EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

THE 15 ERP SELECTION CRITERIA

EXECUTIVE SPONSORS SHOULD USE

How to Evaluate ERP Platforms, Implementation Partners, Commercial Models, Governed Evidence, and Expected Value

The Alentra Methodology governs the process.
The ERP Software Selection Criteria govern the decision.

GROUNDED IN SPONSOR INTENT, GOVERNED EVIDENCE, INVESTMENT QUALITY, AND IMPLEMENTATION READINESS

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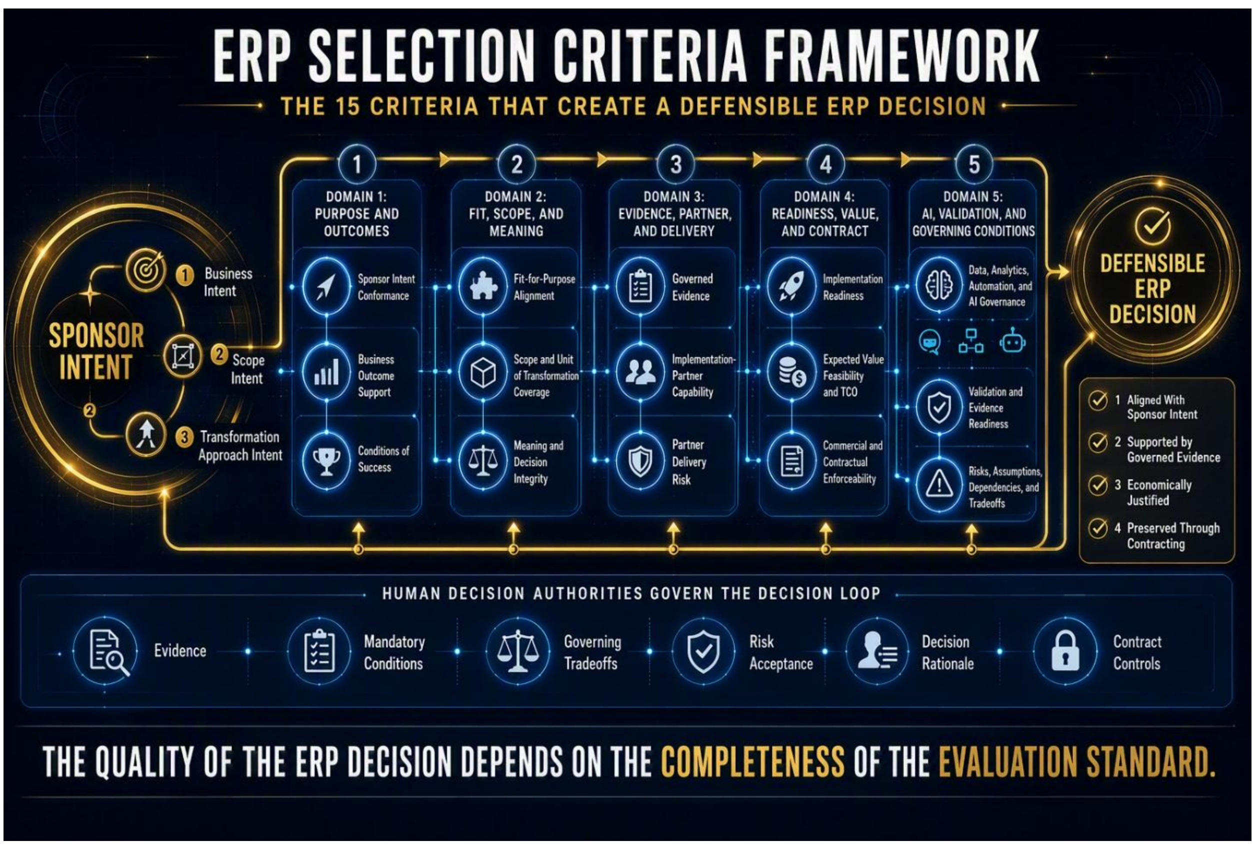
Executive Summary

ERP selection teams commonly evaluate functional fit, technical capability, vendor strength, implementation experience, price, and Total Cost of Ownership. These considerations provide useful inputs, but they do not establish the complete Business-Side standard required to determine whether an ERP investment can operationalize the business purpose authorized by the Executive Sponsor.

