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The business owner's guide for replacing accounting software

Replacing your accounting software is easier and more affordable than you may think. Use this guide to learn about the benefits of a modern technology platform, better understand the advantages of a cloud-based solution, and know what questions to ask when evaluating your options.

Microsoft

Keep pace with evolving customer demands and business requirements

Your customers' needs and expectations have evolved, but your accounting and business management systems aren't able to keep pace with increasing demands. You need a modern technology platform that connects your business and your people like never before. A comprehensive business management solution for SMB's can:

- Automatically pull your systems and processes together so your people don't have to.
- Give you a complete picture from across your business, with reports when and where you need them.
- Get you up and running quickly, so change doesn't get in the way of your day-to-day.

With adaptable applications in the cloud. You can create efficiency across your business processes, help your people make informed decisions, and be ready for growth.

More than 90 percent of consumers said they would consider taking their business elsewhere rather than work with a company that uses outdated technology.

Information silos, disconnected systems, and manual processes keep you from delivering the experience your customers expect and ultimately can put your business at risk. But what kind of solution is right for your business needs today and your goals for future growth? How can you best prepare for change, and how will you know if you're ready to move your systems to the cloud?

This guide will help you evaluate the current state of your accounting and business management systems and processes, and outline considerations you should keep in mind when exploring new solutions.

** Source: Microsoft-commissioned research among 1,405 consumers, 2013.*

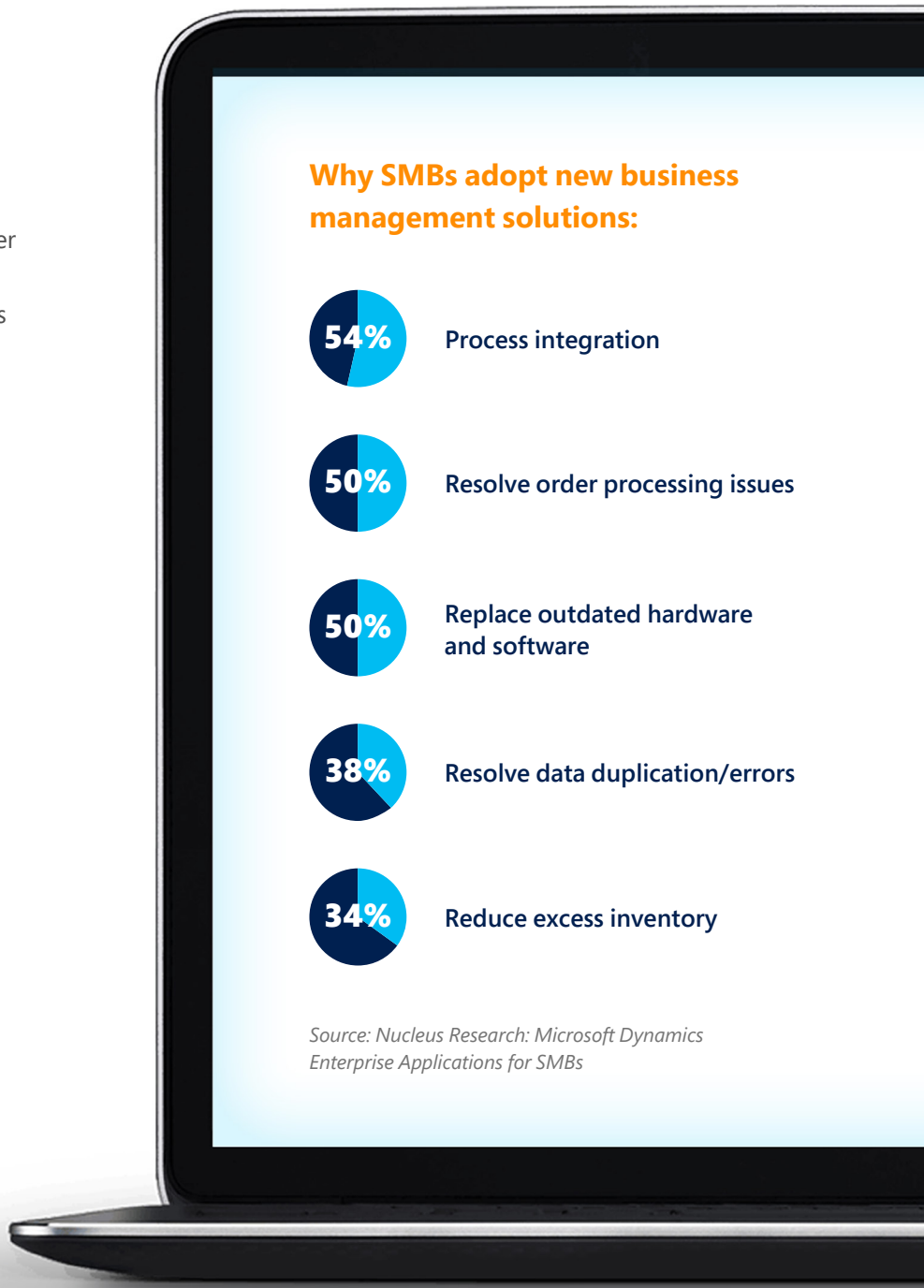
Signs your basic accounting software or legacy systems are putting your business at risk

