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Critical success factors in ERP system implementation: integration between project governance, organizational processes, and change management.

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Critical success factors in the implementation of ERP systems: integration between project governance, organizational processes and change management

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SUMMARY

The implementation of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems remains a highly complex socio-technical problem, as it requires simultaneous coordination between technological architecture, business processes, project governance, data quality, and organizational change. This article analyzes critical success factors associated with ERP implementation, emphasizing the articulation between governance, process redesign, training, integration, and change management. A structured narrative review is adopted, supported by peer-reviewed studies, literature reviews, and traceable empirical research. The synthesis indicates that no single factor can explain success: support from senior management, project leadership, alignment between the system and processes, training, communication, data management, testing, and post-implementation follow-up form an interdependent set. Recent studies confirm the continued centrality of organizational factors and highlight the growing importance of continuous integration and post-go-live sustainability. It is concluded that implementation should be governed as a technology-supported organizational transformation, and not simply as software installation.

Keywords: ERP; systems implementation; project governance; change management; business processes; SAP.

ABSTRACT

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementation remains a highly complex sociotechnical problem because it requires simultaneous coordination of technological architecture, business processes, project governance, data quality, and organizational change. This article analyzes critical success factors associated with ERP implementation, highlighting governance, process redesign, training, integration, and change management. The authors used a structured narrative review, supported by traceable peer-reviewed studies, literature reviews, and empirical research. The synthesis indicates that no isolated factor explains success: top management support, project leadership, system-process fit, training, communication, data management, testing, and post-implementation monitoring form an interdependent set. Recent studies confirm the continuing centrality of organizational factors and the growing importance of continuous integration and post-go-live sustainability. ERP implementation should therefore be governed as an organizational transformation enabled by technology rather than as a software installation.

Keywords: ERP; systems implementation; project governance; change management; business processes; SAP.

1 INTRODUCTION

ERP systems were designed to integrate organizational data, processes, and functions that, in

Fragmented architectures operate through distinct applications and databases. This promise

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Integration, however, comes with high implementation complexity. Umble,
Haft and Umble (2003) describe ERPs as business systems whose implementation mobilizes
Substantial financial resources, organizational time, and coordination are required. The problem, therefore, is not...
It is limited to the selection of technology: it involves the organization's ability to align processes, people,
Data, responsibilities, and business objectives.

The literature on critical success factors (CSFs) has consolidated a broad set of conditions.
associated with better results. Ngai, Law and Wat (2008), in an international review,
They identified 18 critical factors and more than 80 subfactors, including support from senior management,
project management, process reengineering, communication, data management, strategy
Implementation, training, and alignment between the ERP and processes. The breadth of this taxonomy.
This demonstrates that the performance of a deployment can hardly be explained solely by...
chosen platform.

This interpretation remains present in the most recent literature. Leyh et al. (2024), when updating
Previous reviews, including studies published up to 2023, identified 272 relevant works and 33
Critical factors for ERP projects. Among the most recurring factors, support and... stood out.
Involvement of senior management, organizational suitability of the ERP system, and user training.
which reinforces the predominance of strategic and organizational components, without excluding other factors.
technological.

However, empirical results are not uniform. Bradley (2008), analyzing eight projects by
Through case studies, he found an association between success and elements such as choice.
The proper selection of a full-time project manager, the training and presence of a project manager are essential.
champion. Other factors frequently mentioned in the literature did not clearly distinguish the
successful cases versus unsuccessful ones. This discrepancy is relevant because it prevents the lists of
FCS should be treated as mechanical and universal checklists.

The objective of this article is to analyze how project governance, organizational processes, and...
Change management relates to ERP implementation, incorporating data quality, and...
training and evaluation mechanisms. The guiding question is: how do the main
Critical factors identified in the literature can be organized into an integrated framework of
implementation, avoiding a purely technological reading of the project?

2 METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a structured narrative literature review. This methodological choice is compatible.
with the aim of integrating conceptual and empirical findings from research with designs

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distinct, without aiming for the exhaustiveness of a formal systematic review. The strategy was designed to preserve bibliographic traceability and allow the propositions discussed were associated with identifiable sources.

Articles directly related to ERP implementation were prioritized. critical success factors, project management, data quality, and transformation organizational. The conceptual basis includes seminal studies widely used in the field, such as Umble, Haft and Umble (2003), Ngai, Law and Wat (2008), Bradley (2008) and Dezdar and Sulaiman (2009), complemented by contemporary literature on post-implementation, integration, and quality of data.

