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Once you
know how...

A strategic view of systems integration

It's commonly understood that data is an asset. Companies sometimes forget this when they engage in strategic decision-making that can have years of impact. What's more, they tend to disregard that critical data can reside in a variety of systems. As a result, that data is worthless for the business, and important decisions may be flawed.

Even in everyday operations, people and processes may become ineffective when the right data from your business systems is not easily accessible.

For these reasons, systems integration is too important to pass off to IT. It's a critical business concern that can make a difference to execs and employees in many roles.

On the other hand, when you integrate systems and ensure an open, secure, companywide flow of data, you might be able to accelerate innovation, increase customer satisfaction, and create more value from business relationships. When it comes to enhancing your product and service offerings, systems integrations and the availability of data intelligence can make all the difference between a digitally driven, thriving business and an also-ran.

When systems are not integrated: 5 common risks

1

Decision-makers at all levels are flying blind and have a hard time substantiating decisions. As a result, they may make errors that can be expensive, cause the company a competitive setback, or slow down innovation.

2

People interacting with customers and trading partners cannot properly discuss or resolve issues without taking time to research them in other systems, causing their contacts to wait or move on.

3

Financial data, intellectual property, customer and vendor histories that reside in separate systems may be more vulnerable to theft and hacking, put your compliance at risk, and only be of value to a small group of employees.

4

Common actions, like generating an invoice when an item has shipped, updating a product revision for a less expensive part, or telling a customer when an onsite repair will happen and what it will cost, take far too long, are fraught with errors, and become costly.

5

IT becomes burdened with requests for information and reports, which take time to produce and delay more important tasks that IT could perform for the business.

Three typical business scenarios

Three typical business scenarios where integration makes a business in the long-term viability of a company

① Take the business to the next level

| Pre-integration	Post-integration
Product, environmental, or equipment data from the internet of things (IoT) is collected on a server, and can be collated in a spreadsheet or business database with associated reporting tool. A trained person who knows how to access these resources can then support a maintenance or production-planning decision.	Product, environmental, or equipment data from the IoT is collected, stored, and subjected to analytics tools in the cloud or on-premise and contextualized with findings from finance and operational systems to enable decisions regarding proactive maintenance, timely and economical procurement, product design and innovation, production planning, new services offerings, financial and sales forecasting, and environmental compliance. Executives and employees in many different roles can use the company's intelligence tools to take the right steps.

(2) Organically manage operations after an acquisition

Pre-integration	Post-integration
Customer account histories and product versions of an acquired company are stored in the systems that used to belong to that organization, where they are available if somebody – usually a former employee of the company that was bought – determines that they should be reviewed to help understand a business trend or make a product-planning decision.	Customer account histories and product versions of a merged company are connected to the ERP and CRM systems where most important decision-making takes place. All current employees from the acquiring as well as the acquired company, including engineers, sales and marketing execs, production planners, the finance team, the service team, and the call center can draw on this information to help customers, revise product roadmaps, work together in a team-like manner, and make decisions regarding the procurement of materials and equipment, market segmentation, and campaign planning.

(3) Build closer relationships with key accounts and trading partners

Pre-integration	Post-integration
Purchase orders, invoices, and other business documents travel in and out of the network in form of email attachments or in the body of mails. They can be forwarded, but usually information needs to be rekeyed and checked for errors.	Integration makes the data content of purchase orders, invoices, and other business documents accessible in the company's ERP system immediately, without rekeying, error checking, or delays. Transactions and communications happen very quickly. The company can effectively do business with very large suppliers that otherwise would not be entering into a business relationship with it, and has found another way to make the most important customers happy.

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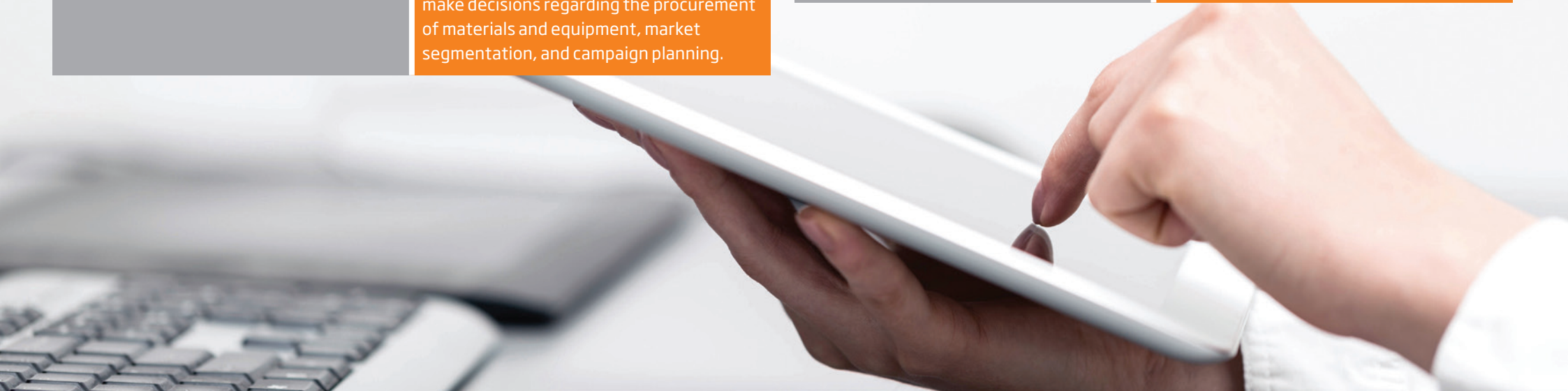
At Columbus, we help our customers digitally **transform** their businesses and improve the value realization of their business application investments. We **mitigate** the inherent risks associated with implementing, upgrading and replacing legacy ERP systems. We **lead** our customers with best-practice consulting services we have refined over thousands of engagements. We take care of our customers and aspire to keep them for life.

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