As your business grows in size and complexity, and your customers expect better and faster service, the tools that once supported you may now be standing in your way. For small and midsize businesses (SMBs), deciding to overhaul your accounting software or business management systems may seem like a daunting task.

But what is the real cost of trying to maintain a system that is no longer keeping up with demands? Whether the result is lost sales, customer dissatisfaction, or compliance risks, failing to update your technology can be a costly decision.

If you recognize any of these warning signs, the time has come to make a change:

- We waste too much time dealing with multiple systems that can't talk to each other.
- Manual processes are error prone and can't keep up with increasing demand despite added headcount.
- Creating and configuring reports it too complicated, and often doesn't give us the information we need.
- Incomplete or incorrect information creates customer dissatisfaction and lost sales.
- Increasingly stringent compliance and security concerns keep you up at night.
- Productivity is lost spending valuable time switching back and forth between multiple applications and disconnected systems.



The signs are clear, now what?

There's never been a better time for SMBs to update their systems. The cloud has opened up new avenues for companies of all sizes to affordably expand capabilities, create greater efficiency and mobility, and be prepared for ever-changing business conditions.

With so many technology vendors competing for your business, it can be tricky to differentiate between solutions and find the best fit for your business.

Characteristics of a modern technology platform like Microsoft Dynamics 365 include:

Comprehensive integration. Deploy one solution to manage your financials, sales, service, and operations with the ability to connect applications like payroll, banking apps, CRM systems, or custom APIs.

Connects your entire business. Automatically pulls your systems and processes together so your people don't have to.

Automates and secures business processes. Improve productivity and get more done with easy-to-create workflows, audit trails, and enterprise-level security—features that basic accounting software can't provide.

Provide an end-to-end view of your business. Centralize your data from accounting, sales, purchasing, inventory, and customer interactions to get an accurate end-to-end view of your business. All data stays up to date so you can spot trends, prevent issues, and deliver great customer experiences.

Trusted technology provider. Creates security as a trusted, leading technology provider for businesses of all sizes around the world.

Enables mobility. Empowers a mobile workforce by delivering the same experience across devices, regardless of their location.

Fast from the start. Delivers an easy-to-learn solution that people just intuitively know how to use.

You recognize the signs, now get ready to explore your options

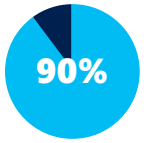
Beyond evaluating the technical capabilities, here are a few questions to ask when meeting with potential solution providers.

- How easy is the solution to learn and use?
- How will it integrate with our existing systems and applications?
- If we deploy in the cloud, do we retain control over our data?
- What will my price be after the initial contract expires?
- How easily can I add or remove users, and how is that reflected in my pricing?
- How often do you provide product updates and can we control when the updates are deployed?
- What is your track record for service after the sale?
- Who do you have locally that can help us with implementation and ongoing support when needed?

The dollars and sense of business applications in the cloud

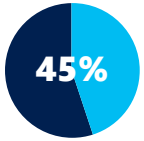
Businesses of all sizes, including an increasing number of SMBs, are making the move to the cloud to modernize their technology platform, gain overall system efficiency, and enable their teams to stay connected to the data they need in order to meet customer demands from virtually anywhere. Here are the top business benefits that are driving SMBs to move to the cloud.

Why should SMBs move to the cloud?



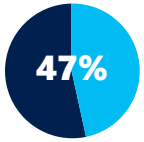
of consumers said they would stop doing business with a company using outdated technology.

Source: Microsoft commissioned survey



of SMBs said their employees get more done in the same amount of time thanks to cloud and mobile technologies.