The analysis was organized into five axes: governance and leadership; alignment and redesign of processes; change management and communication; training, knowledge and adoption; and data. Integration, testing, and monitoring. In each area, the studies were compared regarding their nature. from the factor, to the expected mechanism of influence on implementation, and to the type of evidence presented. For chronological updating, recent studies that review the evolution of the FCS have been incorporated. Leyh et al. (2024) provide an extensive update of the literature on ERP projects, while Butarbutar et al. (2023) focus on the post-implementation phase. Herrmann et al. (2022) were used specifically to discuss the relevance of data quality in integrations dependent on ERP data.

No primary data, proprietary percentages, or quantitative inferences were produced from the... The author's professional experiences were not attributed to him. No project results were attributed to the author either. specifics. As a limitation, the review does not calculate the effect size nor establish causality. statistical analysis between each FCS and success; its purpose is to offer an analytical, critical synthesis and traceable from the literature.

3 ERP as a Socio-Technical Transformation

An ERP implementation changes how transactions are recorded, and how information is stored. They circulate and responsibilities are distributed. Consequently, configuration changes These can have repercussions on financial, logistical, productive, and administrative activities. Umble, Haft and Umble (2003) argue that implementation must be linked to clear strategic objectives. realistic expectations and management mechanisms capable of coordinating change at scale organizational.

The taxonomy of Dezdar and Sulaiman (2009) reinforces this interpretation by organizing critical factors. identified in the literature and demonstrate that success depends on organizational dimensions and

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Technological. Instead of considering technology as a variable independent of the environment in which it is...
Within this framework, this perspective treats ERP as an infrastructure that materializes rules, flows, controls, and...
decisions.

The update by Leyh et al. (2024) confirms the persistence of this sociotechnical character.
The predominance of organizational factors among the most relevant critical success factors suggests that technical advances
The platforms did not eliminate problems of alignment, sponsorship, training, and adherence.
Conversely, more interconnected architectures expand dependencies and make coordination between them easier.
Technical and organizational decisions are even more important.
This characteristic explains why customization represents a governance dilemma. Adherence
adapting to existing processes can reduce perceived disruption, but it can also preserve inefficiencies and
increase technical complexity. Conversely, standardizing processes according to the system can...
Simplify maintenance and integration, but increase resistance and the effort required for change. The decision
It needs to be supported by explicit criteria of value, risk, compliance, and sustainability.
Thus, the concept of socio-technical transformation offers a more suitable lens than the idea of
The system is a purely computer-based implementation. While it integrates technical components, its performance is not a purely computer-based system.
It depends on how the organization redefines roles, decision rules, data ownership, and processes.
and forms of coordination. Technology is necessary, but the benefit stems from the interaction between
Technology and organization.

4. GOVERNANCE, SPONSORSHIP AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Support from senior management is frequently discussed in the literature. Ngai, Law and Wat (2008)
They note that support from senior management is among the most frequently identified factors, and Leyh et al.
(2024) again position it among the most frequently occurring FCS. Its importance stems less from
Formal approval of the budget and greater ability to resolve conflicts between areas.
to establish priorities, allocate resources, and support decisions that alter processes.
organizational.
Project management transforms these guidelines into operational mechanisms: scope, schedule,
Responsibilities, acceptance criteria, risk management and addiction treatment. Bradley (2008)
observed a relationship between choosing a suitable project manager with full-time dedication, and
The success in the cases analyzed. The finding is especially relevant because the implementation goes through
functional boundaries; without authority and coordination, local decisions can compromise the
global objectives.
Effective governance also requires separating strategic, functional, and technical decisions. A committee

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Executives can set priorities and resolve high-impact impasses, while process leaders
They validate requirements, and technical teams handle configuration, integration, and testing. This distribution
It reduces ambiguities regarding authority and allows problems to be escalated to the appropriate level.
The formal existence of these instances, however, does not guarantee results. Bradley (2008) found
traditionally recommended factors that did not differentiate, in their sample, well-designed projects
both successful and unsuccessful. This demonstrates that formal structure and practical effectiveness are not synonymous.
Equivalents: meetings, committees, and documents can exist without critical decisions being made.
with the necessary speed, information and accountability.
Governance must, ultimately, remain active after the go-live. Butarbutar et al. (2023) identified
Relevant organizational factors in the post-implementation phase, including project management and skills.
of the team, change management, interdepartmental collaboration, commitment from senior management and
Post-implementation training. Evidence reinforces that the transition to operation does not eliminate the
need for executive coordination.