The ERP Software Selection Criteria Framework expands the decision across the complete candidate position. It evaluates the platform, implementation partner, implementation approach, commercial structure, governance conditions, evidence, validation readiness, expected value, economic exposure, risks, assumptions, dependencies, contractual commitments, and organizational conditions required to translate Sponsor Intent into operating reality.



The framework begins with a governing question:

Which platform, implementation partner, commercial structure, and implementation approach can best operationalize the Sponsor Intent authorized by the Executive Sponsor?

That question changes the criteria, requirements, demonstrations, evidence, scoring model, economic analysis, contractual commitments, and meaning of the final selection decision. It requires candidates to demonstrate how their complete proposed position will support the Business Outcomes the Enterprise Transformation Program was authorized to produce.

The 15 criteria operate within the Alentra Methodology. They do not create a separate ERP selection process, additional methodology, or parallel sequence. The canonical 30-step Alentra Methodology governs how Transformation Strategy and Solution Selection are performed, while the criteria define what the resulting ERP selection decision should evaluate.

The CFO-TA is the Executive Sponsor Platform. It helps Executive Sponsors apply the Alentra Methodology, use the ERP Software Selection Criteria, preserve governed evidence, authorize consequential decisions, and maintain Sponsor Intent throughout contracting, implementation, operations, and outcome validation.

What Are ERP Software Selection Criteria?

ERP software selection criteria are the standards used to evaluate and compare ERP platforms, implementation partners, implementation approaches, commercial proposals, and the conditions required to support intended Business Outcomes.

Effective criteria define what candidates must demonstrate, what evidence they must provide, how material differences should be evaluated, and which conditions require direct authorization from the appropriate Decision Authority. They establish a common evaluation basis so proposals can be compared across consistent scope, assumptions, responsibilities, operating conditions, time horizons, and evidence expectations.

The criteria should originate from the purpose the ERP investment must serve. Sponsor Intent provides that authoritative standard. Once Sponsor Intent is sufficiently explicit, functional fit, technical capability, implementation credibility, cost, risk, contractual terms, and future readiness can be evaluated in relation to a defined Business-Side purpose.

The Missing ERP Selection Standard Is Sponsor Intent

Sponsor Intent is the Executive Sponsor-owned expression of purpose and foundation of the Transformation Definition. It is formed by three Sponsor-owned responsibilities:

- Business Intent
- Scope Intent
- Transformation Approach Intent

Business Intent defines the intended Business Outcomes, priorities, governing meaning, and Conditions of Success that must remain true. Scope Intent establishes what the Enterprise Transformation Program will address, exclude, sequence, defer, or treat conditionally. Transformation Approach Intent defines how the Executive Sponsor expects the Enterprise Transformation Program to be structured and pursued.

Together, these responsibilities establish the authoritative standard against which ERP platforms, implementation partners, proposals, commercial structures, implementation approaches, risks, tradeoffs, costs, and expected value can be evaluated.

Sponsor Intent is progressively defined through Sponsor Intent Assets. A Sponsor Intent Asset is a governed business artifact that captures the Sponsor’s intended outcome, required change, rationale, Decision Boundaries, validation requirements, and evidence model. Initial Sponsor Intent Assets are expected to be partial and are refined as decisions are made, assumptions change, evidence develops, and operating conditions evolve.

Greater completeness strengthens candidate comparability, proposal accuracy, contractual precision, implementation continuity, validation, and confidence in the selection decision. Sponsor Intent Lifecycle Management governs and guides this continuing refinement throughout the Enterprise Transformation Program lifecycle.

