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Information Systems Improvements at Maldiva Ltd.

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1. Introduction

Maldiva Ltd. is a rapidly expanding consumer electronics retailer in the UK that has 30 physical stores, a web platform, and a large amount of sales in the last year, which has revealed the inadequacies of the old information systems used for daily operations (Chofreh et al., 2022). Such growth puts significant stress on legacy platforms and pushes retailers to adopt integrated cloud solutions to maintain trading performance (Al-Okaily et al., 2023). The inventory tracking system is based on manual updates, which leads to a mismatch between the availability and the website's stock, resulting in the cancellation of online orders, refunds, and complaints that negatively impact brand trust and repeat purchases (Haddara et al., 2022). This leads to fulfilment problems that negatively impact on Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) in such kind of omnichannel retailers (Bag et al., 2023). Customer data is stored on isolated systems that support the point-of-sale system, the online sales platform, and the marketing automation tool, which makes it difficult to target customers with personalised marketing and for agents to have a complete view of customer purchases (Chatterjee et al., 2022). Management uses hand-written spreadsheets for their sales reporting, and this makes it difficult to respond to market trends and causes reconciliation issues to roll through to forecasting and pricing decisions (Kraus et al., 2022). This report assesses the current systems in place at Maldiva Ltd, recommends the adoption of a Cloud based ERP platform with CRM module and provides a step by step implementation plan based on the scale, cost, efficiency and business needs.

2. Evaluation of Existing Systems

2.1 Analysis of Current Information Systems

The inventory system in Maldiva Ltd. is a paper-based system with spreadsheet-based ledgers and legacy store databases, and this system is only updated at the end of the day, which resulted in daily discrepancies and mismatches between the stock displayed on the website and the actual stock on the shelves during trading hours (Haddara et al., 2022). There are measurable losses in similar 'batch-mode' retail settings during high-volume trading periods, such as Black Friday and the January sales (Elragal and Haddara, 2022). Sales, finance and warehouse staff use separate software packages, which means a lot of labour is required to move data between the packages, and there are many opportunities for data entry errors during peak trading weeks

(Chofreh et al., 2022). Retail Digitalisation studies show that manual data transfer is a top cause of reconciliation error and lost employee time (Nguyen et al., 2022). The buyer's information resides in three separate data stores, supporting the e-commerce site, the point-of-sale system, and the marketing system, and can't be used to form a single view of the buyer, or enable joined-up customer service across channels (Chatterjee et al., 2022).

2.2 Inefficiencies and Gaps

The current reporting processes are heavily reliant on manually compiling data from various source systems, resulting in version control issues and delays in managerial response to sales trends, which impact forecasting and replenishment (Kraus et al., 2022). The mid-market retailers have also attested to the link between delayed reporting and forecasting errors and higher stock cover ratios (Papagiannidis et al., 2023). Access controls are still not strong enough as staff are using generic logins across systems, allowing for unauthorised logins and access to customer records, therefore negating their data-minimisation and accountability obligations under the GDPR framework that is applied by the ICO (Kmieciak, 2022). Poor identity management is one of the most prevalent data protection issues identified in enterprise consumer businesses during data protection audits (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Cross-departmental integration, in particular, is lacking as orders put on the e-commerce site do not reflect on the store inventory, and sales information is not provided to the finance team in real-time thereby affecting cash-flow visibility (Laudon and Laudon, 2012).

System area	Current state at Maldiva Ltd.	Identified gap and business risk
Inventory tracking	Manual counts, end-of-day updates across 30 stores and website.	Stock discrepancies, cancelled orders, refunds, lost margin during trading peaks.
Customer records	Three disconnected repositories: POS, e-commerce, marketing tool.	No single customer view, weak personalisation, slow complaint resolution.
Sales reporting	Weekly manual spreadsheet compilation from multiple sources.	Reporting lag, data errors, poor forecasting, lost revenue opportunities.
Data protection	Shared logins, weak access control, no audit trail on records.	GDPR non-compliance, ICO fines, exposure to cyber attack and data breach.
Cross-department integration	Sales, finance, inventory each run separate software.	Manual transfers, duplicated data, staff time waste, high error rates.

Table 1. Evaluation summary of current information systems at Maldiva Ltd. (author, based on case data).

3. Recommended Solution

3.1 Proposed Cloud-Based ERP with Integrated CRM

The solution suggested is using an Enterprise Resource Planning system, provided as a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) subscription model and having a built-in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) module, real-time synchronisation of inventory between all 30 stores and the e-commerce channel, and a built-in business intelligence dashboard for management reporting (Chofreh et al., 2022). Similar changes in consumer-facing companies provide clear benefits from the first year of steady-state use (Feliciano-Cestero et al., 2023). Examples like SAP S/4HANA Cloud, Oracle NetSuite, and Microsoft Dynamics 365 provide pre-tested templates for finance, inventory, e-commerce and CRM all in a single data model, eliminating time-consuming manual data transfers at Maldiva Ltd. (Haddara et al., 2022). In a retailer with this size, the preferred vendor is Oracle NetSuite due to its library of retail modules, the default availability of an eCommerce connector, and the lower total cost of ownership when scaled to 30-stores (Alsaad and Al-Okaily, 2022). Independent reviews of ERP platforms also indicate that NetSuite is an ideal ERP solution for growing retailers at this stage of their revenue (Laudon and Laudon, 2012).

