



9 Questions to Ask Your SAP Implementation Partner



SAP implementations are complex by nature. They touch core processes, data, people, and long-standing ways of working, all while asking organizations to keep the business running. That complexity alone is enough to challenge even the most prepared teams. Too often, though, SAP programs become harder than they need to be because critical conversations never happen at the very beginning, when expectations are set and decisions are still flexible.

The reality is that many of the outcomes of an SAP implementation are determined long before the first workshop or configuration decision. They're shaped during partner selection, when timelines are proposed, teams are described, and assumptions quietly make their way into contracts.

Asking the right questions early, before you choose an implementation partner and commit to a path forward, can clarify expectations and set the foundation for success. The following questions are designed to help you do exactly that.

Questions to Ask Your SAP Implementation Partner – and Why

1 **How was the proposed implementation timeline developed, and what assumptions, constraints, and risk factors were considered to ensure it's both realistic and achievable?**

Companies need an implementation partner that has their best interests in mind, especially for a transformational project that requires significant investment, time, and resources. It's critical to understand the different factors impacting the timeline to know if the timeline set is both realistic and achievable, or if they are just telling you something you want to hear to earn your business.

2 **What is your assessment of our provided approach, and do you have a recommendation for how we should implement SAP, such as phasing, timeline, scope, etc.?**

System Integrators (SIs) have a wealth of experience implementing SAP and can recognize when a project is over scoped or more complicated than it needs to be. As good as your initial approach may or may not be, it's good to get a second opinion and see if there is a simpler, faster, and more appropriate approach unique to your business, key objectives, and broader industry demands.

3 **Will the implementation be delivered by a dedicated, named project team, and if so, what is each team member's expected allocation to this project?**

For any project, and something this significant, who is doing the work? That's what you should want (and need) to understand. You want to know if you're getting a dedicated team of resources in critical project roles or if they're going to be split between another project(s). This will help you to better understand cost and [identify potential warning signs](#) if the team provided isn't fully dedicated. It helps align project expectations, too.





4 Which members of the sales team will continue into delivery roles, and how will knowledge transfer be handled if they don't transition to those roles?

The sales process is a long one – rightfully so with how significant of a decision this is. Relationships are built and trust is earned throughout this process between you and your selected SI. Unfortunately, there are instances where an SI is selected and then handed over to a completely new team within an SI's business and rarely to be heard from again. This can be challenging after a relationship has been built. Additionally, there's a risk of poor [knowledge transfer](#) between the sales and execution teams on specific challenges and opportunities discussed throughout the process. It's preferred and recommended that there should be some continuity between sales and execution team members.

5 What is the experience level of the functional leads and project manager assigned to this project (years of SAP experience, similar implementations, and industry experience)?

You'll want to understand if you're receiving a quality team of resources for key project roles or being handed over to an inexperienced team that doesn't understand your business or the implementation challenges and nuances. It's inevitable that there will be challenges throughout the implementation; these projects are hard [and require experienced people](#) who know how to navigate and steer the ship through times of uncertainty. Asking about experience level will also help to understand and compare rates between SIs and someone with more experienced resources, which helps derive cost and realistic timelines, too.



6 How is Organizational Change Management (OCM) addressed in your implementation estimate, and what risks or impacts should we expect if OCM activities fall outside of scope?

It cannot be overstated just how critical [OCM is to the success](#) of this project. It is a large percentage of why these transformations may fail as the business may never fully adopt the solution. Unfortunately, a lot of times this is one of the first things cut in pricing estimates. Organizations can choose to do [OCM in house](#), but it requires significant risk and the SI should have some level of support and guidance. This absolutely must go right.

7

What level of effort and time is allocated to data cleansing, preparation, and migration in your estimate, and how are responsibilities divided between your team and ours?

Data cleansing and transformation activities are typically one of the longest poles in the tent for this type of transformation. Poor and unstructured data can take significant time and delay the project if it's not scoped properly, ultimately driving up the implementation cost. It's good to have honest conversations with your teams and potential SIs on what it looks like, even providing sample data sets to aid in scoping.



8

How robust is your testing approach, and what testing phases are included in the implementation estimate (e.g., unit, integration, UAT, regression), including planned duration, cycles, and client responsibilities?

The lack of testing depth and testing cycles breeds quality issues and makes the go-live much more challenging for the business. This can drive stress among stakeholders, impact adoption, and even worse, create challenges with critical business activities like shipping your products. The more testing the better – this will ultimately help derisk the project, too.



9

How common are change orders for projects of this size, and are these changes more attributable to initial scoping assumptions or true scope expansion?

Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for organizations to undersell or underestimate the work required to earn your business. You want to understand just how accurate and realistic the timeline set truly is and assess the risk of the potential implementation partner. The last thing you want is to select a project with an lower upfront and/or timeline, be "change ordered to death," and look back at an implementation that ends up significantly over budget and longer in duration than expected.



Selecting the Right SAP Implementation Partner

These questions are designed to create clarity early, when expectations and assumptions are still being formed. By taking the time to understand how timelines are developed and how delivery teams are organized, organizations can reduce uncertainty and limit avoidable challenges later in the program.

[A capable implementation](#) partner should be able to address these questions clearly and directly, without deflection or overgeneralization. The way a partner responds offers insight into their delivery approach and how they manage risk throughout an SAP implementation. Addressing these topics during selection helps organizations move forward with greater confidence and a [stronger foundation for success](#).

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