Business Intent Design is the discipline responsible for progressively defining Sponsor Intent before consequential commitments are made. Intent Governance preserves and governs that purpose throughout the Enterprise Transformation Program lifecycle.

Intent Governance addresses both the enduring challenge of transformation drift and the emerging requirements of Agentic AI. It preserves authoritative Sponsor Intent as decisions, participants, assumptions, and operating conditions change. It also makes intended outcomes, priorities, boundaries, accountabilities, validation requirements, and evidence expectations explicit enough to guide increasingly autonomous execution.

People compensated for ambiguity. Autonomous agents amplify it.

The Alentra Methodology Governs the ERP Selection Process

The Alentra Methodology provides the canonical 30-step methodology across Transformation Strategy, Solution Selection, Govern Implementation, and Prove Outcomes. It governs how Sponsor Intent is progressively defined, Business Outcomes and Conditions of Success are established, scope and Transformation Approach Intent are authorized, candidates are evaluated, and the selection basis is preserved through contracting and implementation mobilization.

The methodology also governs how Meaning-Aligned Requirements are developed, Sponsor-controlled demonstrations are structured, evidence is classified, risks and assumptions are assessed, tradeoffs are authorized, and decisions are recorded. These activities operate as part of one integrated Enterprise Transformation Program methodology.

The 15 ERP Software Selection Criteria define what Executive Sponsors should evaluate when applying the Alentra Methodology to an ERP selection decision. The criteria are decision domains rather than steps, stages, phases, or gates. The applicable steps of the Alentra Methodology determine when and how each criterion is defined, applied, analyzed, reviewed, and authorized.

The Alentra Methodology governs the process. The ERP Software Selection Criteria govern the decision.

Why Traditional ERP Selection Criteria Are Incomplete

Traditional ERP selection criteria commonly originate from functional requirements, departmental requests, current-system limitations, product categories, consulting templates, technical standards, vendor questionnaires, implementation estimates, and commercial terms. These inputs organize useful information, but they do not establish the complete Business-Side standard the selected ERP platform and implementation partner must satisfy.

A functional requirement can describe what a user expects a system to do without defining why that behavior matters, which Business Outcome it supports, what governing meaning must remain intact, who holds Decision Authority, how exceptions must be handled, or what evidence will demonstrate achievement.

A feature comparison can show that multiple ERP platforms support a business process. It cannot determine whether those platforms support required operating behaviors, Core Business Definitions, accountability structures, evidence expectations, authorized scope, or Transformation Approach Intent without a clear governing standard.

A price comparison can identify a lower-cost proposal without exposing whether the proposal limits intended value, transfers responsibilities to the client, depends on future capability, introduces extensive customization, or relies on assumptions that have not been evaluated.

A vendor-controlled demonstration can present a polished version of a product under preferred conditions. It does not establish how the product will perform within the Sponsor's business context, data conditions, Decision Boundaries, exception conditions, accountability model, or evidence requirements.

Traditional criteria organize the comparison.

Sponsor-governed criteria establish what the comparison must prove.

The Complete ERP Selection Decision

The ERP Selection Criteria Framework evaluates the complete candidate position:

- ERP platform
- Implementation partner
- Implementation approach
- Commercial structure
- Governance model
- Business-Side and technical responsibilities
- Required integrations and third-party products
- Evidence base
- Validation readiness
- Expected Value Feasibility
- Total Cost of Ownership
- Risks, assumptions, dependencies, and tradeoffs
- Contractual commitments
- Implementation readiness
- Continuing alignment with Sponsor Intent

The criteria work together as an integrated evaluation standard. Weighted comparisons remain useful, while mandatory conditions, non-compensating criteria, evidence sufficiency requirements, Governing Tradeoff Decisions, disqualification conditions, contract conditions, and residual-risk acceptance keep consequential matters directly visible to human Decision Authorities.

