EPICOR

Committing to Digital Transformation for Business Resilience and Continuity

Contents

Introduction

A New World—and the Technology Prepared for It

Everyone's talking about digital transformation, including your competitors in the distribution industry. Your customers have been asking for ways to do business with you digitally. And you've heard that moving to the cloud would mitigate the risk of losing business continuity via a costly ransomware attack or data breach. But it seems like such a huge step—and you have limited time, people and resources to commit to a change.

It's not "why" or "if" anymore
The questions about transforming a business to digital technology to ensure business continuity are no longer "why" or "if"—they're "how" and "when." Businesses that want to thrive now and in the future are either in the midst of their digital transformation, or they're planning it. After experiencing the fundamental challenges of the pandemic, businesses know their future depends on the ability to pivot quickly in response to new market challenges, cyber threats, emerging customer demands, and unexpected supply chain disruptions.

You can't predict the next business disruption
But you can build your business readiness and resilience with digital preparedness. A strategic mix of cloud/browser-based technologies will enhance your customers' experiences, deliver business efficiency, create connectivity between business, customers, and suppliers, and protect your business from most security threats.

Who Should Read This eBook

If your distribution business was disrupted during the pandemic (most companies were) and you are concerned with maintaining your future business continuity, you should read this eBook.

It is created for distributors who recognize the urgent need to transform their business—to prepare for the next disruption and improve security, agility, adaptability, customer experience, margins, connectivity and data integration.

This includes:

- CEOs looking to expand the business and satisfy stakeholders

- VPs working in Operations or Supply Chain who want to build customer loyalty and improve forecasting and inventory control

- Finance or IT leaders who want better ways to measure ROI or streamline communication and data flow

At the end of the day, everyone should be interested in a digital transformation that can improve your performance and protect your data and processes.

How This eBook Will Help You

Most distribution companies are somewhere on the path to digital transformation— perhaps you're just starting. Or maybe you're in the process of implementing change or are well on your way to a complete shift. Wherever you are on this continuum, this eBook will help you solidify exactly what digital transformation means for your business, what digital tools will best help you, and how you can get the results you want.

You'll learn about the critical technologies that enable business continuity and how they can make a difference for your organization. You'll also learn how these technologies will allow you to identify problems more quickly and avoid major downtime and potential loss of business. And finally, you'll discover the steps you need to take to prepare your company to withstand disruptions, recover faster, and even thrive in challenging environments.

The Rising Importance of Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

It's no surprise to you. The past few years have been difficult for distribution—with rapid and widespread changes. Covid-19 hit distribution hard, with roughly 35% of distributors experiencing a negative impact on business[1].

Some distribution companies experienced sharp and unprecedented drops in demand. Other companies experienced an explosive increase in demand, while yet others experienced irregular demand[2]. Either way, it's been hard for distributors to keep pace with both current and future threats and disruptions. In this volatile environment, the elements of business continuity and disaster recovery are critical.

23% of businesses reported their servers had at least one unexpected outage in the previous 12 months and 36% of organizations said up to 50% of their servers experienced one or more outages[3].

The pandemic has underscored the need for reliable, accessible data backup and the ability to recover quickly for businesses around the world. Even companies that felt they were on good footing technologically had to acknowledge that they were skating on thin ice.

