because of an unusual amount of snow that caused clients to stay home from work more frequently and therefore push off purchases for several months. But the analysis of a wide range of data can help you understand what happened and predict what you'll see going forward.

Because Big Data pulls in information from so many places, it would be nearly impossible to spot trends using spreadsheets and simple or traditional reporting techniques. However, when Big Data is combined with other analysis tools like business intelligence and financial dashboard reporting, trends become apparent quickly that would otherwise go unrecognized. Business leaders see the interplay of otherwise disconnected data and the impact it has had on their financials, while also creating a more accurate predictive model that can be used in decision making going forward.

Competition is fierce in today's corporate world, and every advantage is needed to stay ahead of the game. The more information you have, the better decisions you can make. Stepping beyond simple "what happened" financial reporting and reviewing performance in a broader scope can provide the insights that drive intelligent decisions and predictions. Big Data pulls in the myriad of data needed to have a complete picture, making financial analysis patterns apparent and actionable.

Cash Flow Planning is a Company's Secret Weapon Against Disruptors

The business world is no longer occupied with mere startups. Instead, we live in the age of disruptors—small, agile organizations with big ideas that are changing the world and the market they are part of with new ideas and rapid adaptation to customer demand.

Larger companies don't always have the ability, or the foresight, to make the adjustments in time to address the threat of a disruptor. Recent years have provided cautionary tales, like behemoths such as Borders and Blockbuster falling to new ideas and innovations.

But established organizations have a number of advantages over startups. They just need to take the time to recognize them, understand them, and leverage them. The Harvard Business Review lists three steps to ensure you can formulate a strategic response to market disruptors in your space, namely:

- Understand the strengths of the disruptor organization.
- Identify your own advantages.
- Define how to keep the disruptor organization from eliminating your advantages.

As you move through these steps, one advantage likely stands out, and that is your existing cash flow. Where a disruptor might need to seek out funding to make their product a reality, your established organization may already have a built-in means of funding your adaptation to changing market conditions.

Cash Flow Management is a Key Differentiator

Companies with existing cash flow have the advantage of knowing they have a base of funds from which to operate, making it easier to pivot to meet the challenge of a disruptive technology or product.

Out-of-date financial information results in inaccurate cash flow planning, removing the advantage you have over startups. To leverage your cash flow as a tool to keep you ahead, make sure that your financials are up to date and accurate, better stabilizing your cash flow position.

Predictable and consistent payment by your customers ensures that resources are available when you're building your strategy to address new competitor challenges. Make sure your billing is timely and that your customers are reliable by performing credit checks as needed. Also, keep on top of invoices. Late payments can directly impact your cash position, giving you fewer options as you work to meet new market demands.

Forecasting your future cash position can also put you in the driver's seat as you rise to meet new customer expectations and weather the storm brought on by innovative new products from your competitors. The right software with proven cash forecasting models and what-if scenarios will inform your current situation, but also point to where you expect to be tomorrow to plan for innovation cycles and organizational fluidity.

A startup's strength is in its ability to change quickly, meeting the needs of customers quickly and transforming rapidly. But what startups lack is the historical data and established cash flow that makes tasks like innovation and R&D less risky. With solid cash flow management procedures in place, companies can meet disruptors head-on in the marketplace while having the stability they need to reinvent their products and services.

About the Author

David Winterhalter is the Vice President of Marketing at Centage Corporation. He is a seasoned professional with 20 years of combined marketing and business development experience, with a strong background in web-based marketing, lead generation, CRM systems, and sales development.

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Why You're Probably Overdue to
TRANSFORM YOUR DEMAND PLANNING PROCESS

by Eric Graf

If your business manages inventory, intelligent demand planning is an absolute requirement. Anyone who has spent time in or around supply chain management has seen dozens of methods for demand planning and ordering, but very rarely do these methods actually seem to work. Sure, orders are produced and the warehouse gets by, but how accurate is the forecasting, planning, and ordering process overall? Does this process improve or hurt profitability?