The 15 ERP Software Selection Criteria

1. Sponsor Intent Conformance

Sponsor Intent Conformance determines whether the platform, implementation partner, commercial structure, and implementation approach can operationalize approved Sponsor Intent within the boundaries, accountabilities, and evidence conditions authorized by the Executive Sponsor.

The evaluation tests alignment with Business Intent, Scope Intent, Transformation Approach Intent, Sponsor Intent Assets, Core Business Definitions, governing constraints, Decision Authority, Decision Boundaries, Accountability Requirements, Exception Rules, validation requirements, and evidence expectations.

This criterion provides the governing reference point for the complete evaluation. Functional capability, technical fit, implementation credibility, economics, contractual terms, and future readiness all gain meaning through their relationship to the authorized purpose.

Executive Sponsor question: Can this candidate operationalize what I authorized within the approved boundaries, accountabilities, and evidence conditions?

2. Business Outcome Support

Every candidate should demonstrate how the proposed platform and implementation approach support the approved Business Outcomes. That connection should extend across product capability, operating changes, data requirements, controls, implementation commitments, adoption conditions, accountability, and evidence-producing mechanisms.

Platform capability demonstrates the potential to support an outcome. Outcome support becomes credible when the required implementation and operating conditions are explicit, feasible, supported by evidence, and assigned to accountable parties.

The evaluation should identify which Sponsor Intent Assets support each Business Outcome, which platform capabilities are required, which implementation conditions must be satisfied, and what Outcome Evidence will eventually demonstrate achievement.

This creates a visible relationship between the selection decision and the value the Enterprise Transformation Program was authorized to produce.

Executive Sponsor question: How will this candidate support each authorized Business Outcome, and what conditions and evidence make that conclusion credible?

3. Conditions of Success

The Alentra Methodology evaluates candidates against four transformation-level Conditions of Success:

- Capital Protection
- Outcome Confidence
- AI & Data Integrity
- Compliance Proof

These conditions extend evaluation across the complete environment required for the Enterprise Transformation Program to produce durable value. They make capital exposure, outcome evidence, data meaning, AI authority, compliance, and proof part of the selection decision.

Each Business Outcome should support at least one Condition of Success. The selected ERP platform and implementation partner should support the complete transformation standard authorized by the Executive Sponsor.

A platform can satisfy extensive functional requirements while creating unacceptable capital exposure, uncertain outcome evidence, unreliable data meaning, unclear AI authority, or inadequate compliance proof. Conditions of Success ensure these considerations remain visible throughout evaluation and authorization.

Executive Sponsor question: Does this candidate support the conditions required to protect capital, strengthen outcome confidence, preserve AI and data integrity, and produce compliance proof?

4. Fit-for-Purpose Alignment

Fit-for-Purpose Alignment evaluates whether the proposed platform and implementation partner support the intended future-state business environment defined by the Executive Sponsor.

The assessment includes required business capabilities, intended operating behaviors, Business Domains, Units of Transformation, material business flows, cross-functional interactions, operating-model expectations, scope boundaries, governing constraints, and evidence requirements.

Broad product strength does not establish specific suitability for an Enterprise Transformation Program. The strongest candidate is the one best suited to operationalize the Sponsor-approved purpose within the organization’s operating context.

Fit-for-Purpose Alignment gives the Executive Sponsor a disciplined basis for distinguishing general product capability from specific suitability for the authorized transformation.

Executive Sponsor question: Is this candidate specifically suited to the future-state business environment and operating conditions we intend to create?

5. Scope and Unit of Transformation Coverage

ERP vendors commonly structure scope around modules, features, workstreams, integrations, and technical components. Meaningful Business Outcomes frequently require coordinated change across processes, roles, decisions, data, controls, systems, interfaces, organizational units, and third parties.

