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5 Selection Mistakes in ERP Projects

in the Pharmaceutical Industry and How to Avoid Them

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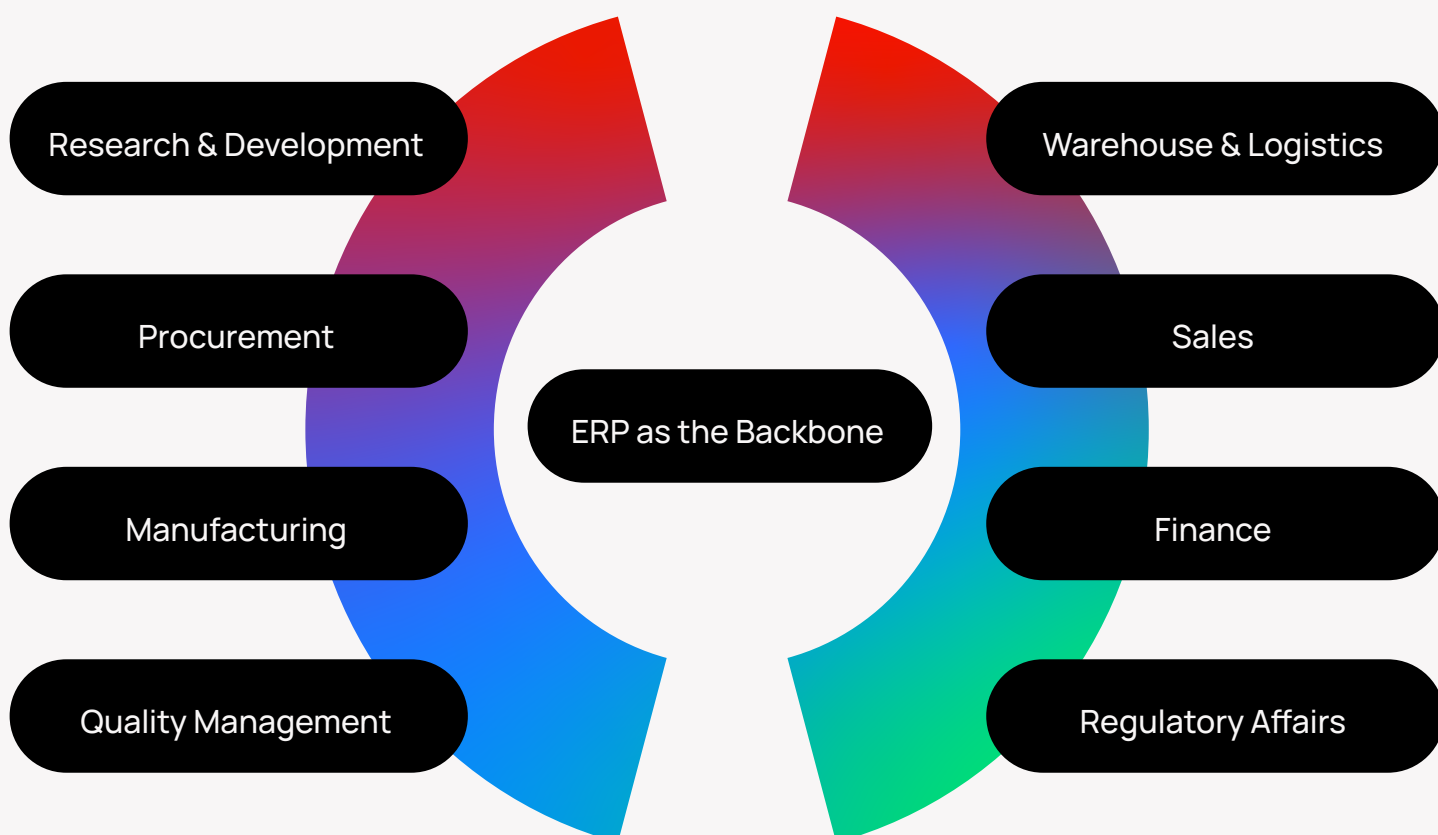
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Why ERP Selection Makes the Difference in the Pharmaceutical Industry

An ERP system forms the strong backbone of your entire business processes. In the pharmaceutical industry in particular, this system plays a decisive role in whether you can produce safely, face audits with confidence, and reliably meet strict regulatory requirements.

