



Aptean Food & Beverage ERP

Managing Change and Preparing Your Food Business for an **ERP Solution**





Growing pains are most commonly faced by youngsters going through spurts of development—but they’re also known to occur in food businesses that are expanding their operations and market share. As a food industry professional, you should know these signs and what they imply.

You might need to implement some big changes if your business is facing any of the following:

- Difficulty getting one version of the truth
- Lower yields and increased waste resulting from inefficiencies
- Reduced customer satisfaction due to delays and errors
- Inability to forecast sales causing you to hold inventory
- Salespeople lacking the real-time access to data they need
- Anxiety and doubts about your ability to respond to emergencies

The most effective way to alleviate these symptoms and future-proof your organization is with a purpose-built enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution. Of course, a company-wide integration with a brand new system has its own difficulties and it takes careful planning and strategy to do it well.

Thankfully, bright minds in academia have realized this truth and explored how large-scale organizational transformations are best achieved. One such scholar is John Kotter, a Harvard University professor who in 1996 authored the ground-breaking *Leading Change*.

In it, he laid out these eight steps for navigating the human element and ensuring your company has a successful implementation.

Step 1: Create a Sense of Urgency

Kotter describes this step as convincing people that they are “standing on a burning platform”—or, in our context, demonstrating to employees how problematic the current situation is. This is key for ensuring their buy-in on the process, which will be of utmost importance for a long and potentially complicated implementation.

Because your workers are encountering those growing pains on a daily business, getting them to believe that change is necessary likely won't be too difficult. Keep in mind that everyone, from top to bottom, needs to be on board. Especially important are those who have significant influence over others, such as executives and more senior staff.

Step 2: Build a Guiding Coalition

Forming a team to lead the charge is crucial. These will be your champions of the project, so they should be individuals with strong leadership capabilities—but they shouldn't just be from management.

You should consider not only employees who have already expressed enthusiasm for the implementation, but also those who have expressed doubts. When even the critics begin to show their eagerness to get a solution in place, they also begin to feel accountable for the eventual success of the process, and they can win over other skeptics in the organization.

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Step 3: Create a Vision

Defining the desired end-state for your implementation creates the “carrot on a stick” incentive for your staff, but it also clarifies the reasons the process is being undertaken in the first place. Consider laying out goals as bullet points like these:

- Software to support 25% annual growth over the next three years
- Reduction of paper use by 20%
- Cut inventory errors in half
- Ensure employees can fulfill their responsibilities in normal business hours

The importance of accomplishing this step and getting the vision right can't be overstated. It will be crucial in maintaining motivation throughout your journey.

Step 4: Communicate the Vision

Now that you know where you're headed and why, you need to make sure everyone else fully understands the plan, too. This needs to play out on a company-wide scale, as well as within core teams and your guiding coalition.

After an initial announcement of the implementation, make sure there's a space for individuals to come with questions and concerns. Illustrate your progress visually, perhaps with a timeline, so that everyone is aware of the milestones being marked.

Meetings and memos can be brief if there isn't much to report, but keep them coming consistently so the whole business has a good idea of where they are and what's next.

Step 5: Empower People by Removing Obstacles to Progress

What could be worse than getting the entire staff raring to go, only to have an otherwise avoidable roadblock pop up? The obstacles could be physical, organizational or human, but you need to have your eye out for these potential pitfalls and eliminate them before they become an issue.

The ways you can accomplish this are many:

- Put less important projects on hold so people can prioritize the implementation
- Provide training throughout the process to establish necessary skills and familiarity
- Simplify decision-making and approvals, and delegate when necessary
- Physically reposition workers—or set up new virtual meetings—to foster teamwork
- Re-evaluate traditional processes and metrics to lessen friction and maintain focus

With all of your employees able to contribute to the implementation and see the positive effects of their effort, you'll not only accelerate your process but also spread the sense of accountability for the project. They will see themselves as part of the solution and therefore remain motivated to keep moving forward.

Step 6: Create Quick Wins

This goes hand-in-hand with frequent communication and transparent progress tracking—find reasons to celebrate along the way. Consider separating the implementation into clear phases, and mark the transitions with an event or special acknowledgment.

Approach this in both informal and formal ways. Managers expressing gratitude to team members for hard work should be accompanied by company-wide emails elaborating on your successes and the employees who deserve credit.



Step 7: Build on the Gains

Don't let off the gas once you're in motion. Momentum can be a deciding factor when it comes to overcoming hiccups in the process. Your guiding coalition and leadership team will be key here. Task them with identifying and communicating the latest achievements. That should help prevent individuals from slipping into complacency.

"Irrational and political resistance to change never fully dissipates," Kotter explains. Recognize this, but instead of becoming frustrated, find ways over those hurdles.



Step 8: Embed the Changes in the Company Culture

New processes and projects will hold your employees' attention at first, but you'll need to truly make them part of your company culture for them to last. That means you need to make it easy to do things the right way and impossible to do them the old way.

Try some of these strategies:

- Revisit the corporate values and mission statement for potential revision
- Create transition plans so that changes in staff don't result in progress being lost
- Get rid of all the now-obsolete forms, inboxes, databases and meetings
- Critically assess key teams, identify silos and reconfigure as necessary
- Share evidence that shows how the implementation is leading to superior results
- Enforce the new values with new employees and identify those who struggle

Frequently, the impetus for seeking new business software is a merger or acquisition. With people, equipment and facilities changing or coming on board, this step will be all the more important.

Finishing Strong and Reaping the Rewards

The marathon that is implementing new ERP software will always come with stumbling blocks. These steps, however, give you a framework for the process and should help you remain prepared in the face of setbacks.

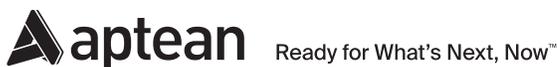
Ready for what's next? **Contact our experts** to learn more about how Aptean's industry-specific solution can help your food business grow and achieve even greater heights.



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Interested to see how Aptean Food & Beverage ERP can help you better manage your food company?

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