1   Epicor Software Customer Data. 2022.
2   Abdekbiyr A, Devignes JC, Randery T, Rogers J. "Covid-19 crisis: How distributors can emerge stronger than before".
    McKinsey & Company. Oct, 2020.
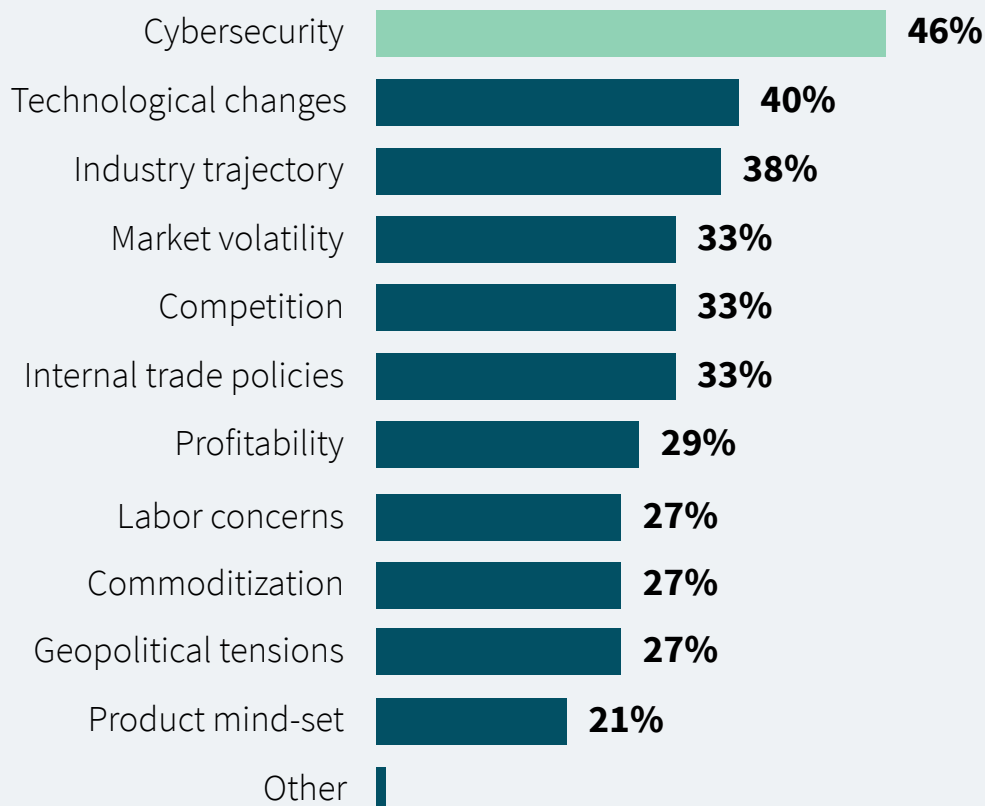3   Veeam. Data Protection Report 2021. Mar 2021.

37%
of all backup
jobs fail

34%
of all restore
jobs fail

58%
failure of
recovery
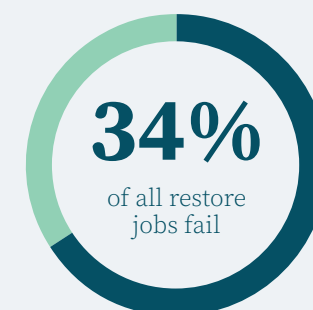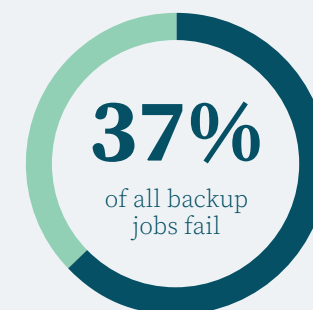
Veeam, Data Protection Report. March 2021.

Continuing Challenges in Distribution

In this climate, backup integrity becomes critical, which is why the issue of data protection and disaster recovery readiness is so concerning. It's a broad industry challenge that cannot be left to chance or the next upheaval.

It's no surprise then, that when distributors were asked about their current challenges, they cited cybersecurity, technology changes, and industry trajectory as their biggest challenges[4].

Challenge	Percentage
Cybersecurity	46%
Technological changes	40%
Industry trajectory	38%
Market volatility	33%
Competition	33%
Internal trade policies	33%
Profitability	29%
Labor concerns	27%
Commoditization	27%
Geopolitical tensions	27%
Product mind-set	21%
Other	

Epicor Software Customer Data, 2022.

How Distributors Are Meeting These Challenges

- 7 out of 10 organizations reported planning to increase their investment in building resilience.

- 67% of organizations applied a business continuity plan as part of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 88% of respondents indicated that public cloud would play a role in their future backup strategies.

- 52% of the respondents plan to invest more in both backup and disaster recovery improvements.

PCW: Global Crisis Survey, 2021

Technology Makes a Difference

At the end of the day, distributors that embraced technology were more resilient than others. Analytical and digital tools unlocked productivity in inventory management, warehousing and delivery—things that became increasingly important to survival.

Prior to Covid-19, companies were already going digital to survive shifting market trends, but Covid-19 accelerated that adoption. High-performing distributors developed a nimble cost structure, managed cash carefully to build war chests, diversified revenue streams[5], and had the right technology in place to support their efforts.

5   Abdekbiyr A, Devignes JC, Randery T, Rogers J. "Covid-19 crisis: How distributors can emerge stronger than before". McKinsey & Company. Oct, 2020.

Understanding Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is not an overwhelming abstract concept—it's a-step-by-step process that starts by choosing the technologies and partners that can provide the best help for you.

Digital transformation has become such a buzz-term that it's easy to forget what it means. Here's a simple definition we like:

Digital Transformation

- Integrating digital technologies into all areas of your business, fundamentally changing how you operate and deliver value to your customers.

- Increasing your use of technology to improve the experience of your organization's employees, customers, suppliers, partners, and stakeholders.

Breaking It Down: Improvement, Innovation, and Transformation

To digitally transform, you'll need digital technology to help you improve your business processes and resources. This can include a combination of elements such as e-commerce, cloud, document management, business intelligence, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, or the Internet of Things (IoT). All these technologies are capable of delivering what we call "new value."

