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Cloud ERP Buyer's Guide

Combining scalability and speed to boost efficiency and cost-effectiveness: what buyers need to know before choosing a cloud ERP.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide helps software buyers evaluate cloud ERP in a large, mature market. It explains how application suites have evolved, how today's hybrid and pure-play cloud products differ, what cloud platforms make possible, the trends shaping cloud suites, and the factors successful buyers focus on when they choose.

WHO IT IS FOR

IT leaders, finance and operations executives, and procurement teams who are shortlisting, replacing or expanding an ERP system.

Executive summary

Technology and data now sit at the centre of how organisations of every size operate. Finding innovative, cost-effective ways to record, archive, access and safeguard business information has become critical.

Businesses are working within budget constraints while getting more value from enterprise data across the value chain: research and development, human resources, operations research, sales and marketing, customer relationship management, supplier administration and logistics.

Cloud ERP software offers a way to curb costs without sacrificing revenue growth or operational productivity. Cloud applications, including order-to-cash, supply chain, human resources and financial accounting applications, combine technological sophistication with operational know-how to provide functionality that:

- ✓ Scales easily and integrates with existing legacy applications
- ✓ Can be built and deployed quickly
- ✓ Is engineered on modern platforms and programming environments that are cost-effective and operationally nimble

The ERP market is large and mature, with several established suite vendors, and data safety and security remain real concerns. Buyers therefore need a clear approach to finding software that suits their operations, the right balance of cost and quality, and an efficient deployment plan for the short and medium term.

$723B

worldwide public cloud end-user spending forecast for 2025[1]

GARTNER, 2024

2

main approaches to cloud ERP today: hybrid and pure-play cloud

SEE SECTION 02

4

factors successful buyers focus on: storage, collaboration, cost and components

SEE SECTION 06

Key takeaways

- ✓ **Know the architecture.** Cloud ERP is either 100% cloud-based or legacy software using the cloud.
- ✓ **Platforms matter.** Cloud platforms combine scalability, affordability, efficiency and speed.
- ✓ **Suites come in many shapes.** They bring speed and scalability across the value chain.
- ✓ **Buy against clear criteria.** Focus on storage capacity, collaboration, cost and technology components.

01 Application suites, as they were yesterday

For the past 50 years, application software suites have met the operational needs of companies looking for a broad range of functions in one package. Corporate buyers preferred suites with breadth of functionality, modules and deployment options: in short, software with the breadth and depth needed to improve the **3Ps of productivity, performance and profitability**.

The most successful vendors built their value proposition on products that:

- ✓ Had a uniform set of system software tools, development tools and programming language, making it easier for IT staff to learn and support third-party applications
- ✓ Used identical user tools across all modules, so staff could apply what they learned in one application or module across many others
- ✓ Were sold with module-to-module integration services from the vendor, freeing valuable in-house IT resources
- ✓ Included built-in discounts, giving corporate buyers often sizeable rebates on bulk purchases

These older applications offered real breadth and depth of features, supporting the value chains and operations of organisations of every size. However, proprietary technology made products difficult to use and scale, and sometimes made implementation challenging. Each vendor had its own data model, module code and technology stack (**upstream differentiation**). That made it hard for in-house IT teams to make necessary adjustments to operating systems, on-premise hardware, and file and data management systems (**downstream implementation**).

The cloud has changed the status quo, introducing fresh, effective and operationally nimble approaches and technologies.

Then and now: what the cloud changed

Area	Yesterday's application suites	Today's cloud suites
Technology	Each vendor's own data model, module code and technology stack	Shared cloud platforms and programming environments
Scaling	Difficult to use and scale	Scalability, flexibility and speed built in
IT effort	In-house teams adapt operating systems, hardware and data management	Less integration and support effort for IT teams
Versions	Countless technical combinations across single-tenant or on-premise estates	Multi-tenant: everyone on the latest version, upgraded automatically
Buying	Many applications bought from a single vendor	Focused, robust applications from different vendors

02 Today's application suites

The booming market for application suites has attracted many players in recent years. Depending on their strategies, resources and target audiences, software vendors have developed products ranging from hybrid applications (cloud plus legacy) to pure-play cloud application suites. The market now features two prominent strategies:

Hybrid applications

Attempt to take advantage of cloud technology while retaining their legacy components.

Pure-play cloud applications

Revolve 100% around cloud technology, and engineer or re-engineer products to embed cloud functionality and features systematically.

Large vendors and smaller specialists, including Axolt, have embraced the pure-play approach. It has been well received by businesses and appears to be the winning strategy for the near future.

BUYER'S TIP

Ask each vendor whether its product was built for the cloud or adapted for it, and which components still run as legacy software. The answer shapes scalability, upgrades and integration effort.