5 Business Processes and Adaptation to ERP

Implementing an ERP system often exposes inconsistencies between local practices and models.
integrated. Ngai, Law and Wat (2008) identify business process reengineering and the fit between ERP
and the business/process as recurring factors. This implies that the requirements must be evaluated.
not only because of the preference for one unit, but also because of the impact on end-to-end flow and on
coherence of the business model.
Process redesign should precede or accompany configuration decisions. Automate
A poorly defined process can only exacerbate inconsistencies. On the other hand, redesigning processes
Failing to consider system constraints can lead to unfeasible specifications or customizations.
unnecessary. Compliance analysis should distinguish legal or competitive requirements from habits.
historical events without current justification.
Leyh et al. (2024) point to the organizational suitability of the ERP system as one of the most important factors.
Relevant findings in current literature. This result is consistent with the need to evaluate non-relevant findings.
not only the available functions, but also the compatibility between processes, structure, culture and
objectives. Adherence, therefore, is not synonymous with reproducing the legacy: it involves deciding
consciously knowing where to standardize, where to adapt, and where to redesign.
In SAP environments or other large-scale ERPs, this discipline takes on additional importance.
due to the degree of integration between modules, interfaces, and data objects. Although this article does not
Evaluate specific modules, but the principle remains: a functional change must be examined.

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Regarding its effects on master data, integrations, controls, authorizations, and processes.
subsequent.

One practical consequence is the need for clear ownership of the processes. When
No single area is responsible for the end-to-end flow; decisions tend to reflect objectives.
Departmental. Process governance should create mechanisms to arbitrate conflicts and preserve
Integration. This approach aligns functional design with organizational strategy and reduces the...
The risk is that the ERP system will become a collection of locally connected solutions that are fragile.

6. CHANGE MANAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND RESISTANCE

Organizational change is not a step that comes after configuration; it accompanies the entire cycle.
implementation. Ngai, Law and Wat (2008) include culture, the change management program and the
Communication between internationally identified FCS. The communication must explain that...
not only the timeline, but also the reasons, the impacts, the responsibilities and the criteria for
transition.

Resistance can reflect a loss of autonomy, changes in tasks, insecurity regarding...
necessary competence or the perception that the new system does not adequately represent the
work. Treating it as a simple individual opposition reduces the ability to diagnose
Real design problems. Change management needs to create channels to identify these tensions.
differentiating between insufficient communication and criticism that reveals legitimate process or work flaws.
settings.

User engagement functions as a two-way learning mechanism. Users
They contribute operational knowledge, while the project team clarifies the constraints and the...
possibilities of the integrated model. This process does not eliminate conflicts, but it improves quality.
from the decisions and allows identifying impacts that may not be visible in high-level designs.

Bradley's (2008) findings introduce an important nuance: the managerial role in reducing
In the eight cases studied, resistance did not present itself as a clearly distinguishing element.
between success and failure. This doesn't mean resistance is irrelevant; it means that relationships
The relationship between management practices and results depends on the context and should not be generalized beyond it.
from the available evidence.

In the post-implementation phase, change continues. Butarbutar et al. (2023) identified the participation
User engagement was among the key factors, and they ranked change management, communication, and...
Collaboration as a relevant organizational element. Stabilization requires the strengthening of new
practices, correcting deviations, and implementing mechanisms to prevent parallel routines

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rebuild the fragmentation that the ERP sought to reduce.

7. TRAINING, KNOWLEDGE AND ADOPTION

Training is one of the most recurring factors in the literature. In the review by Ngai, Law and Wat (2008), Training and education are among the factors frequently cited, while Bradley (2008) found an association between staff training and success in the projects analyzed. Leyh et al. (2024) also position user training among the three most frequently occurring factors in their Literature update.

A consistent program combines understanding of the process, execution within the system, and handling of... exceptions and understanding of the consequences of the records made. Users who only know Screen sequences can execute standardized scenarios, but have less capacity for... to diagnose deviations or to perceive the effects of an incorrect input on subsequent processes.