Three types of initiatives will deliver this new value to you. To be effective, any of these new value initiatives must deliver "quantifiable impacts" that you can measure and monitor.

Improvement

- Makes your core business more efficient.

- Serves as ideal stepping-stones to larger, future projects.

- Installs foundational capabilities you can build on for more ambitious initiatives.

- Helps rally your team, generate enthusiasm, and demonstrate success.

Innovation

Goes one step further than improvement.

- Introduces additional elements to your business, such as new revenue streams, customer segments or products.

- Delivers growth and expansion.

- Doesn't have to be groundbreaking; often, the world's most innovative companies identify innovations in other markets or regions, and simply make them work in their own business.

Transformation

- Disrupts the status quo in your industry or supply chain.

- Means a larger-scale reimagining of your business and industry as a whole.

- Looks at the horizon—where disruptive new offerings will change the way distribution works.

Three Ways to Look at Digital Transformation

It's easy to assume that going digital to protect business continuity is simply all about technology. But there are other critical factors behind a successful digital transformation.

Technology can provide the capabilities you need to transform, but your business success is driven by customers, employees, and partners (people) and how you purposefully connect with each group (strategy). As you think about how digital technology can provide new value, consider these three elements - strategy, capabilities, and people.

Strategy
Do the Business Benefits Make This Initiative Worth It?

The key to creating real value through digital technology is pursuing changes that make sense from both a strategic and financial perspective.

- Does the initiative help us move forward on our prioritized business goals?

- Does it create the agility, flexibility, and speed we'll need to tackle future challenges?

- How will the costs to implement and maintain new technology compare to the benefits it delivers?

- What favorable cost factors should be considered, such as decreased maintenance, lower overhead and reduced need for hardware?

- What initiatives will generate the most value—giving the most bang for our buck?

"We were with the old system for 40-some years. We were comfortable, and to get out of that rut is tough. But now, I just see so many exciting horizons to go into. This will help us grow into the future. I think it will definitely help our bottom line and give us the profits that we need to grow."

Monatto Smith, VP Sales | Transply Inc.

Capabilities
Do We Have the Technology and Capacity We Need?

For digital technologies to work for you, they need to deliver.

- Can we do this? Is it technically feasible for us?

- Do we have the right technology, either in-house or through a partner, to make a digital transformation feasible?

- Do we have the organizational capacity to sponsor, support, and lead this initiative?

- Can we implement smoothly and successfully?

"We are not in the business of managing technology. We are in the business of distribution. We made every effort to launch without complex customizations—we've been able to do a lot out of the box with today's solutions."

Scott Young, President | George E. Booth Co. Inc.

People
Will Your Customers, Employees, and Partners Love It?

For a digital initiative to succeed, people must actually adopt and use the technology.

- For customers, what are their pain points or unmet needs as they interact with our business? Will this new technology make something easier, faster, cheaper or more enjoyable for them?

- For employees, will eliminating or streamlining manual data-entry tasks improve productivity and morale? Will digital solutions help you attract and retain digital natives and learning-hungry talent?

- For business partners, will the new technology improve collaboration and information-sharing and lead to more fruitful and seamless partnerships?

- Seek out initiatives that will remove friction, improve productivity, or free up time to work on higher-value activities.

"We, and more of our customers, are jumping online and buying. We need to get ahead of the click. We have to give people access to the tools they need to do their jobs right on the shop floor."

Matt Schron, General Manager | Jergens Industrial Supply

Digital Technology: The Gateway To What You Need

Digital technology is arguably one of the most important tools a company may have for business continuity. Digital tools are critical elements for everyone involved—allowing remote and hybrid workers to stay connected, helping companies better engage with online customers, and providing critical protection to withstand disruptions and threats.

When it comes to being ready for whatever might come next, a digital toolkit is no longer a nice to have. It's a must have. In order to be responsive, nimble, proactive and ready to solve problems, distributors need the right technology in place to immediately understand what's going on in their business, where their inventory is, and what customers are experiencing. Plus, they need to be able to connect anytime, anywhere, and anyhow.