Even today, one of the most popular tools for inventory replenishment and demand planning is Excel. Despite being a completely inadequate tool for creating reliable forecasts, managing stock levels, or producing optimal purchase orders, countless businesses across the world use an inventory spreadsheet. There's no seasonality, no trends, no usable safety stock calculation. To put it another way, there is simply no visibility into a warehouse with an inventory spreadsheet.

Take a moment to think about your planning tools and planning process. Does your process tell you how much excess stock you have? If you had to, could you even locate that excess stock? And what's the difference between a smart amount of safety stock and an unnecessary amount of excess? Does your current planning tool show you where stock-outs are occurring or where stock-outs are about to arise? How much time does your team spend organizing all this data and deciphering it all to make purchase orders?

Perhaps you're beginning to realize the hidden costs that come with your planning tool of choice. For small and medium-sized businesses, this story is far too common and it's limiting their potential to grow.

Inventory-based businesses need a tool that was built for a modern and complex supply chain. Implementing the right planning tool will help businesses strike the balance between too much inventory and not enough by producing perfect purchase orders quickly and at the right time.

If your business already uses an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, you have a trove of data that's perfect for helping you in your demand planning process. All you need to do to transform your process is to find a tool that links to your ERP and gives you a clear view into your warehouse. At any moment, you should be able to discern what's going on and what's going wrong with your inventory.

Whether you rely on Sage, NetSuite, or Acumatica, the demand planning app NETSTOCK can help you make better use of your data to produce perfect purchase orders in minutes. You can save time and money while increasing fill rates, thus opening new opportunities to grow your business. The user-friendly dashboard gives you a robust view into critical areas, so you can adjust ahead of time instead of reacting after a problem arises.

The old methods of demand planning simply don't work for the modern supply chain. If you've been getting by with an inadequate tool to handle your forecasting and planning, you're past due for a transformation. Contact a solutions coordinator at Blytheco to get more information about how a small change could make a massive impact.

About the Author

Eric Graf is the Director of Marketing for NETSTOCK, the leading inventory replenishment and demand planning app for a variety of ERP platforms. With 10 years of experience in communications, Eric now works with NETSTOCK's partners to explain the critical importance of smarter inventory management. Learn more at www.netstock.co.

Transforming the
SELLING PROCESS

by Vicki Fox-David

Almost every entity "sells" something—a product, a service, tangible or intangible, for a profit or for the intrinsic value. There are countless selling methodologies. A Google search for "selling methodologies" returns about 15,000,000 results. They represent the spectrum, from "Willy Loman" personality-based style sales, to structured methodologies built around positioning, value proposition, and competitive "fight cards."

While those methods have value too, often the customer is missing from these processes except when they are the subject of the method or are being "sold" what the person is selling. Too often the client feels forced to go on the defense; they put their guard up to make sure they are not "sold." When your competition relies on these sales methods, it gives you the opportunity to use a transformative process. This opens up a purposeful interaction with the client, allowing you to ask meaningful questions, listen, engage in a timely and authentic way, and create a two-way relationship built on trust and credibility. Let's unpack what that is, what it looks like, and how it transforms how you sell to your clients.

Purposeful interaction

A purposeful interaction centers around the customer. It means going into an interaction as one human being talking with another human being to determine if they have a need you can help them address. You may uncover a need that aligns perfectly with the product or service you have to offer. Or it may uncover a need you cannot resolve directly, but with which you can assist by recommending another vendor, someone in your network, or an idea. The customer will see you are a multi-dimensional resource worth staying in touch with, not just another sales rep trying to make quota.

Asking Meaningful Questions

We have all been in situations where someone "shows up and throws up," telling us all about a great product or service which we do not need. What a colossal waste of everyone's time! Asking questions both establishes a rapport and peels away the layers covering the real need. What makes the customer tick? What are the pressing issues? What are the pressing impediments? Are there any constraints? Who will benefit and by how much? Questions are the gift that keep on giving. You gather information about pains your customer didn't even realize they had! And your questions helped them uncover opportunities others had overlooked. You look brilliant!