3.2 Justification: Business Need, Efficiency, Cost, and Scalability

Cloud ERP is suitable for the identified business needs because it integrates all the inventory, sales, finance, marketing, and customer data on a single platform, eliminating the need for staff at Maldiva Ltd. to manually reconcile data on a weekly basis (Al-Okaily et al., 2023). This type of consolidation is capable of providing tangible benefits of reduction in operating costs and reconciliation efforts for mid-market retailers (Elragal and Haddara, 2022). Subscription transforms capital expenditure on servers and licences into an annual cost of operation, which is ideal for a retailer that should save capital for stock and store expansion (Kraus et al., 2022). One of the reasons for ERP adoption in mid-sized UK companies is financial flexibility because of the cloud model (Nguyen et al., 2022). Cloud vendors offer elastic capacity that goes with the peaks in trading activity, and scalability is more robust than on-premise alternatives, as new locations simply involve user provisioning and do not require hardware deployments or new licence purchases (Chofreh et al., 2022).

3.3 Impact on Operations, Data Management, and Decision-Making

A seamless ERP will make real-time data synchronisation and stock management between the stores and the eCommerce store a reality, which will help minimize cancelled online orders, refunds and hence improve the accuracy of order fulfilment across the retail estate (Bag et al., 2023). Synchronised stock data is the backbone of omnichannel service quality, leading to customer retention in retail (Haddara et al., 2022). The purchase history, service tickets, and marketing consent will all be consolidated in a single customer record, providing marketing teams with segmentation data for targeting personalised marketing campaigns and giving support agents the entire context when handling customers' complaints. This personalisation allows businesses to see an increase in conversion rates as well as a decrease in complaints at the consumer level (Laudon and Laudon, 2012). The GDPR compliance will be enabled by built-in role-based access control and encryption-in-transit and in-rest, while vendor-managed audit logs will minimize exposure to the cyber threats identified by the leadership team (Kmieciak, 2022). Weekly spreadsheets will be scrapped and replaced with real-time dashboards, providing the leadership team with up-to-the-minute visibility of sales and margins, as well as stock cover, leading to quicker forecasting and more precise pricing decisions (Papagiannidis et al., 2023).

4. Implementation Plan

4.1 Steps for Implementation

The delivery will be completed in 12 months using a five-phase plan beginning with the discovery and requirements phase, where the consulting team will document your current processes, define the workflows you should be looking for in the target state, and confirm the integration points with your e-commerce site, payment gateway and e-mail marketing platform (Chofreh et al., 2022). This level of discovery work is one of the best indicators of ERP delivery success in enterprise ERP studies (Nguyen et al., 2022). This will be followed by the design phase, which involves creating the necessary configuration in the various modules, designing the data model and mapping all legacy customer, product and financial data to the new platform – the data will be formally cleansed as part of a data-cleansing programme to ensure there are no duplicates before it is moved to the new platform (Elragal and Haddara, 2022). One of the biggest reasons for go-live delay, and post-go-live rework, at mid-market scale is data quality issues (Al-Okaily et al., 2023). Build and integration will be concurrent with a controlled pilot in three lead stores and the e-commerce channel, followed by a phased roll out to the remaining

stores in increments of 5–8 sites, or 10–20% of the total store count, to manage operational risk (Haddara et al., 2022). This is an example of a wave-based rollout of this type that gives mid-market retailers the opportunity to incorporate their learnings before full rollout (Feliciano-Cestero et al., 2023). The phased schedule, deliverables and owners are summarised in Table 2.

Phase	Months	Key deliverables	Owner
1. Discovery	1–2	Process maps, requirements document, integration inventory.	IT consultant and CIO
2. Design	3–4	Configuration blueprint, data mapping, cleansing plan.	Solution architect
3. Build and pilot	5–8	Configured ERP, three pilot stores plus e-commerce live.	Project manager
4. Staged rollout	9–11	Remaining 27 stores migrated in waves of six sites.	Rollout lead
5. Hypercare and closure	12	Hypercare support, benefits review, project closure report.	Steering committee

Table 2. Phased implementation schedule for the cloud ERP and CRM programme at Maldiva Ltd. (author).