Training needs to be segmented by roles and learning moments. Capacity building. Action taken too early may lose effectiveness if the environment is still unstable; training Being too close to the go-live date may not offer enough time for assimilation and practice. Simulation environments, process-based exercises, and competency validation reduce this. voltage.

In addition to end users, the organization needs to develop internal support capacity. Having knowledge concentrated in the hands of consultants or a few specialists creates dependency and hinders... stabilization. Knowledge transfer should be planned as a project deliverable, with documentation, key users, process owners, and support mechanisms capable of to preserve knowledge after the temporary team leaves.

The relevance of learning does not end with entry into production. Butarbutar et al. (2023) They identified post-implementation training as one of the critical factors and included it alongside... of continuous integration and user participation, among the most prominent elements in its review. This indicates that adoption is an evolutionary process: process changes, updates and New scenarios demand continuous retraining.

8. DATA, INTEGRATION, TESTING AND MONITORING

An integrated ERP system depends on consistent data. Ngai, Law, and Wat (2008) identify Data management and development, testing and troubleshooting of the system between FCS. recurring. Data migration is not merely a transfer between banks: it involves definition, sanitation, transformation, reconciliation, and responsibility for quality.

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Herrmann et al. (2022), in developing a framework for evaluating the quality of data from ERP systems for implementing an advanced planning system demonstrate that data Insufficiently qualified personnel can prevent ERP-dependent systems from operating correctly. as expected. Although the study has a specific context of manufacturing and APS, its contribution This highlights a general principle: technical integration does not compensate for low-quality data.

Tests also need to reflect end-to-end processes. Testing isolated functions can demonstrate which components function individually without verifying that the integrated process is executable. Scenarios should include interfaces, authorizations, exceptions, relevant volumes, and reconciliations. In addition to clear functional criteria for acceptance.

Integration remains relevant after deployment. Butarbutar et al. (2023) identified the Continuous system integration is the most important factor in its post-implementation review. This result is consistent with business environments where ERP connects to applications. specialized, data platforms, digital channels and external solutions; changes in a Components can produce effects at various points in the architecture.

Monitoring should continue after the product goes live. Stability metrics, incidents, Data quality, process performance, and adoption rates help differentiate between problems. transients of structural failures. Umble, Haft and Umble (2003) emphasize performance evaluation. as part of the implementation process, while post-implementation literature reinforces the The need for continuous improvement and sustainability.

9. ANALYTICAL SYNTHESIS OF FACTORS

Figure 1 presents a conceptual synthesis developed from the recurring factors discussed by Umble, Haft and Umble (2003), Ngai, Law and Wat (2008), Bradley (2008), Dezdar and Sulaiman (2009), Butarbutar et al. (2023) and Leyh et al. (2024). It does not represent statistical frequency or ranking of Importance; it organizes the functional relationships between the dimensions of the project.

The structure highlights interdependence. Governance without reliable data does not guarantee operation. Integrated training; training without established processes transmits practices that can be changed. immediately; well-designed processes without change management may face low adoption; Robust tests without business criteria can technically validate scenarios that don't deliver the... expected organizational outcome.

This interdependence helps explain why isolated factors can produce different results. in different studies. The presence of training, for example, does not provide information about its quality. moment, adherence to roles, or relationship with established processes. Similarly, support

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The executive branch can nominally exist without producing quick decisions or sufficient resources. The factor
It needs to be analyzed both in its mechanism and in its relationships.

Recent literature expands on this synthesis by demonstrating that the success cycle does not end with the go-live.
Butarbutar et al. (2023) demonstrate the relevance of continuous integration and post-implementation training.
and user participation, while Leyh et al. (2024) reiterate the importance of the factors
organizational. Implementation should therefore be treated as a journey that includes
Preparation, implementation, stabilization, and improvement.

Therefore, critical factors should be treated as a system of complementary controls.
The managerial contribution of literature lies not in offering a universal checklist, but in
Guiding governance questions: who decides, based on what criteria, and what processes will be...
What data will be altered, what data underpins these processes, how will users be prepared, and how will the...
The results will be evaluated.



Figure 1 – Integrated structure of critical factors for ERP implementation.
Source: author's elaboration based on Umble, Haft and Umble (2003), Ngai, Law and Wat (2008),
Bradley (2008), Dezdar and Sulaiman (2009), Butarbutar et al. (2023) and Leyh et al. (2024).