"By choosing the cloud option, we moved to a modern ERP and got out of the hardware management business. We don't have to pay to update servers or move our legacy technology along with all the expensive customizations to new servers—it would have been costly."
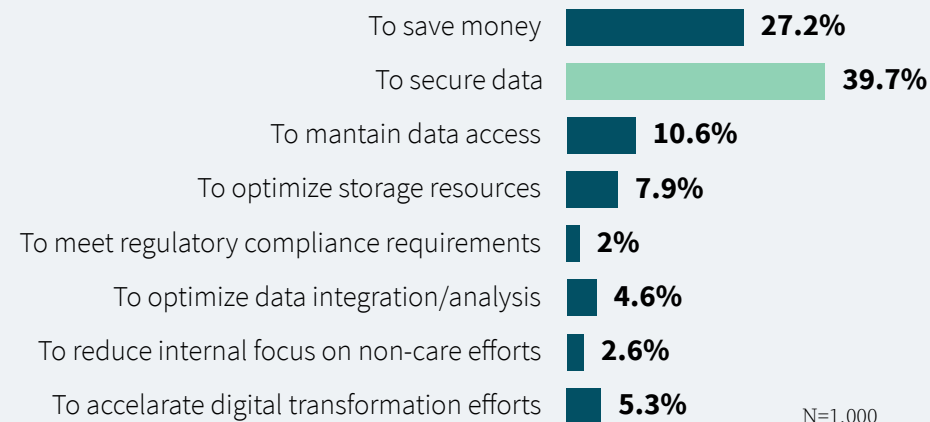
Scott Young, President | George E. Booth

The Cloud—Critical For a Digital Toolkit

Shifting to cloud-based systems and data is essential for business continuity, in all elements of business operations. It's no surprise that 77% of distributors surveyed said their primary motivations for migrating their legacy systems to cloud infrastructures were to secure their data, maintain data access or save money.

What Is the Primary Motivation for Moving Legacy Systems to the Cloud?

To save money	27.2%
To secure data	39.7%
To mantain data access	10.6%
To optimize storage resources	7.9%
To meet regulatory compliance requirements	2%
To optimize data integration/analysis	4.6%
To reduce internal focus on non-care efforts	2.6%
To accelarate digital transformation efforts	5.3%

N=1,000

Lemongrass, 2021 Legacy-to-Cloud Survey.

Digital Transformation for Business Continuity

What do you need to transform your business, remain viable and strong, and be ready for the future? The simple answer is cloud-based digital technology. Consider these business requirements:

You Need Your Data to Be Accessible Always

If you're on an on-premises system, your access is limited to your servers. If your data is in the cloud, you can access, extract and use the information, whenever and however you need it—especially in times of disruption. In addition, your entire workforce can have anytime access, whether they're in the office, in the field or working from home.

> "One of the key benefits of the Cloud is being able to access information from anywhere at any time — which is especially useful for our sales team since they travel quite a bit. They can access the ERP and process orders via their mobile devices without calling internal salespeople."
>
> John Marzitelli, CFO | CJ Spray

You Need Real-Time Reporting to Make Decisions

Digital information, in the cloud, gives you up-to-the-minute data on your revenue and expenses; no shuffling through paperwork or relying on outdated forecasts and information. You can check the availability of inventory at multiple locations with the click of a button, and access both sales in the pipeline and closed deals. Financials like COGS, AR/AP and sales-tax information are all in a centralized location, and available immediately. Armed with real-time data, you can better manage your supply chain and related communication, adjusting to any interruptions or changes. If your data and systems are in the cloud, you won't be at risk of losing it—or of losing the ability to access it when you need it. It's just there. All the time.

You Need to Know Your Business Data Is Safe and Secure

There's no way to put a price on the security of your business information. The cost of digitally transforming your business will pale when compared to the business continuity and disaster recovery expenses you might face if your company suffers an attack.

You also can't put a price on peace of mind. That's what you'll get knowing your ERP is safe from security breaches and malware. You can also rest assured knowing you can access your information whenever, wherever, and however needed. Cloud ERP takes care of these issues for you. Your ERP system becomes easily scalable and operates at the highest levels of performance.

The High Cost of Cyber Crime

- Cybercrime is up 600% since the beginning of the global pandemic.

- The average cost of a ransomware attack on businesses was $133,000.

- Businesses lost approximately $8,500 per hour due to ransomware-induced downtime.

- 25% of business executives are willing to pay $20,000-$50,000 to regain access to encrypted data.

- The average cost of a malware attack on a company is $2.4 million.

- 29.6% of companies will experience a data breach in the next two years. In 2019, breaches caused a customer turnover of 3.9%.

Purplesec. 2021 Cyber Security Statistics.

You Need to Stay Connected with Customers, Especially During Disruption and Down Time

With cloud-based technology, your customers will have a seamless online experience that allows them to discover, buy from, and interact with you throughout the entire sales process. They expect it nowadays—and you're able to deliver it. Even if your business is disrupted, the cloud enables you to stay connected with customers in a whole new way, easily. You never lose that opportunity to communicate what's happening, update them on their orders, and offer reassurances.

