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Individual Report –Information Systems Improvements

Business Case: Maldiva Ltd. – Overcoming Operational Challenges

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1. Introduction

Maldiva Ltd. is a fast-growing fictional consumer electronics retailer operating 30 physical stores alongside an e-commerce platform. Significant sales growth over the past year has created expansion opportunities, yet outdated and inefficient information systems are generating substantial operational problems. As IT consultants, we have been engaged to analyse these challenges and recommend a modern information system that streamlines operations, improves efficiency, and enhances customer satisfaction.

The core difficulties centre on five interconnected areas. First, a manual inventory tracking system produces frequent stock discrepancies between physical stores and online channels. Customers place online orders only to discover items are unavailable, triggering complaints, refunds, and lost sales. Store managers cannot reliably identify overstocked or understocked products, resulting in financial losses and fulfilment delays. Second, customer relationship management (CRM) data resides in multiple disconnected systems. This fragmentation prevents effective tracking of purchase history and blocks personalised marketing. Marketing teams struggle to deliver targeted promotions, while customer support lacks complete records when handling complaints. Third, decision-making is hampered by manually compiled spreadsheet reports that often contain errors and outdated figures. Management cannot analyse real-time sales trends, leading to weak forecasting and missed revenue opportunities. Fourth, the company is not fully compliant with data protection regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Weak access controls elevate the risk of unauthorised access to customer data and potential legal penalties. Finally, the absence of integration across sales, finance, and inventory departments forces employees to transfer data manually. This process wastes time and multiplies the likelihood of errors.

These issues collectively threaten Maldiva Ltd.'s ability to scale profitably while maintaining customer trust. An integrated enterprise system is required to provide real-time visibility, unified data, automated processes, robust security, and scalable architecture. This proposal evaluates the current situation, recommends a suitable solution, outlines an implementation approach, and summarises expected benefits.

2. Evaluation of Existing Systems

Maldiba Ltd.'s present information systems are characterised by fragmentation, manual processes, and limited automation. Inventory is tracked manually, creating a classic example of siloed data. Physical stock counts and online order data are not synchronised in real time. Industry research consistently shows that manual inventory methods in retail yield accuracy rates around 65 percent on average, meaning roughly one-third of recorded stock levels are incorrect. Discrepancies lead directly to stockouts, overselling, excess inventory carrying costs, and customer dissatisfaction. Manual counting is also labour-intensive and error-prone; items are miscounted, SKUs confused, and data-entry mistakes accumulate across multiple locations.

CRM functions suffer from the same fragmentation. Customer records are scattered across separate systems, making it nearly impossible to construct a single customer view. Without unified purchase history, personalised marketing and efficient complaint resolution become impractical. Literature on enterprise systems emphasises that disconnected customer data prevents organisations from leveraging insights for targeted engagement and service improvement (Laudon and Laudon, various editions). Support staff waste time searching for missing records, lengthening resolution times and damaging satisfaction scores.

Reporting and analytics rely on spreadsheet compilation. Data must be extracted from multiple sources, re-entered, and reconciled manually. This process introduces transcription errors, delays, and outdated figures. Managers therefore lack timely insight into sales trends, inventory turnover, or channel performance. Decision-making becomes reactive rather than proactive, impairing forecasting accuracy and revenue opportunity capture.

Security and compliance weaknesses compound these operational shortcomings. The absence of robust role-based access controls and audit trails increases exposure to unauthorised data access. Under GDPR, organisations processing EU personal data must implement appropriate technical and organisational measures, support data-subject rights (access, erasure, portability), and maintain accountability. Current systems appear insufficiently equipped for these requirements, elevating legal and reputational risk.

Inter-departmental integration is minimal. Sales, finance, and inventory teams operate separate software packages that do not communicate. Employees therefore perform repetitive manual data transfers. Each transfer introduces latency and the possibility of error, reducing overall organisational agility. Enterprise systems literature highlights that such silos prevent the realisation of operational excellence, which depends on seamless information flow across core business processes (Laudon and Laudon).

In summary, the existing environment is characterised by low inventory accuracy, fragmented customer data, delayed and error-prone reporting, weak compliance posture, and costly manual interfaces between departments. These gaps constrain growth, inflate costs, and undermine customer experience. A modern, integrated platform is essential.

3. Recommended Solution

We recommend the adoption of **Oracle NetSuite**, a cloud-native enterprise resource planning (ERP) suite that unifies financials, inventory management, order management, CRM, and e-commerce capabilities on a single database. NetSuite is particularly well suited to mid-sized, multi-location retail organisations that are expanding and require omnichannel visibility without the complexity or cost of heavyweight on-premise enterprise suites.