Listening (Yes, Really)

Asking questions means one must really listen to the answers and process that new information. Take notice of what someone says. Additionally, note things beyond what they are saying—what assumptions are they are making? What pains lie deeper beneath the surface? Good listening begets more questions.

Responding

The client's response to good questions then warrants a purposeful and relevant response. Don't revert to the sales script or the process. Critically think about what the client has shared with you. Be authentic. Respond with perspective and an offer to take action. Share a story about another client in a similar situation and how they addressed their challenge using your product or service. Take the information the client has shared and suggest next steps and options to help them problem solve.

A Two-Way Relationship

Showing up with purpose, asking good questions, listening, and responding with stories, ideas, and next steps creates a connection, a relationship, a state of being connected. Collaboration to identify and solve problems together is a powerful and transformative. It builds credibility and demonstrates that you are there to help the client be successful, not to use them for your own success. The interactions and relationship you build are the foundation for the conversation about how your products or services help solve the challenges you uncovered together. It transforms the process from selling to collaborative problem solving. Together, you have a mutual understanding of the challenges to be solved, and the client has confidence in the solution and succeeds. You helped the client, and products or services are rendered—win-win!

About the Author

Vicki Fox-David, Strategic Solutions Manager at Blytheco, is an energetic, strategic thinker and problem solver with over 10 years experience in tech-sector roles including product management, product marketing, business strategy and business development. Connect with her at vfoxdavid@blytheco.com or www.linkedin.com/in/vickifoxdavid.

Reaching the Modern Buyer

by Alicia Anderson

As we move into the Fall and Holiday buying season, it's time for a check in on what's happening and relevant for consumer marketing. If you guessed "buyers have all the information and price is a race to the bottom," you are still right. But smart, educated companies who are strategic about understanding their buyer and delivering an awesome experience are winning big.

Consumer Purchases

Let's be clear about the elephant in the room first. Consumer marketing is, at its heart, about selling to women. According to research firms Yankelovich Monitor and Greenfield Online, women account for 85% of all consumer purchases. That said, please don't make the mistake of assuming all women are the same. Targeting remains key; but targeting today means keying in on behaviors, not demographics. Demographics like age, location, and marital status only serve to lump us in to vast categories of people we have nothing in common with. When you learn an individual's habits, hobbies, spending trends, interests, and motivations, your content becomes so personal and relevant that consumers will seek it out, engage with it, buy time and time again, and share with friends. And please don't take "personalize" to mean plugging my name into your email template—I can see right through that old saw—it's meaningless, overdone and adds no value.

It also means being smart about advertising. Ads are interruptive and intrusive. 81% of consumers have closed a browser or left a webpage due to a pop-up ad. So, that's not an option for smart sellers in 2018 and beyond. Today's buyer wants to be educated about her world and engage in a journey of discovery and conversation. Relevant articles, blogs, and emails still get attention. Video has risen to the top as a channel because it combines multiple senses to help our brains retain information better than simply reading. Purchase probability increases to 97% if a user has a positive experience with a video. Podcasting is also an important low-cost channel to deliver a conversation and humanize your brand. Podcasts are particularly relevant if your product targets an upscale consumer—podcasts listeners trend to higher incomes and education levels.

Compelling Conversation with Customers

Once you've attracted your buyer with a compelling conversation, phoning in the experience is not an option. There are too many choices in the market today—if you screw up, buyers will find another source and never look back. Even worse, they might drop a negative review on one of your channels, endangering new customer perceptions. Exceeding expectations in terms of packaging, delivery, and return is the only way to create repeat buyers, and to get them talking to their friends (on- and off-line) about how awesome you are.