You Need to Attract and Keep Employees Working Productively During a Disruption

There's a new generation of digital-native employees. They want to work for companies that use the best digital tools available—allowing them to do their work easily and more productively. They live on the cloud in their private lives and expect that in their work life. Using cloud-based technology may help you get and keep those employees. But it's bigger than that: If there's a disruption, such as the recent pandemic, your employees may still be able to access the information they need—securely, anywhere and on any device, allowing you the peace of mind that you've still got a team in place to run the business.

Because of the pandemic, 87% of distributors asked select staff to shift to remote work and one-third of companies reported layoffs.

MDM-Baird Distribution Survey: 5 Trends Emerging from the Industry response to Covid-19

"We picked the cloud option with Epicor® Prophet 21® because I was tired of rebooting servers every Monday and the servers being down. We lost probably 3 to 4 hours a month in down time because our servers had to be rebooted during business hours."

Lou Dellemonache, President & CEO, Advanced Controls & Distribution

"In our first week of working remotely and using the Epicor Prophet 21 web application, our team amazingly far surpassed the amount of transactions entered in the office using the Desktop Application compared to the prior week and the same week last year, which proves it works!"

Gess Homsany, Manager of IT and Communications, Shrink Packaging Systems

You Need Strong ROI from Your ERP

Historically, executives considered ERP a cost of doing business. The idea that you could achieve a healthy ROI by changing to a cloud-based ERP system was met with some skepticism. But over the past 10 years, business leaders changed their understanding about this. The total cost of ownership is lower than expected and they can reach an ROI faster than anticipated. After changing to a cloud-based system, companies now see that the core benefits of cloud, combined with other advances in functional capabilities and data mining have made a positive impact to their bottom line. The shift to a browser-based ERP has manifested itself in cost savings, increased revenue, improved quality and performance (cost avoidance), and capital-requirement reductions. productivity, and performance. Their cloud-based ERP is the gift that keeps giving, year after year.

You Want to Thrive

In the wake of the recent turmoil, it's the digital companies that have survived and thrived. They found a way to keep the doors open, shifted to online processes easily, supported customers throughout shipping delays and other challenges, and even created new opportunities for their businesses. Their cloud-enabled technology helped them to do that. You too can take a proactive approach by engaging digital technology in the cloud—allowing you to weather the storms that will inevitably come and successfully adapt to a remote world. What's more, an ERP system run in the cloud will allow you to scale appropriately and support your growth as you add more locations, increase the number of products you sell, or drive a higher volume of business in times of crisis.

"We've grown from 2 branches to 23. We have no desire to do anything except continue to grow—add more business, add more branches—and technology is our biggest tool. Epicor Prophet 21 has enabled us to grow. Our biggest growth years have all been since we implemented Epicor Prophet 21."

Will Dunn, Regional VP | Standard Supply

Six Technologies for Digital Transformation

If business continuity in times of disruption is your end goal, you'll need to start—or continue on with—your digital transformation. There are six technologies that will enable your digital transformation and can unlock significant value without requiring a major overhaul of your business.

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward virtual customer experiences. Over 90% of B2B sales have transitioned to remote selling. Strong eCommerce platforms have weathered this crisis better.

McKinsey & Company. Oct, 2020

eCommerce Technology

If customers can't do business with you digitally, they may not be your customers for long. By taking your business online, you'll allow customers and prospects to view, select and purchase products there. eCommerce opens a new and more convenient way to build relationships with your customers, who are increasingly moving away from traditional ordering methods.

"We've experienced consistent double-digit growth and our eCommerce software is an integral part of that growth. It's our digital face to the world."

James Davis, President | Industrial Specialties Mfg.

What to Look For:

- **Customer-friendliness:** A rich user experience, with both guest and account logins, product browsing before login, list-building and an easy-to-use search function.

- **Support for business-to-business (B2B) customers:** Accessible, easy tools for B2B customers to see special pricing, request a quote through RFQ forms, make fast re-purchases, and submit payments.

- **Integration with your sales team:** Boosts sales team productivity by easy access to account information such as purchase history, transactional repeat business, service calls and custom discounting.

- **Security:** Customer and company information is secure with HTTPS, user IDs and passwords.

- **Reinforcement for your marketing:** Newsletter enrollment, product recommendations and targeted pop-ups to ensure that customers are informed and supported throughout the lead cycle.

- **Integration with your ERP:** Seamless integration with your ERP to guarantee accurate and automatically updated product information, pricing and inventory levels, and order/shipment details.

Results You Can Track:

- **Increased revenue:** Capture new transactional sales leads and business and increase the average order size of your field sales.

- **Reduced cost of sales:** Provide self-serve transactions through eCommerce to eliminate the cost and administrative time of sales reps and staff processing transactions; you can shorten the average sales cycle.

