



transform with
SPEED

ERP Transformation – Analytical POV

ERP Transformation Without the Risk: An Analytical Perspective on Failure Patterns and Implementation Frameworks

Introduction: Why This Paper, Why Now

At Sarrisco, we believe that sharing experiences—both successes and failures—is one of the most valuable contributions we can make to the Oracle user community.

The theme for our paper is an analytical perspective on Project (ERP Implementation) failures, due in part to misguided belief that a 'one size fits all' approach taken by most System Integrators, that their methodology will deliver unique results. There is a lot more at stake that needs consideration, starting from the initial requirement for a new way of working, transpiring into understanding, capturing and ultimately delivering the best solution for the company. There are a lot of variables that are overlooked, which helps the traditional methodologies lock customers in with little recourse away from budget increase and scope creep, which inevitably will occur – we've seen it time and time again.

ERP transformation is a defining initiative for any organisation. It touches every department, every process, and every employee. Yet history shows us that ERP programmes carry significant risk. Too many implementations have overrun, under-delivered, or failed outright, leaving organisations with significant financial loss, reputational damage, and weakened competitive position.

This paper is intended to provide the Oracle user community with a clear, experience-based analysis of:

- Why ERP implementations so often fail
- What the systemic risks are in traditional approaches
- Why Oracle Cloud ERP offers a compelling platform choice
- And how the SPEED Method, developed by Sarrisco, provides a structured, evidence-led way to mitigate risk and accelerate business value

Our insights are drawn from decades of project delivery experience, reference cases across industries, and independent analyst research (including Gartner, McKinsey, and well-documented public ERP failures). The purpose is not to sell a product, but to contribute to the shared learning of the Oracle community—helping members avoid the mistakes of the past and navigate their own ERP journeys with confidence.

Patterns of ERP Implementation Failure

Before considering patterns of failure, it is important to define what we mean by ERP or project failure. An ERP project does not need to collapse entirely to be considered a failure.

A project can be deemed unsuccessful if:

- Budgets escalate far beyond the original business case
- Timelines slip significantly, causing operational disruption
- Scope is compromised, leaving critical functionality undelivered
- Adoption lags, with end-users reverting to spreadsheets or legacy processes
- Anticipated ROI is delayed or never achieved

Evidence from industry research (including Gartner and other analyst reports) and project delivery experience highlights the following recurring issues:

Issue	Description
Scope Creep	Weak initial requirement capture, commercial agreements preceding detailed design, uncontrolled expansion of scope
Misaligned Expectations	Disparity between what is contracted and what is ultimately delivered due to ambiguous RFPs and SoWs
Inconsistent Quality	Reliance on variable expertise of individual consultants without enforceable, standardised artefacts
Inefficient Delivery Sequencing	Extended workshop phases delaying tangible builds, limiting early validation
Integration, Data, and Change Management as Afterthoughts	Late focus increases risk of rework and adoption delays
Partner Lock-In	Architectures and configurations that increase long-term dependency on the same SI
Inadequate Governance	Poor KPI definition, limited escalation mechanisms, bottlenecked decision-making
Underestimated Change Management	Insufficient training and readiness planning reduces adoption rates
Poor Roadmap and Resource Planning	Unrealistic timelines and resource allocations, often set for commercial appeal rather than feasibility

History provides several cautionary examples:

- Hershey (1999): A \$100m SAP project went live just before Halloween, their peak season. Data migration issues and order-processing failures led to missed shipments, lost sales, and a 19% drop in quarterly profits. The problem was not the technology itself, but poor planning, rushed timelines, and inadequate testing.
- Lidl (2018): After seven years and €500m invested in SAP, Lidl abandoned its ERP project. The core issue was a misalignment between Lidl's long-standing processes (based on retail purchase price) and SAP's best practices. The unwillingness to adapt business processes to the system led to an irreconcilable gap.
- UK NHS NPfIT (2002–2011): Intended as the world's largest healthcare IT programme, the National Programme for IT cost over £10bn before being abandoned. A combination of over-ambitious scope, lack of stakeholder buy-in, and supplier complexity left the NHS without the integrated digital system it had envisioned.

The implications of such failures are clear: financial loss, reputational harm, and lost trust in technology as a driver of transformation. These examples demonstrate why methodology, governance, and process alignment are just as critical as technology choice.

The Hidden Assumptions in Conventional Delivery Models

Selecting a leading ERP platform such as Oracle Cloud often comes with implicit assumptions that certain outcomes are inherent to the technology: that Modern Best Practices will be applied consistently; that architecture will be best-in-class; that automation and efficiency gains will be realised automatically; and that ROI will be rapid. In reality, these outcomes are not inherent—they must be actively designed, embedded, and governed throughout the implementation lifecycle.

Customers often assume that by selecting a Tier 1 ERP platform, critical outcomes such as efficiency, best practice adoption, and rapid ROI are automatically guaranteed. This assumption is reinforced during sales cycles, where System Integrators and vendors alike can create the impression that the technology itself will deliver transformation outcomes without additional intervention. In reality, platform capability provides potential, not certainty.