Stitch Fix, an online clothing styling and delivery subscription service, is a great example of creating this journey of conversation with potential customers. Their emails and blogs deliver solid advice about making the most out of your wardrobe, whether you buy anything from the site. They explain in their FAQ exactly how the service works so their buyer is absolutely clear about what to expect. Their Instagram provides dimension using video and customer stories—for extra personalization, tag your stylist when you "like" a post to refine your style profile. Their YouTube channel provides tips and advice. Plus, bloggers regularly boost the company's YouTube profile by independently posting their own tagged "Fixes" with reviews.

> "Exceeding expectations in terms of packaging, delivery, and return is the only way to create repeat buyers, and to get them talking to their friends (on- and off-line) about how awesome you are."

Then, Stitch Fix nails the delivery. They deliver a fun box of carefully wrapped items, plus advice about how to wear them, plus detailed instructions for returning what you don't want to keep. They refine your experience with a post-Fix survey that asks what you liked and didn't about what you received. Their results speak for themselves; as of Q2 2018, the company marked four consecutive quarters of 25% year over year growth, with almost $300 million in sales. This is obviously one example in a vast market of options. And if your product or service is more commoditized, differentiation through price or selection might work fine—for a while.

The channels will continue to change. Podcasts today, Artificial Intelligence via voice recognition this year, who knows what in five or ten more years? But the feeling you give your customers about doing business with your brand remains burned into their brains. A deep understanding of your buyer and thoughtful curation of their journey will never go out of style.

About the Author

Alicia Anderson is the Senior Manager of Business Solutions of Blytheco. She is responsible for the design and implementation of strategic lead generation campaigns, content development, public relations communications, and development of sales materials. Connect with her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/aliciakanderson.

Why You Need To Be
DATA-CENTRIC

by Ruth Richter

In September 2016, global annual internet traffic surpassed one zettabyte, or 1021 bytes. That's like 150 years of high-definition video. And while it took 40 years to reach that volume of traffic, it is estimated that within the next 4 years, data traffic will double. This should be fantastic news for growing businesses: The emergence and growth of the internet has drastically changed how companies sell to and interact with their customers.

But in an age where 8 out of 10 Americans shop online—with more than one-third of total retail sales in the U.S. coming from a smartphone—how can your business maintain a customer-centric approach when you don't actually see any of your customers in person?

Being Customer-Centric Means Being Data-Centric

The positive side of so many transactions occurring through computers and mobile devices is the massive trail of data those transactions and interactions create. By the time a purchase is complete, you have access to a customer's name, email, phone number, and address—perhaps even with the permission to continue contacting them with information on sales and special offers.

The challenge is that customers expect the same access to data in return. The rise of internet shopping, which can be done any time day or night, means that customers expect companies to be available on those same timeframes to serve their needs. Without seamless information on products and services, customers may take their business elsewhere. Thus, the businesses with the larger growth potential will be those who have adopted a data-centric approach along with their customer-centric focus.

Being customer-centric goes hand in hand with being data-centric. Indeed, big data can be assembled to inform companies about all the different types of customers they have: what they like, what they value, how long they've been a customer, and what that has meant to the company's bottom line. Customer satisfaction is the backbone for the business' certainty, and the best customer satisfaction results come from gathering and using as much information on those customers as possible.

Why You Need a Data Strategy

If managing data is critical to a company's success, why are so many organizations behind the curve on doing so? According to Harvard Business Review, less than half of structured data is actively used in decision-making processes. Worse, less than 1 percent of unstructured data is analyzed or used at all. Without a data strategy, it is a challenge to protect and leverage data. Superior data management will support decision making, enhance financial process, and yes, improve your customer-centric actions. All of which, in turn, will position your organization for continual growth.

While a lot of data will flow into your systems from customer interactions, three specific kinds can directly influence customer outcomes.

Traditional: This encompasses any details pertaining to the customer's interactions with your company. This data tells you how customers use or plan to use your products. It is typically stored in a CRM system.