- **Faster go-to-market:** Introduce new products faster and easier by launching them via eCommerce and digital channels. An ERP solution can also let you rapidly test your product mix, messaging and pricing.

- **Improved customer experience:** Customers benefit from a faster and more convenient purchasing experience, letting them browse and buy anywhere/anytime.

Cloud Technology

If you've worked with an on-premises deployed system, odds are high that you've been haunted by their inherent worries—like server downtime, upgrades that include cumbersome customizations, or the threat of ransomware. You can move from a static technology environment to a limitless technology ecosystem. Cloud-based software makes services and applications available to users on demand through a web browser. An ERP delivered via the cloud eliminates these worries so you can focus on running and growing your business. Transitioning to the cloud is no longer an insurmountable effort; you can approach it in stages.

What to Look For:

- **Provider Support:** Annual investments in platform improvements from the cloud provider.

- **Availability:** Reliably delivers uptime that matches or beats competitors.

- **Scalability:** Ability to keep pace with your growth needs.

- **Accessibility:** Easy integration with other technology in your environment.

- **Flexibility:** Cloud capabilities that support your specific operation, now and as it changes in the future.

Results You Can Track:

- **Decreased security costs:** Know that your cloud solution vendor makes security their top priority, saving you time and resources.

- **Reduced administration:** Free up your IT resources from the burden of database administration and redirect to IT projects that help your business succeed.

- **No more hardware:** Eliminate the need for hardware, and the cost and maintenance that come along with it as you scale and grow.

- **Automatic upgrades:** Get the latest releases on a regular cadence, avoiding periodic, organization-wide manual updates.

- **Higher employee satisfaction:** Support remote work easily, keeping employees on-the-job and effective during disruptive times.

"With our prior solution we came to the realization that we were working for the business system instead of the business system working for us. This cultivated a culture of acceptance where people didn't bring up problems because they were tired of calling them out with no way to address them."

Lou Dellemonache, President & CEO | Advanced Controls & Distribution

Enterprise Content Management

Keeping up-to-date on the latest version of paper-based documents can be a recurring nightmare. Enterprise content management (ECM) makes managing your business documents easier and faster, and it adds greater consistency and control. Documents and files are centrally stored and made available to your employees and your customers as needed. You can rest easy knowing everyone is using the latest versions—eliminating problems with paper documents, version control and locating files.

What to Look For:

- **Security:** Granular settings that put you in control of who can access and edit documents.

- **Ease of use:** Navigation that takes users through your ECM quickly and intuitively, with little or no training.

- **Collaboration:** Files that can easily be shared and edited in collaboration with others.

- **End-to-end life cycle:** Features to capture, store, publish, track/audit, export, and purge documents.

- **Integration:** Easy connection with other systems such as your ERP for document attachment, approvals, and process automation.

What to Look For:

- **Improved productivity:** Perform document discovery and management faster and easier, boosting productivity.

- **Customer and supplier experience:** Improve relationships and sales cycles via quick, easy access to information.

- **Error reduction:** Streamline document discovery to obtain critical information for decision-making.

"ECM allows us to spend less time handling the hard copies of invoices, filing, and document retrieval. It's dramatically reduced the workload needed for these processes."

Linda Larsen, Business Systems Admin | Precision Valve & Automation

Data Analytics and Visualization

No one really enjoys the grind of data collection and static reporting. Data analytics and visualization take you and your teams away from this inefficient and often excruciating process. Your ERP brings numbers to life through dynamic reporting and compelling visualizations—allowing you to be proactive with revenue, expenses and other KPIs that matter. With real-time digital analytics, you can stay connected to your revenue and performance, and be able to make informed decisions promptly. Transform the way you manage your business by making decisions backed by quantifiable insights.

"I wouldn't want to be in this environment stumbling around in 6 different places trying to get basic reports on a status of our operations."

John Wiborg, CEO | Stellar Industrial Supply
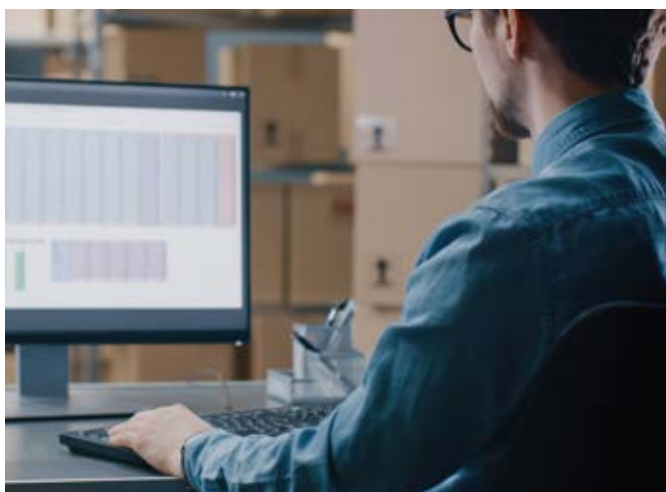
What to Look For:

- **Designed interface:** Faster reporting, consolidation, customization and drill-down for key data.