Justification against business needs, efficiency, cost, and scalability

- **Business needs alignment:** NetSuite provides real-time multi-location inventory tracking, automated replenishment based on demand signals, and native or partner-supported e-commerce and point-of-sale (POS) integration. Stock levels update instantly across stores and online channels, directly addressing the core stock-discrepancy problem. Its CRM module consolidates customer data, purchase history, and interaction records, enabling personalised marketing and efficient support. Built-in reporting and analytics deliver real-time dashboards and customisable financial and operational reports, eliminating spreadsheet-based manual compilation. Role-based access controls, encryption, audit trails, and data-subject-rights tooling support GDPR compliance. All modules share one data model, removing the need for manual inter-departmental transfers.
- **Efficiency gains:** Real-time inventory visibility reduces stockouts and overstocks. Automated order-to-cash and procure-to-pay processes cut manual effort and error rates. Unified CRM accelerates quote-to-cash cycles and improves service response. Studies and vendor case evidence indicate that integrated retail ERP solutions can improve inventory turnover, lower operational costs, and raise customer satisfaction scores substantially when fully adopted.
- **Cost considerations:** As a multi-tenant cloud service, NetSuite avoids large capital expenditure on hardware and reduces ongoing infrastructure management costs. Licensing is subscription-based and scales with usage and modules. Implementation costs are moderated by the availability of retail-focused templates and a mature partner ecosystem. Total cost of ownership is typically lower than traditional on-premise ERP for growing mid-market firms, provided scope is controlled and change management is effective.
- **Scalability:** The platform is designed for growth. Additional stores, warehouses, or sales channels can be added without fundamental re-architecture. Multi-subsidiary and multi-currency capabilities support future geographic expansion. Automatic updates ensure the system remains current without disruptive upgrade projects.

How the system improves operations, data management, and decision-making

Operations benefit from end-to-end process automation. A sale at any store or online immediately updates inventory, triggers fulfilment workflows if needed, posts financial entries, and enriches the customer record. Demand forecasting and automated reordering optimise stock levels. Returns and exchanges are handled consistently across channels. Data management improves through a single source of truth. Customer, inventory, order, and financial data reside in one repository, eliminating duplication and inconsistency. Data quality rises because entry occurs once at the point of activity. Security features—granular permissions, encryption in transit and at rest, and comprehensive logging—strengthen protection of personal data and support GDPR accountability, including subject-access and erasure requests (subject to proper configuration and organisational policies).

Decision-making is transformed by real-time analytics. Managers gain dashboards showing sales by channel and location, inventory turns, margins, and customer trends. Forecasting accuracy improves because data is timely and consistent. Leadership can respond faster to demand shifts, promotional performance, and emerging risks.

Comparable mid-market retailers have achieved measurable benefits after moving to unified cloud ERP platforms such as NetSuite, including reduced financial closing times, improved inventory accuracy, and higher cross-channel sales. These outcomes align directly with Maldiva Ltd.'s requirements.

4. Implementation Plan

A structured, phased approach minimises risk and maximises adoption.

Phase 1 – Preparation and foundation (months 1–2)

- Form a cross-functional project team including executive sponsor, IT, operations, finance, marketing, and store representatives.
- Conduct detailed process mapping and gap analysis against NetSuite capabilities.
- Define data-migration scope, cleansing rules, and master-data standards (products, customers, locations).
- Select implementation partner experienced in retail NetSuite deployments.
- Establish project governance, success metrics, and change-management plan.

Phase 2 – Configuration and integration (months 3–5)

- Configure core modules: financials, inventory (multi-location), order management, CRM, and basic e-commerce/POS connectors.
- Integrate existing e-commerce platform and any retained POS hardware via standard connectors or middleware.
- Implement role-based security, GDPR-related configurations (consent tracking, retention policies, data-privacy utilities), and audit logging.
- Develop and test automated workflows for order fulfilment, replenishment, and reporting.

Phase 3 – Data migration, testing, and training (months 5–7)

- Migrate cleansed historical and master data in controlled batches.
- Conduct unit, integration, user-acceptance, and performance testing, including scenario tests for stock synchronisation and customer-service cases.
- Deliver role-based training (store staff, inventory managers, marketing, finance, executives) using a combination of classroom, e-learning, and hands-on sandboxes.
- Pilot the system in a small number of stores and the e-commerce channel.

Phase 4 – Roll-out and stabilisation (months 7–9)

- Phased go-live across remaining stores, with hypercare support.
- Monitor key performance indicators (inventory accuracy, order fulfilment time, report generation speed, support ticket volume).
- Address issues rapidly and refine configurations.
- Transition to business-as-usual support model with internal super-users and vendor/partner assistance.

Key considerations Training and change management are critical; resistance often arises from altered work habits. Clear communication of benefits, involvement of end-users in design, and visible executive sponsorship reduce risk. Integration with any remaining legacy systems must be carefully scoped to avoid complexity. Potential challenges include data-quality issues during migration, temporary productivity dips during the learning curve, and ensuring continuous GDPR compliance during transition. Contingency buffers and a robust testing regime mitigate these risks. Cloud deployment simplifies infrastructure concerns and provides built-in scalability and security updates.

5. Conclusion & References

Maldiva Ltd. faces clear operational constraints arising from manual inventory processes, fragmented CRM data, spreadsheet-based reporting, inadequate data-protection controls, and lack of inter-departmental integration. These problems generate stock discrepancies, customer dissatisfaction, inefficient decision-making, compliance exposure, and wasted effort. Oracle NetSuite addresses each issue through a unified, cloud-based platform that delivers real-time multi-location inventory visibility, consolidated customer data, automated processes, robust analytics, and strong security and compliance capabilities. The solution is justified by alignment with business needs, efficiency gains, manageable cost structure, and inherent scalability for a growing retailer with 30 stores and an e-commerce channel.

A phased implementation plan covering preparation, configuration, testing, training, and controlled roll-out, supported by strong change management, will enable successful adoption. Expected benefits include higher inventory accuracy, reduced stockouts and overstocks, faster and more personalised customer service, timely and reliable management information, improved GDPR posture, and elimination of manual data transfers. Collectively these improvements will streamline operations, raise efficiency, and strengthen customer satisfaction, positioning Maldiva Ltd. for sustainable further growth.

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