

How ERP systems can optimise distribution and wholesale processes

There is no getting away from the fact that challenges exist in distribution and wholesale processes.



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The ever-changing and interconnected nature of these processes makes them difficult to manage, even more so when customer demands and market conditions fluctuate and product lines diversify.

There is a raft of criteria that need to be complied with in terms of effective distribution and wholesale. Inventory must be managed, orders processed, demand identified, supply chains monitored, finances overseen, customers left satisfied, and reports compiled for informed decision-making.

“It can seem overwhelming at times,” says Stephen Howe, director of South African business solutions firm Times 3 Technologies.

“Fortunately, the emergence of enterprise resource planning (ERP) software has been a game-changer for companies.”



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These solutions integrate a wide range of business functions to ensure consistency and accuracy across departments, providing real-time insights into any changes that may occur. The result is better decision-making that can address problems immediately.

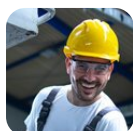
By virtue of their automated nature, Howe adds, errors are reduced and overall efficiency is greatly improved.

“One of the big benefits of ERPs is that they are highly adaptive, both to the growth of a business and market conditions. This level of scalability is making a significant difference to companies,” he says.

“Another plus is that these solutions optimise inventory thanks to their demand forecasting and stock level management functionality.”

Sage X3 is among the world’s most popular ERP systems and has become so on account of its fulfilment of distribution and wholesale requirements. Companies in more than 50 countries now use the platform for financial reporting, inventory and warehousing, customer service and sales, to name only a few of its functions.

“When you are choosing an ERP, you need to evaluate key performance indicators related to inventory turnover, order fulfilment, lead times and financial metrics,” Howe explains.



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“You should not ignore what your employees are telling you about the current process, as it is the system users who help to adopt and streamline your new business processes, thereby making a real difference to your business. This can be measured by assessing performance before and after the introduction of the solution.”

What ultimately has to happen is that the operations are streamlined and manual tasks reduced to reduce errors, he says.

Improved inventory and order tracking thanks to real-time data also benefit both users and the company as a whole.

As a Sage Platinum Business Partner in South Africa, T3T has produced a series of Sage X3 add-ons specifically geared towards wholesale and distribution processes.

Its automated Bulk Stocktake Import function, for example, simplifies and streamlines uploads of stock count information into Sage X3. This function also caters for attributes such as locations, status, lots and serial numbers, and supports multiple recounts to save time and improve accuracy.

Another of T3T's innovations is its Delivery Manifest Module.

This has been created to integrate driver, logistics, and warehouse functionality into a single function or process within Sage X3.

"Deliveries can be consolidated and grouped to a route, driver, vehicle and delivery date, for optimal productivity and efficiency. Furthermore, all processing and management around a group of orders and deliveries is facilitated through a single manifest which allows for the simplified Proof of Delivery Management and Cash Collection Management," Howe says.

"It's a solution we're especially proud of within the context of wholesale and distribution."

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