- **Customization options:** Ability to add, calculate and visualize the numbers that matter most, in the way your organization uses them—such as EBIT, margins and ratios.

- **Cloud-based tools with secure access:** Availability from anywhere, but only for those with access and administrative permissions.

- **Multiple sources:** A range of data sources brought together from across your business, including your ERP and even external sources, to reveal what's really going on.

- **Financials:** Ability to build financial statements easily and collaborate with stakeholders on budget planning and revenue forecasting in real time.

Results You Can Track:

- **Time savings:** Enjoy fast and easy monthly reporting, consolidations, comparisons, customized statements and permission-setting.

- **Streamlined analysis and reporting:** Report, analyze and track numbers automatically, for legal and non-legal entities including branches, area departments and specific product lines.

- **Faster, better decision-making:** Rely on a single source of truth that's always up to date, without the headache and errors of managing static spreadsheets.

Smart Shipping

The speed of order fulfillment is increasing all the time, and sales are happening more rapidly than ever; it's a daily challenge to keep up. Smart shipping technology lets you process shipping transactions faster and more efficiently—a critical advantage. By integrating shipping with your ERP, you can automatically pull in order details, share them with carriers via the web, and estimate freight charges and tracking information. All this automatically appears in your ERP system in real time, so you can process shipments with any licensed carrier, all from the same screen. You'll see a significant reduction in errors from manually inputing data from the carrier to your ERP system. And if your shipping is integrated, the system triggers automated invoicing for freight charges.

What To Look For:

- **Designed interface:** Faster reporting, consolidation, customization, and drill-down of key data.

- **Support for multiple carriers:** Rate-shopping capability, providing customers with options at the time of quoting, ordering or shipping.

- **Automation:** Automatically triggered bills of lading, email notifications, invoices and other key points in the shipping workflow.

- **Easy-to-use interface:** User-friendliness that ensures employees, carriers and customers adopt and value your smart shipping technology.

- **Integration with ERP:** Seamless connections to your ERP system guarantee a quick process, making shipping transactions more efficient.

Results You Can Track:

- **Reduced overall freight spend:** Benefit from improved shipping productivity; do more with less by automatically streamlining multiple tasks into a single workflow.

- **Eliminate errors, surcharges and fines:** Eliminate manual errors that lead to poor estimates.

- **Improved customer service:** Provide customers the best rates and multiple shipping options at points throughout the sales cycle, and deliver seamless email notifications as orders are processed and shipped.

- **Reduced onboarding and training time:** Reduce the need for worker training, with automated processing and fewer workflow steps.

"When we integrated our shipping with ERP, we quadrupled sales, reduced shipping days from four to one, and vastly improved productivity. This is our foundation to thrive in this hyper-competitive environment."

Mary Porter, CEO | Emergent Safety Supply

Electronic Data Interchange

One of the drawbacks of stand-alone legacy data systems is that the information doesn't translate for your partners or customers. Electronic data interchange (EDI) is the global standard for exchanging information electronically between two organizations that do business together or are "trading partners." It allows companies to speak the same electronic language and communicate more efficiently through their digital connection. EDI automates the electronic flow of information, eliminating paper-based and manual processing and the inefficiencies that come with it. As a distributor with EDI technology, you're no longer on an island; you're established within the supply chain.
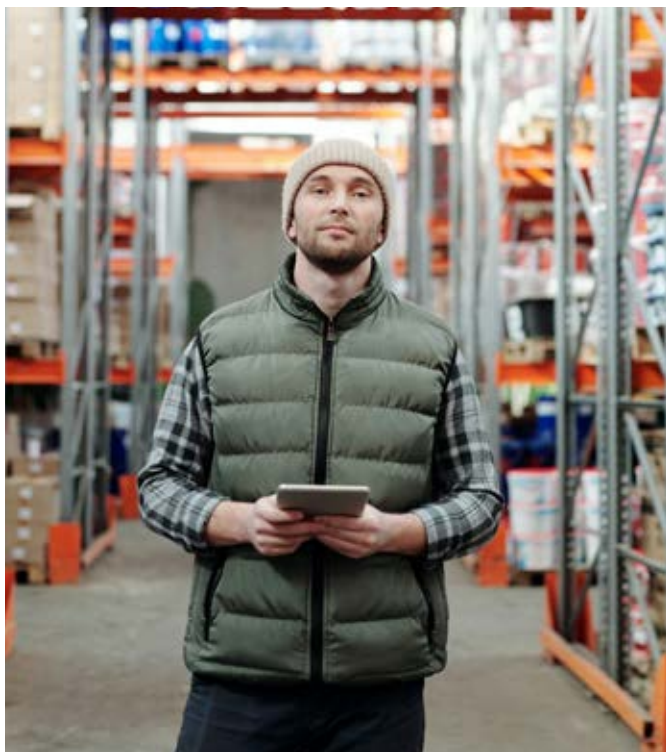
What To Look For:

