

# California CEO

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# BUCKING THE ERP SOFTWARE TREND TO CONSOLIDATE PRODUCTS MAY SAVE MANUFACTURERS TIME, MONEY AND FRUSTRATION

*More enterprise resource planning software makers are developing massive one-size fits all applications intended to serve all companies. MIE Solutions President David Ferguson, an Orange County-based leading producer of enterprise solutions, explained why manufacturers should resist the trend recently in a video interview on “Manufacturers Corner,” which was sponsored by the Manufacturing Council of the Inland Empire.*

**M**ore manufacturers are stepping into the technology minefield of enterprise resource planning (ERP) software systems to reduce costs and enhance productivity. As a result, more enterprise resource planning software makers are developing massive one-size fits all applications intended to serve all companies. It’s a trend that can blow up in a manufacturer’s face.

“There’s a lot of functionality in these products that the customer may not even need,” Ferguson said. “We don’t want to

force certain functionality to a customer when it’s not in their business model.”

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ERPs are a big investment in time, money and implementation. They can fail if the software is too generic and it doesn’t meet the needs of an individual manufacturer’s unique production processes.

“You have to tailor it,” Ferguson said. Many ERP software packages are heavy





on accounting. But he said manufacturers need more on what's happening on the shop floor, especially in made-to-order manufacturing. He continues that ERP software needs to be adaptable to maximize returns in every company.

The right ERP software will help you aggregate all of your costs together. "So when you're done, you're going to know if you've made any money or lost money on those parts," Ferguson said. "You're not waiting for the end of the month to see if you have money in the bank."

To tailor the software to manufacturer's needs, MIE Solutions puts a consultant on site. "We ask a lot of questions and give them multiple solutions and then we hear what they are really doing," Ferguson said.

"90-percent of our product is based on customer input in some way, that's less development time because we're not trying to develop things the customers don't need," Ferguson said.

The trend to consolidate ERP software into a single catch-all product presents another risk to manufacturers. They

might miss out on the newest innovations in enterprise solutions.

"One of the biggest things coming now is machine tools and monitoring of machine tools for costing and labor tracking," Ferguson said. "We're going to start integrating more and more with the actual machine tools out there on the shop floor where you can get real time feedback. When that machine breaks down, you will immediately know."

A consolidated ERP might overwhelm a small manufacturer, and it might not do enough or exactly what a big manufacturer needs. Ferguson added you only want to use the parts of the enterprise system that benefit you the most. At the same time, he said you only want to buy one software package that can handle all the needs of the small manufacturer as it grows into a big manufacturer.

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