The Alentra Methodology uses Units of Transformation to preserve the complete business-change boundary required to achieve a meaningful Business Outcome. The evaluation should make the following scope conditions explicit:

- Included scope
- Excluded scope
- Optional scope
- Deferred scope
- Conditional scope

- Dependencies
- Third-party responsibilities
- Future capability
- Sponsor Intent Asset coverage
- Unit of Transformation coverage

This treatment reveals business change that has been fragmented, transferred, deferred, qualified, or left unresolved. It also creates a stronger basis for comparing implementation estimates, commercial proposals, risks, resource commitments, and expected value.

Two proposals can only be compared responsibly when they reflect a common evaluation basis. Scope, responsibilities, dependencies, assumptions, and Units of Transformation should be normalized before the organization compares cost, timing, value, or implementation credibility.

Executive Sponsor question: Does the proposed scope cover the complete business change required to achieve the intended outcomes, with exclusions, dependencies, and transferred responsibilities made explicit?

6. Meaning and Decision Integrity

ERP platforms operationalize business meaning through classifications, approvals, workflows, reporting, controls, automation, analytics, recommendations, and AI-enabled actions. Candidates should demonstrate that the proposed solution can preserve authorized Core Business Definitions, Decision Authority, accountability, Decision Boundaries, Exception Rules, escalation paths, and Evidence Requirements.

Meaning and Decision Integrity becomes increasingly important as ERP platforms introduce copilots, intelligent assistants, autonomous agents, and agentic workflows. AI-enabled behavior requires explicit purpose, stable meaning, reliable data, bounded authority, governed exceptions, human Decision Authority, attributable evidence, and continuing validation.

The evaluation should determine how the platform represents business meaning, applies decision logic, manages competing priorities, recognizes exceptions, escalates consequential decisions, and preserves human authority. It should also establish how changes to definitions, rules, configurations, models, prompts, policies, data, permissions, and agent behavior are authorized and governed.

Traditional ERP selection evaluated whether software could perform a process. Agentic ERP selection increasingly requires evaluating whether autonomous systems can operationalize the intended business purpose.

Executive Sponsor question: Can the candidate preserve our authorized business meaning, Decision Authority, accountability, boundaries, and exception conditions as work becomes increasingly automated?

7. Governed Evidence

Traditional ERP evaluations frequently treat questionnaires, proposals, demonstrations, presentations, product documentation, reference discussions, and evaluator impressions as broadly equivalent inputs. The ERP Selection Criteria Framework classifies evidence according to what the evidence demonstrates and the conditions under which it was produced.

A material candidate claim can be classified as:

- Demonstrated capability
- Configurable capability
- Custom capability
- Third-party-dependent capability
- Implementation-partner-dependent capability
- Manual workaround
- Future Release capability
- Candidate assertion
- Insufficient evidence

Evidence should be observable, attributable, traceable, accessible, reviewable, produced under known conditions, and accompanied by its limitations. A written response and a capability demonstrated under Sponsor-controlled conditions provide different forms of evidence and should receive different evidentiary treatment.

The evaluation should preserve the distinction among raw evidence, evaluator observations, approved findings, scores, recommendations, decision rationale, and contractual use. This separation allows human Decision Authorities to understand how conclusions were reached and whether the available evidence supports them.

Agentic capabilities require evidence that extends beyond a prepared demonstration. The evaluation should establish the data and instructions provided, the authority granted, the operating conditions, the decisions made, the exceptions encountered, the actions initiated, and the evidence available to explain and validate resulting behavior.

Persistent evidence should be stored on the client's infrastructure.

Executive Sponsor question: What evidence supports each material candidate claim, how dependable is that evidence, and under what conditions was it produced?

8. Implementation-Partner Capability

Platform capability and implementation-partner capability are separate evaluation questions. A platform can provide a capability without establishing that the proposed implementation partner can design, configure, integrate, migrate, test, validate, stabilize, and support that capability within the client's environment.