Anyone who compromises on this key decision often finds themselves having to rework not only individual workflows later on, but also deeply embedded structures. Take a look at the typical pitfalls of ERP implementation and find out how to avoid them successfully from the very beginning.





Mistake 1: Requirements Remain Too Superficial

Many pharmaceutical ERP projects start with structure, but lack the necessary depth. They often describe requirements, yet fail to reflect the real day-to-day work in precise detail. The result is a concept that seems plausible during the selection process but quickly reaches its limits in day-to-day operations.

It is only in daily practice that the missing details become apparent:

- How do approval processes work in concrete terms?
- How do we document deviations?
- How do we ensure seamless traceability?

The result is a system that looks perfect on paper but requires significant additional effort in practice.



Mistake 2: The Pharma Focus Is Underestimated

A standard ERP system offers flexibility, but it cannot be stretched indefinitely. Anyone planning to bolt complex pharmaceutical requirements onto the system afterward is simply pushing critical challenges further down the road.

This is often underestimated, especially when it comes to:

- end-to-end traceability across the product lifecycle
- integration of quality control and documentation
- management of changes and approvals

Without being firmly embedded in the standard solution, isolated individual processes emerge instead of a smooth, end-to-end system. The direct consequence: complexity increases and errors creep in much more quickly.



Mistake 3: Compliance Only Comes Into Play Afterwards

Project teams often have compliance on their radar – just not early enough. In most cases, it only becomes part of the evaluation once an ERP system has already been preselected or the project is running at full speed.

The rude awakening comes when you realize that the new system does not consistently support the strict pharmaceutical requirements:

- Documentation suddenly has gaps.
- Audit trails cannot be reliably maintained.
- Validation stalls and becomes unnecessarily complex.

The cause: poor timing. In the pharmaceutical industry in particular, compliance must be at the table from the very first minute and actively help shape system decisions. Organizations that treat compliance as a core project pillar from the outset not only saves time and resources, but also secures the long-term success of the project.



Mistake 4:

A System Is Evaluated by Individual Features Instead of Processes

A demo can showcase what a system is capable of in theory – but the real stress test is practice. Far too often, far-reaching decisions are based on ticking off rigid feature checklists instead of walking through real pharmaceutical business processes step by step.

Only in practical use does it become clear whether the different areas truly work together seamlessly:

- Do quality control, production, and warehousing work together smoothly?
- Do approval processes run efficiently and without unnecessary delays?
- Does the documentation remain consistent and fully traceable throughout?

Anyone who skips this practical comparison will quickly choose a system that shines on paper but creates noticeable friction in daily operations.



Mistake 5:

Price Dominates the True Value

The first figure many organizations focus on is the software license cost. These figures seem tangible and are easy to compare. But that impression says little about the tangible added value an ERP system will actually deliver in day-to-day work later on.

The real, often invisible costs lie beneath the surface and usually only arise after the purchasing decision:

- in custom adaptations
- during integration into existing structures
- in ongoing operations and during updates
- as part of validation

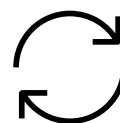
If the software does not support your core processes out of the box, it will require ongoing customization and maintenance.

Foundation Before Function: Your Key to ERP Success

Implementing a new ERP system is a far-reaching decision. Anyone who clearly defines their requirements, includes industry-specific details, and considers compliance from the very first minute is laying a strong foundation. Without this basis, painful compromises in live operations are inevitable. So how do you make the right choice? The key lies in a clearly structured approach:

Real processes instead of long lists

Define your requirements based on real work processes – not rigid feature lists.



Test workflows

Run through business-critical workflows early and specifically, for example in practical demos or a proof of concept (PoC).



Compliance from Day One

Anchor compliance requirements directly as a criterion so that you can carry out a suitable evaluation.



Everyday reality instead of glossy promises

Measure the systems offered against the reality of your company, not against polished presentations.



Value before price

Make your decision based on the long-term added value for your company instead of being guided only by initial entry costs.



This way, you are not just making a well-founded and secure decision. You are creating a stable foundation for an ERP system that supports your processes efficiently, reliably, and for the long term.

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