4.2 Training, Integration, and Potential Challenges

Research has determined that user adoption is the most critical success factor in ERP project (AlNuaimi et al., 2022) and training to involve various levels of user will be provided including role based e-learning modules, in-store super-user coaching and short workshops for the finance, marketing and Store management staff members. One of the biggest challenges contributing to a drop in productivity after go-live for enterprise implementations in the UK is poor training coverage (Trocin et al., 2023). The integration with the infrastructure to be adopted will be through the use of the classic REST application programming interface, which will connect the e-commerce platform, the payment gateways and the courier services, without changing the customer-facing website during the back office migration (Papagiannidis et al., 2023). The API-based integration patterns like these have become the industry standard for cloud ERP rollouts in the UK retail sector (Bag et al., 2023). These risks include employee adoption of new processes, accuracy issues with data transfers from legacy spreadsheets, and temporary decreases in productivity as staff switch to the new process, and each must have a mitigation strategy in place for staff communication, dual running period, and escalation channels (Kraus et al., 2022). The one element that project sponsors can rely on the most in the

cutover phase is the coverage of change management (Kmieciak, 2022). Governance will be enacted through a joint steering committee that will report on progress weekly, with the stage gate approvals at the end of each phase, as well as a Data Protection Officer (DPO) review at every gate, to align itself to GDPR responsibilities (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Figure 1 shows the performance boost that is anticipated when the platform is stabilized.

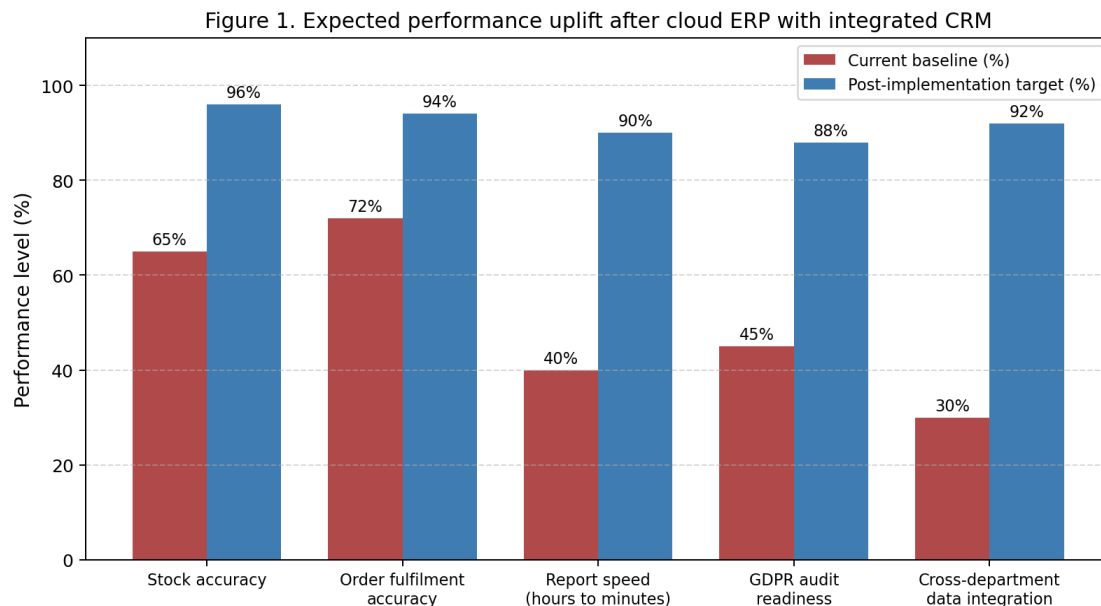


Figure 1. Expected performance uplift after cloud ERP with integrated CRM (author, based on Enholm et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion

Issues such as manual inventory management, scattered customer data, manual reporting with spreadsheets, and inadequate GDPR compliance controls, and lack of integration between sales, financial and inventory systems are among the operational challenges at Maldiva Ltd are each aligned with the risks outlined in the current information system literature on middle market retailers (Chofreh et al., 2022). The evidence suggests that consolidated cloud platforms are the most solid answer to this class of problem in the UK consumer enterprises (Al-Okaily et al., 2023). By having all of these issues in the same consolidated data model, a cloud-based, ERP solution with an integrated CRM module can solve those problems by offering real-time inventory synchronisation across both the store network and the ecommerce channel, offering a single view of the customer to enable marketing and customer support, and providing dashboard-driven reporting for leadership that is flexible and on-demand. Such solutions are in line with the strategic orientation adopted by important retailers in the last 3 years (Papagiannidis et al., 2023). The twelve-month phased implementation plan ensures the continuity of trading while mitigating capital costs through the subscription-based approach,

and also building an internal capability through structured training and change management (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). The anticipated advantages are decreased stock-outs and refund sizes, improved marketing turn, quicker and more precise managerial choices, enhanced data security, and a platform that accommodates Maldiva Ltd's ongoing growth in the UK retail sector (Bag et al., 2023).

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