Implementation-partner evaluation should address:

- Relevant implementation experience
- Proposed leadership
- Named resources
- Resource continuity
- Location and availability
- Subcontractor dependencies
- Knowledge transfer
- Implementation responsibilities
- Evidence-production responsibilities
- Data and integration capability
- AI and automation capability

- Remediation accountability
- Alignment with Transformation Approach Intent

This assessment determines whether the proposed partner can convert platform potential into operating reality while preserving Sponsor Intent.

The implementation partner's ability to configure AI-enabled and agentic capabilities deserves specific scrutiny. The partner should be capable of translating Sponsor Intent into purpose, instructions, boundaries, Decision Authority, exceptions, monitoring, evidence, and validation conditions that the platform can operationalize.

Executive Sponsor question: Can this implementation partner convert platform potential into operating reality while preserving Sponsor Intent?

9. Partner Delivery Risk

Partner Delivery Risk evaluates the credibility of the proposed implementation model. The assessment examines staffing assumptions, named resources, estimates, dependencies, milestones, qualifications, exclusions, subcontractor arrangements, client responsibilities, evidence obligations, governance conditions, and commercial exposure.

A detailed implementation plan remains a proposal until its assumptions, resources, responsibilities, dependencies, conditions, and evidence are evaluated. Partner Delivery Risk determines whether the complete implementation model provides a credible path to the authorized result.

The analysis should expose where the proposed model depends on future decisions, unavailable resources, accelerated approvals, unresolved data conditions, limited validation, deferred controls, temporary staffing, or assumptions that have not been authorized by the Business-Side.

Agentic capabilities introduce additional considerations involving specialized expertise, agent configuration, data readiness, testing environments, observability, exception design, human authority boundaries, evidence retention, continuing validation, and accountability as configurations or operating conditions evolve. These dependencies affect cost, timing, risk, Expected Value Feasibility, and Business Outcome achievement.

Executive Sponsor question: Does the proposed delivery model provide an evidence-supported path to the authorized result, with its assumptions and dependencies made visible?

10. Implementation Readiness

Implementation Readiness determines whether the preferred candidate can transition responsibly into implementation. The proposed solution, resources, environments, data approach, integration approach, governance structure, validation responsibilities, evidence mechanisms, risks, assumptions, dependencies, and Decision Authorities should be sufficiently mature to support implementation mobilization.

This criterion preserves continuity between Solution Selection and Govern Implementation. It provides a structured basis for authorizing work, constraining conditional activities, and keeping unresolved selection conditions visible as implementation begins.

Implementation Readiness should identify which activities can begin, which remain conditional, and which should remain constrained until the required Sponsor Intent, evidence, authority, resources, data, environments, or governing definitions are available.

For AI-enabled and agentic capabilities, readiness also requires explicit purpose, authorized autonomy boundaries, accountable human authorities, exception procedures, monitoring requirements, evidence expectations, validation conditions, and triggers for reassessment.

Executive Sponsor question: Are the organization and the preferred candidate sufficiently prepared to mobilize implementation against the authorized Transformation Definition?

11. Expected Value Feasibility and Total Cost of Ownership

Total Cost of Ownership remains a critical selection criterion, but cost gains decision value through its relationship to the value the investment is intended to create, protect, enable, or preserve.

The framework evaluates two connected dimensions:

- Expected Value Feasibility
- Total Cost of Ownership

Expected Value Feasibility assesses how credibly each alternative can support the approved Business Outcomes. The assessment considers Sponsor Intent alignment, Fit-for-Purpose Alignment, implementation credibility, adoption dependencies, evidence readiness, time to expected value, durability, Partner Delivery Risk, operating-model implications, and material assumptions and dependencies.

Expected Value Feasibility can be expressed through evidence-based classifications:

- Strongly supported
- Supported with qualifications
- Conditionally supported
- Weakly supported
- Insufficient evidence

These classifications allow the Executive Sponsor to compare the strength of expected value while preserving uncertainty and avoiding unsupported financial precision.