03 Integration: a key concern for buyers

Application integration is a key concern for IT executives and software buyers, especially when combining legacy systems with new cloud technology. Whether a business runs 10 applications or 200, a smooth, seamless and scalable integration process can save significant resources and free up substantial staff time in the short and medium term.

Four integration paths

PATH 1
On-premise to on-premise

PATH 2
Cloud to cloud

PATH 3
Cloud to on-premise

PATH 4
On-premise to cloud

Whatever the path, companies can establish the right protocols to define, execute and monitor software integration. The cloud adds scalability, flexibility and speed, which matter when onboarding, upgrading, adjusting or replacing applications across the enterprise. Staff can share

information from one cloud service to another, across modules or applications. With multi-tenant applications, everyone needs access only to the latest version of the relevant applications to complete the integration.

Why cloud integration pays off

- ✓ **Fewer environments to support.** The cloud avoids the countless technical combinations that single-tenant or on-premise estates can require. This is the greatest benefit of cloud integration.
- ✓ **Lower IT overhead.** Organisations can connect consumer and corporate cloud applications easily, saving IT resources through reduced integration and support needs.
- ✓ **Integration that adds value.** Cloud integration is becoming a value-adding, cost-effective task that helps organisations of every size adopt cloud application software.
- ✓ **More freedom for buyers.** Buyers no longer need to acquire, for example, 10 applications from a single vendor, which reduces risks such as sub-optimal functionality, mismatched technology and vendor viability.

Buyers can now acquire several small yet robust suites that each deliver the right functionality.

04 The emerging power of cloud platforms

Cloud platforms offer a powerful mix of scalability, affordability, efficiency and speed, meeting the needs of software buyers who want solid, focused cloud applications.

Scalability
Applications and users scale with the business

Affordability
Costs curbed without sacrificing growth

Efficiency
Fewer environments and less IT overhead

Speed
Applications built and deployed quickly

Vendors now approach the cloud from many angles, as cloud software development takes many forms. Large vendors and smaller specialists such as Axolt combine module expertise and business acumen to create their cloud strategies. Some offer cloud-based development and application scaling, or infrastructure management for deploying and managing applications in the cloud. Others offer Platform as a Service (PaaS), which virtualises applications by combining open-source software and hardware.

Capabilities found in today's cloud platforms

The most effective and popular functionality in today's cloud platforms includes:

BUILD AND DEVELOP	
Dynamic-language applications	Development, management and distribution of applications built in dynamic languages.
PHP and Java applications	Cloud-based development and scaling of PHP applications, and the ability to build, run and manage Java applications quickly and easily.
Process-driven applications	Development environments for building process-driven applications with minimal complexity.
RUN AND MANAGE	
Open PaaS	A stack that turns an organisation's infrastructure into a self-service cloud application platform.
Private PaaS	A business-ready private platform that improves developer productivity, reduces cloud application management costs, and maintains security and compliance.
Infrastructure management	Deployment and management of applications in any kind of cloud.
Application virtualisation	Moving mission-critical applications to next-generation environments.

DATA AND INSIGHT	
Structured and unstructured data	Extracting value from all types of corporate data.
Data-intensive applications	Developing, scaling and managing big data applications with integrated compute and in-memory data grids.
AUTOMATION AND ECOSYSTEM	
Automation and reporting	Helping businesses automate processes, collaborate and improve visibility through real-time reporting.
Partner solutions	Helping developers and solution providers package best practices into their own SaaS offerings.

05 Cloud suite trends: diversity and speed

Today's cloud suites come in many shapes, offering speed and scalability across a wide range of work streams along companies' value chains. Industry observers, developers and software vendors, as well as corporate buyers and end users, have come to value multi-form, multi-format cloud suites that boost performance, productivity and profitability. Five trends deserve every buyer's attention.

1 Cloud computing is extending into mobile

The future of the cloud lies in the network and infrastructure needed to support the hundreds of millions of mobile devices in use worldwide, particularly smartphones. Today's workers perform tasks from phones and tablets and may need real-time cloud access to carry out critical duties. Staff no longer need to visit the office to log in to an application: with mobile access, they can stay connected anywhere, at any time.

2 The cloud is smoothing internal and external communication

Cloud technology is breaking down barriers between departments and business units, easing the exchange of information and flattening hierarchies that may once have hindered communication.

Buyers now look for cloud suites that cover key parts of the value chain, including customers, suppliers and HR. Cloud-enabled tools such as automated dashboards and supply chain applications help organisations significantly reduce inefficiencies in project management, order placement and delivery, post-delivery analysis and analysis of customer expectations.

3 The cloud is going global

As the economy becomes more global, organisations need cloud suites that not only support tasks in London, but also help oversee operations research in Mumbai, track productivity in Johannesburg, monitor social media responses in New York and improve user interfaces in Rio de Janeiro.