Social: Insights from social networking gives you access to real-time feedback that will help your organization better understand your customers. Social data insights must be unified with traditional data for more powerful results.

Demographics: This data provides a broader view of customers, rather than the specific focus of traditional or social data. Demographic data provides information on general needs as related to age, location, or other specified characterizations. Pairing this data with traditional and social will uncover deeper information about customer needs and/or how they use your product.

The Power of Integrated Data

But all that data doesn't do your company any good if it's inaccessible to those across the organization who need it. Integrating data housed in a centralized location—such as Sage 100cloud—enables teams to arrange it holistically in order to gain the most value and insight from it in real time.

Keeping data free flowing is a simple matter of proper integration. Sage 100 has the capability to integrate with ecommerce carts and third-party marketplaces. Even when a customer is purchasing your product from an ecommerce platform such as Amazon, eBay, or Shopify, both the traditional data of their purchasing information and the social data gleaned from their online shopping process along with demographics parsed from their location and age range are organized and flow into Sage 100. Suddenly your company has access to data not only to send out the product order but gain a deeper understanding of the customers you serve. That deeper understanding leads to more accurate targeting, increased sales, and ultimately measurable growth for your business.

Data Is More Critical Than Ever

Data began as critical to only back-office processes, such as accounting and payroll. Today's technological advances, however, place data squarely in the center of business, and its proper and strategic management has become vital to the success of an organization. The right data strategy could very well mean the difference between growth and closing shop.

About the Author

Ruth Richter is the Customer Experience Director for ROI Consulting, Inc, a Sage 100 integration company. ROI Consulting is the market's leading ecommerce solution and Sage 100 integration specialist, maximizing Sage 100 customer's technology investment through integration and customization since 1997. Learn more about ROI's integration solutions for Sage 100 at www.roi-consulting.com or by calling Ruth Richter at 402-934-2223 x1.

ALL IN ONE
OR BEST IN BREED:
Do Businesses Have to Choose?

by Jeff Franklin

T here's a proverb that says, "You can't have your cake and eat it, too." The meaning, of course, is that you can't have two highly desirable but mutually incompatible options—like, say, having both a best-of-breed software solution that integrates with other solutions and a single, all-in-one native database that's configured to exhaustive company needs. Such a situation would give you the best of both worlds. You must make a choice between the two, or so the assumption goes. But do you?

Joining the Best of Both Worlds

At TrueCommerce, we're working on ways to make this assumption of having to choose between all in one versus best in breed a thing of the past. The answer, we believe, is in providing customers instead with total choice. Or, more precisely, the ability for customers to pick and choose solutions depending on their unique business needs.

That's the thinking behind our recently released TrueCommerce Foundry. The Foundry, at a basic level, combines a native platform (the foundation of the solution) with a broad set of unified commerce services, together with the ability to integrate seamlessly with best-in-breed business systems, logistics systems, marketplaces, and storefronts. This allows supply chain businesses to manage the bulk of their operations from a single, responsive interface while connecting these systems to their preferred ERP system.

The result for the customer is a kind of building block approach: the customer determines which solutions are best in breed for their business, and the Foundry platform enables the customer to build on top of them. The customer can add new systems, capabilities, channels, and supplier partners, or scale operations as evolving business needs require. This is the benefit of a single, centralized platform with a unified, easy-to-use interface paired with the deep functionality of a constellation of best-in-breed solutions.

For example, picture a buyer connecting to a network of suppliers through an integrated EDI portal. This buyer could utilize replenishment software to ensure optimized stock levels, leverage the "endless aisle" capabilities of a drop ship program, and develop and manage commerce content campaigns across numerous channels. They could also integrate B2B and B2C sales through multiple online marketplaces, like Amazon or TrueCommerce NEXstore, and connect these capabilities to a preferred business system. All of this is manageable through the TrueCommerce Foundry. In other words, businesses no longer have to choose.