Total Cost of Ownership evaluates the complete economic implications of each proposed platform and implementation approach over the approved analysis horizon. Applicable costs include:

- Software licensing and subscriptions
- Consumption-based and AI usage charges
- Infrastructure and hosting
- Implementation services
- Internal Business-Side and technical resources
- Data remediation and migration
- Integrations, customization, extensions, and third-party products
- Testing and validation
- Training, organizational change, and adoption
- Cutover and stabilization
- Support, managed services, maintenance, and upgrades
- Regression testing and continuing Sponsor Intent Testing
- Evidence production, compliance, assurance, security, and privacy
- Model, prompt, policy, configuration, and agent changes

- Agent monitoring and human oversight
- Future Units of Transformation
- Decommissioning, transition, and exit
- Contingency and material risk exposure

TCO analysis should preserve user, volume, transaction, data, consumption, scope, responsibility, resource, timing, pricing, renewal, third-party, and exchange-rate assumptions where applicable. It should also make excluded costs, client-borne costs, deferred costs, transferred costs, and cost uncertainty visible.

Proposals should be normalized to a common evaluation basis before TCO is compared.

Expected Net Value = Expected Value - TCO

Where the organization has an authorized financial methodology and sufficiently supportable inputs, Finance or another authorized specialist can calculate forecast ROI:

Forecast ROI = (Expected Financial Benefit - TCO) / TCO

The CFO-TA does not create the organization's financial model or determine accounting and financial treatment. It structures and governs the relationship among Sponsor Intent, Business Outcomes, expected value, TCO, assumptions, evidence, risk, and the authorized investment methodology so the applicable human authorities can make a defensible decision.

Formal financial modeling remains conditional on the availability of an authorized methodology and supportable inputs. Expected Value Feasibility and TCO remain required because both can be assessed pragmatically even when a dependable forecast ROI cannot yet be calculated.

The objective is economic decision quality.

Executive Sponsor question: Does the expected value justify the complete cost, risk, time, dependencies, and organizational commitment required to achieve it?

ERP Investment Models Can Resemble the Drake Equation

The Drake Equation illustrates how a precise-looking result can depend on multiple uncertain variables. ERP implementation estimates, TCO projections, expected-value forecasts, and forecast ROI can demonstrate the same characteristic. Each input can appear reasonable while the conclusion changes materially when a small number of influential assumptions change.

The answer is to govern the variables. For every material cost, value, timing, adoption, implementation, consumption, or benefit assumption, the Business-Side should understand:

- The variable being used
- The source of the estimate
- Whether the input is evidenced, estimated, assumed, or unknown
- The applicable range or sensitivity
- The accountable owner
- The Decision Authority
- The Business Outcome, scope, cost, or timeline affected
- The evidence required to validate the assumption
- The consequence if the assumption proves incorrect
- The trigger for reassessment

This creates an assumption-transparent investment case. The Executive Sponsor can see which conclusions are strongly supported, which remain conditional, which variables materially influence the result, and which commitments should remain constrained until stronger evidence becomes available.

A precise calculation is only as dependable as the variables, assumptions, and evidence it contains.

12. Commercial and Contractual Enforceability

Commercial and Contractual Enforceability determines whether material selection representations can survive negotiation. Capabilities, responsibilities, staffing commitments, evidence obligations, acceptance conditions, validation requirements, remediation duties, retesting rights, payment conditions, escalation mechanisms, and change controls should be reflected in the contract when they support the selection decision.

A future Release statement should remain classified as future capability unless the provider makes an enforceable commitment addressing timing, evidence, remedies, and consequences. A general statement of intention provides a different level of protection than a contractual obligation.

AI-enabled capabilities require clarity regarding licensing, consumption charges, data treatment, service dependencies, model or agent changes, evidence access, monitoring responsibilities, security, privacy, support, continuity, and the conditions under which functionality can be modified, withdrawn, or replaced.