As more organisations run on the cloud worldwide, people and business partners can work across locations using local capabilities such as multi-currency financial tools and multi-language interfaces.

4 More businesses will adopt the cloud

Cloud ERP has already grown rapidly, and adoption continues to extend into small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs). Given the structural and geographic opportunities, cloud ERP software is here to stay. Gartner forecast that worldwide end-user spending on public cloud services would reach **US$723.4 billion in 2025**, up from US$595.7 billion in 2024.[1]

5 Cloud ERP is becoming social and collaborative

Beyond offering greater flexibility than legacy, on-site software, cloud ERP is increasingly social. Organisations will need to consider social and collaborative capabilities at every stage of strategic thinking, from defining a problem and identifying alternatives to implementing a solution and analysing the results. Cloud ERP will gradually become part of how organisations of every size manage operational data.

Experts expect this capability to progress rapidly, because cloud computing is natively web-based and upgrades are rolled out to cloud solutions automatically and regularly.

06 How to get the most value from cloud ERP

Cloud ERP buyers should pay attention to four factors when making acquisition decisions.

1 Storage capacity

Cloud services provide an environment to host and share business information. A provider offers space in its data centres to store documents, spreadsheets, images, videos and other file types, together with the tools needed to manage them.

> **Buyer action** Select a vendor whose storage capabilities match or exceed your current operational needs.

2 Collaboration capabilities

Companies choose cloud-based services to share information and work together. For example, staff can set up a shared folder to keep everyone's work aligned, and create links to any document or folder they want to share outside the team.

> **Buyer action** Select a vendor whose collaboration capabilities match or exceed your current operational needs.

3 Cost

No two cloud-based services are priced alike. Each offers several plans, with prices that vary according to the features included.

> **Buyer action** Select a vendor whose value proposition is cost-effective and matches or exceeds your current operational needs.

4 Components

Effective cloud ERP software must include a few critical elements. Before acquiring applications, check these four with the vendor:

- ✓ Cloud management and brokerage services
- ✓ Expense management
- ✓ Operational monitoring
- ✓ Governance

Buyer's checklist at a glance

Use this checklist to compare shortlisted vendors. The last two rows bring in the architecture and integration points from sections 02 and 03.

Factor	What to look for	Question to ask the vendor
Storage capacity	Capacity that matches or exceeds current operational needs	How much storage is included, and how does it grow with us?
Collaboration	Shared workspaces and controlled sharing inside and outside the team	How do teams share records and documents securely?
Cost	A cost-effective plan with the features you need	Which features are included in each plan?
Components	Cloud management and brokerage, expense management, operational monitoring and governance	How does the product cover each of these four components?
Architecture	A clear understanding of pure-play cloud versus hybrid	Which parts of the product are cloud-native, and which are legacy?
Integration	A defined path for every integration your estate needs	How will you connect to our existing on-premise and cloud applications?

07 Axolt ERP

Cloud ERP that helps you grow by aligning manufacturing, servicing, supply, shipping, inventory, finance and human resources.

Axolt ERP is a dynamic enterprise resource planning suite for businesses of any size, built natively on the Salesforce platform. It helps organisations streamline every facet of the business, gives real-time insight and supports rapid growth, so you can manage your business effectively.

With Axolt ERP, the areas of your business with room for growth become clear, and costly problems are easier to avoid. The suite is versatile and adaptable, offering a structured, seamless way to manage the many areas of a modern company.

One integrated system instead of many

Area	Multiple separate systems	Axolt ERP
Data	Integrating and cross-referencing data is slow and costly	Everything is integrated in one user-friendly system
Accuracy	A large margin for error, with expensive fixes	Costly mistakes are avoided
Team time	Lost to manual reconciliation	Freed up to develop the business

Areas Axolt ERP helps you manage

Supply chain and shipping

Manufacturing

Equipment maintenance and service

HR management

Finance

Procurement

Why Axolt

Axolt is an innovator in cloud computing. By offering fully customisable enterprise suite solutions on cloud-based platforms, Axolt gives clients hassle-free solutions that reduce the cost of running the business while offering more functionality and capability than traditional software and applications.

08 Conclusion

The cloud has changed what buyers can expect from application software. Cloud suites combine scalability, affordability, efficiency and speed, integrate more easily with the applications around them, and improve through regular, automatic upgrades.

Buyers who understand the difference between hybrid and pure-play cloud products, plan their integration paths, and evaluate vendors against clear criteria for storage, collaboration, cost and components are best placed to choose software that supports growth.

Talk to Axolt about your cloud ERP plans

See how Axolt ERP brings operations, finance and HR together in one system.

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About Axolt

Axolt supplies enterprise applications and services that help businesses align and improve their manufacturing, servicing, supply, shipping, inventory, finance and human resource operations, and drive growth across numerous industry sectors. To learn more, visit **www.axolt.com**.

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