Common assumptions include:

- Best Practices will be consistently applied across all processes.
- Efficiency and automation are inherent features of the software.
- Architectural integrity is delivered uniformly regardless of consultant expertise.
- ROI will flow naturally from adoption of the platform.

The reality is starkly different: unless these outcomes are explicitly designed, embedded, and governed throughout the implementation lifecycle, they frequently fail to materialise. The result is a disjointed, inconsistent system that may technically function but falls short of enabling true business transformation.

Why Oracle Cloud ERP is a Strong Platform Choice

Oracle Cloud ERP offers a comprehensive, unified suite encompassing finance, procurement, supply chain, EPM, and project management. Its embedded AI/ML capabilities, pre-configured Modern Best Practices, quarterly release cycle, and integration ecosystem provide a strong foundation for transformation. However, platform capability alone is insufficient—delivery methodology is the differentiator between unrealised potential and measurable success.

Oracle Cloud ERP stands apart for the breadth and depth of its coverage across business functions. From Finance and Procurement to Supply Chain, Project Management, and Enterprise Performance Management (EPM), Oracle offers an integrated suite that avoids the fragmentation of point solutions. This ensures that data flows seamlessly between functions, supporting real-time insight and enterprise-wide decision-making.

Key differentiators include:

- A quarterly release cycle that continuously delivers new features and innovations.
- The Redwood user experience (UX), which modernises interaction design and improves adoption.
- Embedded AI and machine learning (ML), plus new GenAI Agents that extend process automation.
- Pre-configured Modern Best Practices that provide a blueprint for operational excellence.

Industry analysts such as Gartner and Forrester consistently highlight Oracle's momentum in Cloud ERP adoption, often positioning it ahead of traditional ERP vendors in terms of cloud-native maturity. Yet while the platform is strong, its true value can only be realised through a disciplined methodology that ensures these differentiators are implemented effectively.

The SPEED Method: A Structured Response to Known Risks

Sarrisco's SPEED Method was developed to directly address the common points of failure in ERP projects. Purpose-built for Oracle Cloud ERP, SPEED re-engineers sequencing, scope definition, and stakeholder engagement to systematically remove risks before they manifest.

Key principles of SPEED include:

- **Requirements Before Contracts** – Comprehensive, validated requirements and design captured before commercial agreements, eliminating scope ambiguity.
 - **Early Prototyping via Solution Sets** – Delivering a working solution within two weeks using pre-built, best-practice-aligned configurations, enabling immediate validation.
 - **Integrated Workstreams** – Data migration, integrations, and change management embedded from the outset, reducing late-stage disruption.
 - **Embedded Best Practices** – Modern Best Practices and best-in-class architecture included by default in every process and module.
 - **Continuous Governance** – Defined KPIs, decision gates, and escalation paths hardwired into the delivery model.
 - **Knowledge Transfer** – Structured documentation and training artefacts to ensure client self-sufficiency post go-live.
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From Risk to Measured Confidence

In traditional models, adherence to best practices, architectural integrity, and process efficiency is probabilistic—possible but not assured. SPEED makes these outcomes systematic by embedding them into the earliest stages of the project and maintaining them through governance and validation. Rather than offering generic guarantees, SPEED applies a closed-loop assurance model where requirements, design, build, and validation are all traceable to agreed business objectives.

Traditional ERP delivery methods often leave success up to probability. Adherence to best practices, architectural soundness, and efficiency gains may occur, but they are not systematically assured. This probabilistic approach explains why so many projects fail to deliver on their promised outcomes.

SPEED transforms this by embedding assurance into the methodology itself. Requirements are validated and traceable to business outcomes; governance checkpoints provide clear decision gates; and best practices are not optional add-ons but structural components of the solution. This means outcomes are no longer left to chance but are engineered into the delivery.

The implications for organisations are significant:

- Faster time-to-value as validated solutions are delivered earlier.
- Reduced disruption thanks to integrated data, change, and integration workstreams.
- ROI realised within shorter timeframes, often within the first financial year.

This is not about making empty guarantees. It is about designing a methodology that systematically reduces risk and builds confidence at every stage, turning transformation from a leap of faith into a measured, evidence-led journey.

Conclusion: Methodology as the Differentiator

ERP transformation has never been more urgent—or more challenging. Oracle Cloud ERP provides an unparalleled platform in terms of breadth, innovation, and scalability. But platform capability alone does not guarantee success.

As history shows, ERP failures are most often the result of methodological weakness, poor governance, and misaligned expectations. The SPEED Method addresses these risks directly by embedding requirements first, prototyping early, and integrating governance, data, and change from the outset.

Our aim in sharing this paper with the Oracle user community is simple:

- To help members learn from the mistakes of the past
- To provide a structured, evidence-based framework for ERP success
- And to demonstrate how Oracle Cloud ERP, when implemented with the right methodology, can be the foundation for long-term transformation

ERP transformation is not about reaching go-live—it is about creating a system and an approach that continues to deliver value long after the initial implementation. With the right methodology, that goal is not only achievable, but repeatable.

If you're ready to move from "we think" to "we know", it's time to talk.
Let's make your Oracle Cloud journey as predictable as the success it delivers.

Contact us to learn how *SPEED* can support your long-term Oracle Cloud success.

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