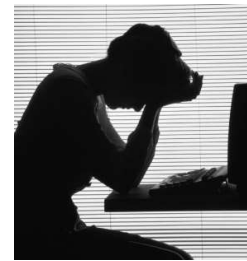


Is your software working for you, or are you working for your software?

After working in the window and door industry since 1987, I have seen a lot of change. The growth of large manufacturers has pushed the software developers to improve their products immeasurably since those early days of green on black screens. But I still hear the same common complaints. Here are just three.

Challenge #1 : “I have CRM for Sales and Customer Care, my surveyors still use paper, I employ countless people to input quotes and orders for pricing and production, my stores are full yet I still run out of items and I have so many spreadsheets ... why can't all the different software just talk to each other?”



It's annoying, but why does this really matter?

- Incomplete, often inaccurate picture of overall company performance
- Drain on employee time and productivity to compile, input and analyse data from each area of the business
- Duplication of data entry
- Time-lag of information that prevents effective planning and proactive decision-making
- Difficulties in providing meaningful and accurate reports



Challenge #2 : Poor Communication

Poor communication between different departments is definitely something I hear a lot, particularly when there are more than one manufacturing site involved or the company is growing rapidly. People get busy and so they forget and often they assume. The results can be;

- lost sales opportunities
- cancelled orders (or worse, contracts)
- delays in manufacture leading to yet more over-time
- increase in purchasing costs through carriage charges
- late deliveries leading to unscheduled runs
- customers not receiving calls back

Challenge #3 : “I have a stores that is full, but I continually running out of stock. I’m obviously buying too much of the wrong parts, but what are they and why? Why are we always out-of-stock on something?”



If there is no other useful alternative, people will usually try their best (that’s why you employ them) and will often write a spreadsheet to control and schedule the work coming through with the information they have available.

Unfortunately, this information will often reach the purchasing department too late. Without any visibility to sales (or better yet sales forecasting), buyers have a hard time knowing what to purchase and when.

As well as working with window and door companies, I also work in other business sectors both in the UK and North America and these challenges are not uncommon to businesses outside of our industry. In response, many of these other markets have developed a solution – it’s called ERP. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software is a suite of integrated applications that an organization can use to manage the business and automate many of the “back office” functions by using a single database, one application and the same user interface for all areas of the business.

An ERP system provides an integrated view of all the core business processes, often in real-time, by using a common database. Such a system is able to track resources and business commitments;

- raw materials
- components
- production capacity
- quotes
- orders
- purchase orders
- inventory
- cash
- finances
- HR

Is now the right time to introduce ERP?

It’s clear to see that ERP implementation is becoming a key requirement in today’s competitive market. The introduction of an integrated ERP system gives competitive advantage and boosts profits and productivity through;

- easy access to critical information; *inventory levels, shipments, customer financials, order history, returns, payments, product pricing, etc*
- increased data accuracy; *fewer errors, delays and inefficiencies*
- quote to sales order

automation; *faster and more accurate quotes based on real-time inventory and pricing* •
enhanced visibility; *better customer service, support and insight into your customer base* •
improved planning, forecasting and reporting.

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