- **Support for trading partners:** Capacity for the number of trading partners you need to exchange EDI with, for the types of transactions you require and the frequency you need. These drive the mapping, translation and communications requirements for your business.

- **Integration with back-office systems:** Ability to integrate with your business systems to realize the full benefits of EDI. Ensure that the product you choose can receive and share information with these systems. And if some manual data will be required, look for a system that allows this as well.

- **Resources and commitment:** A range of options, depending on the resources you have available to deploy and manage EDI: browser-based, managed services, installed software and cloud-based. Cloud tends to be the best option for companies looking for flexibility and control without the IT overhead.

Results You Can Track:

- **Cost savings:** Automate the information flow and reduce human manual work, lowering the cost of overhead, printing and paper, data entry errors, inventory, and penalties and chargebacks.

- **Partner collaboration:** Reduce the likelihood of errors by sending data via EDI so it's never physically touched. This promotes stronger relationships with trading partners, because their information is visible faster and easier for inventory status, forecasts and more.

- **Improved efficiency:** Send information via EDI in just seconds or minutes. Partners can act on received data immediately, more efficiently and with less manual work. This is even more true when EDI is integrated with your internal business and accounting systems.

- **Greater security:** Exchange information more securely with EDI that uses encryption and other security protocols.

The Time to Act is Now

Business threats are everywhere but cloud-based digital technologies can be the cornerstone that allows you to survive and thrive when disruptions occur. Your plans for growth, disaster recovery and business continuity will be key drivers to developing, and committing to, a digital transformation that will address your needs. It's a matter of having a plan and executing it.

In this eBook we've laid out the basic considerations for a digital transformation, along with the associated benefits. Here's a quick recap that can serve as an outline for your digital planning.

- Develop a clear understanding of digital technology, and study what other businesses are doing

- Assess your company's existing strategy, capabilities and people, and refine these elements as needed

- Take Epicor's Digital Preparedness Assessment to understand your company's level of readiness for a digital transformation

- Address your specific concerns for business continuity and disaster recovery

- Learn what digital technology can do for you by considering an ERP/cloud combination, specific ways digital capabilties can help your business, and ROI

- Consider the six main elements of digital transformation, including what to look for and how to track results

- Determine your own level of readiness for digital transformation

With this knowledge and planning in hand, you're ready to start—continue—or finish your digital transformation.

Epicor Solutions are Made With You, For You

Now is the time to move to a cloud-based solution, with our experts ready to support you at every step.

At Epicor, we understand your unique distribution challenges. As the leader in industry productivity solutions, Epicor is already the trusted partner to thousands of distributors worldwide. Powered by our uniquely deep industry knowledge, our solutions are built for your specific needs. That's why we're the cloud vendor of choice for the distribution businesses we serve.

We encourage everyone to experience the flexibility, security, and simplicity of our cloud-based solutions. Whether you want to move your entire system to the cloud or you're looking for a hybrid solution, we'll support you through every step. Our dedicated migration teams will work closely with you to develop a solution that's carefully curated for your business—made for the cloud, and made for you.

"Epicor listens to our needs, wants, and they are often able to add what we ask into future releases. The company truly values its user community. Epicor Prophet 21 is just such a terrific ERP system. It punches above its weight class and it punches up to the top ERP systems—it can handle everything from EDI to order automation to shipping confirmations to wireless warehouse."

Brian Schank, CTO | Links Unlimited

Find out more about how Epicor for Distribution can help your business soar.

Contact us:
distribution@epicor.com
www.epicor.com/distribution

EPICOR

We're here for the hard-working businesses that keep the world turning. They're the companies that make, move, and sell the things we all need. They trust Epicor to help them do business better. Their industries are our industries, and we understand them better than anyone. By working hand-in-hand with our customers, we get to know their business almost as well as they do. Our innovative solution sets are carefully curated to fit their needs and built to respond flexibly to their fast-changing reality. We accelerate every customer's ambitions, whether to grow and transform, or to simply become more productive and effective. That's what makes us the essential partners for the world's most essential businesses.

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