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Nuts and Bolts: Legacy layers-Done and Dusted

Customisation is shallow, partners act as implementation proxy and source code issues act as spoilers. Here's more on why a customer stayed away from a big ERP vendor.

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MUMBAI, INDIA: Brendon Pereira, VP, Corporate Planning and IT for Dusters Total Solutions tells us why RAMCO has been the right choice for giving the company a neat and clean IT environment so far.

When and what made the company turn in direction of an ERP solution?

Our inception dates back 12 years back. But after some years, there came a point when objectives of rapid growth became paramount. This required stronger systems, resources and bigger consolidation as well as growth curves. Stronger MIS, control mechanisms were called for besides a huge capability to consolidate data. The growth was organically driven. There was a lot of manpower, about 20,000 people and that too spread over various locations due to the nature of our business. I mean over 500 customers 1200 customer sites. Any deployment at any one physical location needed to be centrally updates. For this kind of scale and scope, we needed structures, processes and systems. That's when we went for automation.

How has it turned out? Did you consider other obvious options in the league of SAP or Oracle before opting for a relatively smaller and local player like RAMCO?

We went through almost all available options. RAMCO was the final choice because it gave a comfort level having done implementation in similar industries like ours. We had similar pain points of a large geographical spread, multiple bases, large spread, an annuity model of business etc. The invoicing is spread over two to three years which required stringent back-end systems that fit the model.

Why not the big ERP vendors?

One issue with them is that source code is required, and a lot of customization that they offer is superficial and not within systems and processes. With RAMCO, the customization is way easier. Also, the implementation is done by the company itself and not by a partner. That brings a lot of difference in long-term experience.

Are there any special gaps on pricing and other costs too?

In RAMCO's case, there are implementation expenses and other normal licensing costs.

Is it better on AMCs?

We are very conscious of the recurring type of costs as a customer. So we kept that as a focus during initial negotiations. Year on year escalations going out of hand is not an issue I see now. The percentage of license fee that we have to pay as support costs are comparatively much better in case of RAMCO as I have experienced. Maintenance is taken care of in an AMC mode. Certain level of enhancements happens on a case to case basis.

Are third-party options good enough here?

I am exploring those for areas like hardware. We have outsourced hardware maintenance to a third-party service provider. A lot of talent is available outside, which in the long term, is also cost effective. We are happy with that decision.

Is the choice of ERP vendor because of your nature and size of business?

If I have to do this whole process again, I would choose RAMCO again. In our industry, we are on the pioneer side when it comes to automation. I have seen and heard other peers who have tried the usual big ERP suites and have given up midway. That is a reflection of both the vendor and the company side. Standardization of processes is important. Automation only sits upon a set of processes.

So how has this phase changed you, your processes? Any mishaps or lessons? What can RAMCO too, improve on?

Lots of them. Like the objective of ERP is to completely integrate the process. Example- sales to cash. The implementation has to be designed with that approach. RAMCO does not have consultants on the complete process. We ourselves have been witnessing rapidly evolving processes. We need scalability and that calls for standardization. A lot of time, hence, has to be spent on scoping the process, identifying the gaps between manual and automatic set-ups.

What else on your side?

It also needs a lot of discipline on our side on process enhancements. All of it is actually driven and not on a piece of paper, as exceptions keep coming. So one has to keep the pace and focus. Our ability to bring in data in quick manner is equally important. The ability to consolidate data into the system became important as every time there is a backlog, there is a problem.

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