10 DISCUSSION

A comparison of the studies reveals both convergence and caution. There is a strong recurrence of
factors related to leadership, design, training, processes, and data, but the presence

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The nominal value of a factor does not guarantee its effect. (International review by Ngai, Law and Wat, 2008) demonstrates the amplitude and repetition of the FCS; Bradley (2008), however, shows empirically that Some prescribed practices did not result in distinct outcomes in the cases examined.

These pieces of evidence are not necessarily contradictory, as they operate on different levels. A Frequency in the literature indicates perceived and investigated relevance; case studies examine how Factors manifest themselves in concrete contexts. An organization may formally possess a executive sponsor and yet maintain ineffective governance. Similarly, Training can exist without generating sufficient operational competence.

Dezdar and Sulaiman (2009) contribute to organizing the literature into a comprehensive taxonomy. allowing us to understand which factors belong to distinct and interdependent dimensions. This view It is useful for management because it avoids concentrating risk on a single front. A technically sound organization Prepared but not prepared, it may fail in terms of change and governance; another, with strong sponsorship, may suffer from data issues. or inadequate adhesion.

Recent studies show continuity and evolution. Leyh et al. (2024) confirm the centrality of executive support, organizational fit, and training, while Butarbutar et al. (2023) shift some of the attention to post-go-live support. Herrmann et al. (2022), in turn, They demonstrate how data quality can become a determining factor for integrated systems that They depend on the ERP. The overall picture suggests that the contemporary agenda expands, but does not replace, the classical fundamentals.

For SAP projects, the implication is particularly relevant: the platform does not eliminate the need organizational decisions. The value of an integrated solution depends on the coherence between the configuration, processes, data, controls, integrations, and user behavior.

Thus, technical expertise and management discipline need to work in a complementary way, with A governance structure capable of preserving this consistency throughout the life cycle.

11 CONCLUSION

ERP implementation should be understood as an organizational transformation supported by technology. The literature reviewed argues that success depends on a combination of factors, including executive support, project management, process redesign and adherence, communication, training, data management, testing, integration, and performance monitoring.

Classic studies remain relevant because they identified problems that persist in Contemporary architectures. Umble, Haft, and Umble (2003) and Ngai, Law, and Wat (2008) already demonstrated that ERP implementation requires strategic alignment, managerial coordination, training, and technical discipline. The persistence of these elements in recent reviews indicates that technological evolution does not eliminate the organizational dimension of the problem.

The update by Leyh et al. (2024) reinforces this conclusion by identifying support and involvement from senior management, organizational suitability of the ERP, and user training as the factors of

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greater recurrence. The result suggests that organizations should not interpret technological modernization as a substitute for governance, process design, and people development.

The analysis also shows that there is no basis for reducing complexity to a universal formula. Bradley (2008) demonstrates that frequently prescribed factors may not distinguish between success and failure in all contexts. Consequently, the practical application of CSFs requires contextual diagnosis, operational definition of the factors, and evaluation of how they interact in the specific project.

Data and integration constitute another crucial dimension. Herrmann et al. (2022) show that poor ERP data quality can compromise systems dependent on that data, while Butarbutar et al. (2023) identify continuous integration as a central element in the post-implementation phase. ERP sustainability therefore requires ongoing data and interface governance, not just activities focused on the initial migration.
The post-go-live phase should be treated as a consolidation phase, not a shutdown.
Additional training, user engagement, continuous improvement, performance monitoring, and integration management are necessary to convert production deployment into a stable organizational capability.
Recent literature reinforces that benefits may be limited when the organization prematurely reduces its managerial attention after technical deployment.
From a management perspective, the main implication is replacing generic checklists with an integrated governance architecture. Executive sponsorship, process ownership, project management, data quality, testing, enablement, and change management need to be connected through...
Decision criteria and accountability mechanisms. The absence of one of these dimensions can transfer risk to the others.
As for research agendas, longitudinal studies that differentiate between successful implementation, operational stabilization, and medium-term benefit generation remain relevant; comparisons between organizations of different sizes and sectors; and investigations into how cloud ERP, automation, and...
Artificial intelligence and new integration architectures alter the relative importance of critical factors.
These lines of research can expand the explanatory power of the literature without abandoning the socio-technical understanding supported by accumulated studies.

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