Moving from "Either, Or" to "This and That"

In many ways, the ongoing debate among many company leaders about what kind of software they should select—integrated solutions or a single encompassingsolution—is founded on the idea that a great compromise is always necessary. But with the increasing connectivity and ease of integration of supply chain solutions, such decisions are simply becoming additive: which solutions do you want, and how do you want to configure them? The gist is that we're quickly moving away from an era when software solutions come with significant, one-sided limitations and into another where companies can truly have their cake and eat it, too.

About the Author

Jeff is the Channel Development Manager at TrueCommerce. He brings over 25 years of expertise in manufacturing, distribution, and ERP systems including EDI. This entrepreneur has started a few technology companies, with his last being acquired by TrueCommerce in 2017.

BLYTHECO
SPOTLIGHT
Meet the BAM Team

What is the BAM Team? "BAM" stands for Business Accounts Managers. This superhero-esque team is the backbone of what makes the Blytheco customer experience so unique. These team members consistently go the extra mile to ensure that our clients are always taken care of, well beyond software. They serve as the go-to resource for any and all needs that arise throughout the clients' lifecycle and are 100% dedicated to helping their client reach their established goals. To help you get to know these folks a bit better, we did a fun Q&A with the team. BAM, that's awesome.

For the full interviews check out:
www.blytheco.com/resources/bamspotlight

Jason Gillham
Laguna Hills, CA

What do you love most about being a BAM?

Assisting clients to solve complex problems and think more strategically about their business.

If you weren't an account manager, what would you be doing?

Professional Musician and/or Music Producer. But not a famous one.

What's your motto or personal mantra?

Journey before destination.

Laurin Search
Lexington, SC

What do you love most about being a BAM?

The ability to lead others to an opportunity for success. I'm very results driven. Doing a good job and achieving the desired end result is my primary motivation.

If you weren't an account manager, what would you be doing?

I'd work with the youth of today—likely as a school teacher.

What's your motto or personal mantra?

It's not what you want, it's how bad you want it.

Val Chick
Laguna Hills, CA

What do you love most about being a BAM?

Being of service to my customers and partners and developing long term relationships.

If you weren't an account manager, what would you be doing?

Tour guide, as I could travel to great places. Or a Forest Ranger, as I love to be outside.

What's your motto or personal mantra?

Live life to the fullest.

Gregg Baum
Laguna Hills, CA

What do you love most about being a BAM?

Selling WMS. The warehouse always seems to be the last area of a business to be digitized.

If you weren't an account manager, what would you be doing?

Animal rescue.

What's your motto or personal mantra?

Give me the bad news first!

Evan Williams
Atlanta, GA

What do you love most about being a BAM?

Interacting with and learning about all our different customers.

If you weren't an account manager, what would you be doing?

Building houses.

What's your motto or personal mantra?

Never give up.

Amy Sonnentag
Eagan, MN

What do you love most about being a BAM?

I love helping customers bring positive change to their businesses through technology.
The right product paired with great execution can make people's work lives easier and allow them to focus on growth.

If you weren't an account manager, what would you be doing?

I often daydream about running personal growth retreats with great speakers, fitness, and food and wine in beautiful, natural locations.

What's your motto or personal mantra?

If you see something that needs to be done, do it. Don't wait for anyone else.

> "If I had to sum up Blytheco in three words it would be transparent, engaged, and transforming."
>
> —Laurin Search, Senior Blytheco BAM

David Dang
Minneapolis, MN

What do you love most about being a BAM?

Working with my clients going through the unknowns, the "You Don't Know What You Don't Know" with technology, so that they will be equipped with knowledge on how to navigate the ever-changing business landscape.

If you weren't an account manager, what would you be doing?

My parents wanted me to become a doctor or a mechanic (apparently mechanics made a lot of money in Vietnam), and I wanted to become a choir teacher. We met halfway, and I became a software account manager.

What's your motto or personal mantra?

It's all about the impact and outcomes!

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