Source: The Boston Consulting Group



of SMBs said technology is critical to their company's future.

Source: The Boston Consulting Group

Demystify the cloud

While the business benefits of moving technology to the cloud are clear, some of the technical jargon that surrounds cloud computing can be confusing. Here are a few terms that will increase your cloud IQ and help you understand the various options for deploying your solution in the cloud.

Cloud Jargon Translator

SaaS—software as a service. Specific applications delivered through the cloud, typically for scenarios such as email, office productivity, customer relationship management, marketing analytics, and so on.

IaaS—infrastructure as a service. IaaS enables businesses to move their entire datacenter, including storage, servers, and software, to the cloud, essentially outsourcing management, security, and maintenance to the cloud provider.

PaaS—platform as a service. PaaS provides a complete operating system environment in the cloud where customers can develop and deploy software, applications, and services. The advantage is that PaaS systems scale seamlessly to provide consistent quality of service.

Virtualization. Virtualization creates a layer of abstraction between hardware and software, enabling entire datacenters full of servers and microprocessors to operate as a shared pool of resources.

Public cloud. Public cloud refers to services offered to multiple users (or "tenants") in a single datacenter.

Private cloud. Private cloud is a dedicated datacenter or server environment to deliver cloud services for a single customer or tenant.

Hybrid cloud. Hybrid cloud is an enterprise IT environment combining some private cloud services, some public cloud services, and some on-premises computing resources.

Why choose Microsoft Dynamics 365 to run your business

Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Financials is a business management solution that's connecting people and processes like never before. From day one, it makes ordering, selling, invoicing, and reporting easier and faster.

Turn your multiple disconnected systems into one. Boost efficiency with automated tasks and workflows—all from within familiar Office tools like Outlook, Word, and Excel. Get a complete picture of your business and make better business decisions, with built-in intelligence when and where you need it.

With your business running in the cloud, it's easy to change and adapt at your own pace without IT. Start with what you need, quickly and easily, then be ready for growth.

Only Microsoft delivers a connected technology platform bringing together business applications with tools for productivity, communication, and collaboration. Microsoft business solutions deliver insight across your devices, all while helping you:

Connect your business

- Deploy one solution to manage your financials, sales, service, and operations with the ability to connect applications like payroll, banking apps, CRM systems, or custom APIs.
- Outlook isn't just for email and calendars anymore. Now you can go from quote to cash without switching applications. Set up customers or vendors, create quotes, process orders, and submit invoices without leaving your inbox. Easily export data and create outgoing documents directly in Word and Excel.
- Easily and cost effectively extend Dynamics 365 to fit your industry or business needs with integrated add-on applications and Microsoft Power Apps.
- Improve productivity and get more done with easy-to-create workflows, audit trails, and enterprise-level security—features that basic accounting software can't provide. Easily connect workflows across other SaaS services using Microsoft Flow.

Make better business decisions

- Centralize your data from accounting, sales, purchasing, inventory, and customer interactions to get an accurate end-to-end view of your business. All data stays up to date so you can spot trends, prevent issues, and deliver great customer experiences.
- Keep people informed with easy-to-share reports including key performance indicators (KPIs), inventory, sales, and order status. Empower users to create self-serve reports from trusted data sources for faster, more informed decision-making.
- Access, model, and analyze data across multiple dimensions to perform ad hoc, customized reporting. Use Microsoft Power BI to create highly compelling dashboards, and to infuse big data, predictive analytics, and Internet of Things to transform data into actionable intelligence.

Start and grow easily

- Handle the most common business processes from day one, like quotes, orders, invoicing, purchasing, cash management, and reporting. It's built in the cloud, so it's easy to set up and manage.
- Has the same familiar interface as the Office tools you already know, like Outlook, Word, and Excel. A comprehensive yet easy-to-use solution means less training time and quicker adoption for employees.
- Get the powerful desktop capabilities you need across Windows, iOS, and Android platforms. Desktop, laptop, tablet, or phone, you get one experience that is consistent and secure.
- Start with only what you need and grow at your own pace to run your business securely in the cloud. Using flexible applications and a scalable database, you can easily adapt to change and manage growth.

Take the next steps for your business

There's never been a better time to update your systems and take advantage of all the benefits of cloud-based business applications. Learn more about the capabilities of **Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Financials**, how to buy and deploy the solution, and start your free trial to see it in action.

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