The authorized selection decision should become the basis for a Sponsor-controlled contract framework. The reasons the candidate was selected should remain visible and durable in the executed agreements.

The selected candidate should remain the candidate represented in the final agreement.

Executive Sponsor question: Will the commitments supporting this selection decision remain explicit, enforceable, and durable in the final agreements?

13. Data, Analytics, Automation, and AI Governance

ERP platforms establish and apply business meaning across operational and analytical environments. ERP selection should therefore assess whether meaning-critical data can support consistent decisions, evidence, analytics, automation, and AI-enabled behavior.

Relevant evaluation considerations include:

- Core Business Definitions
- Authoritative data sources
- Data Ownership
- Data lineage
- Cross-system consistency
- Data quality requirements
- Decision logic
- Decision Authority
- Accountability

- Autonomy boundaries
- Agent permissions
- Exception handling
- Escalation
- Monitoring
- Explainability
- Evidence
- Validation

AI opportunity should be evaluated through governance readiness. An AI-enabled capability becomes suitable for authorization when its purpose, inputs, outputs, boundaries, authority, accountability, data conditions, exceptions, evidence, and validation requirements are sufficiently explicit.

The evaluation should examine whether agents can act across applications, initiate transactions, create or modify records, recommend decisions, apply policies, route work, interact with other agents, and invoke downstream actions. Each capability should be assessed against the authority granted, the purpose served, the conditions constraining its use, and the evidence required to validate its behavior.

The ERP interface is also changing. Human interaction is expanding beyond menus, forms, reports, and workflows to include conversational interfaces, copilots, agent-generated work, event-driven actions, and autonomous coordination. ERP selection should evaluate how users understand, authorize, review, challenge, override, and validate actions produced through these interfaces.

Human governs the loop.

Executive Sponsor question: Can the proposed environment preserve authoritative business meaning, data integrity, human Decision Authority, accountability, and evidence as automation becomes more autonomous?

Agentic ERP Changes the Evaluation Standard

As ERP platforms embed copilots, agents, autonomous workflows, and decision-support capabilities, organizations must evaluate more than intelligence. They must evaluate purpose, authority, accountability, boundaries, evidence, validation, and governance.

The same criteria used to evaluate ERP suitability are increasingly the criteria required to evaluate autonomous behavior. Executive Sponsors should ask what the ERP can do, what it should be allowed to do, under what authority, and with what evidence.

A Sponsor-governed evaluation determines whether AI should perform a task, which conditions must govern its behavior, who retains Decision Authority, how exceptions are handled, and what evidence will demonstrate continuing alignment with Sponsor Intent.

Intent Governance addresses both the enduring challenge of transformation drift and the emerging requirements of Agentic AI. It preserves authoritative Sponsor Intent as decisions, participants, assumptions, and operating conditions change. It also makes intended outcomes, priorities, boundaries, accountabilities, validation requirements, and evidence expectations explicit enough to guide increasingly autonomous execution.

People compensated for ambiguity. Autonomous agents amplify it.

14. Validation and Evidence Readiness

The selected platform and implementation partner should be capable of producing the evidence required to validate Sponsor Intent during implementation and operations. The evaluation should address environments, data, evidence sources, accessibility, attribution, retention, remediation, and retesting.

Sponsor Intent Assets define what must remain true. SIA Outcome Evidence and Measures define the expected result and evidence standard for each Sponsor Intent Asset. The Sponsor Intent Validation Plan structures planned validation activities, while Sponsor Intent Test Cases define the individual tests used through Sponsor Intent Testing.

Validation and Evidence Readiness connect the selection of a claimed capability to later proof that implemented behavior conforms to Sponsor Intent. They also strengthen the investment case by establishing whether the platform and implementation partner can produce evidence of implementation conformance, sustained operating behavior, and Business Outcome achievement.

Agentic capabilities require validation across purpose, inputs, authority, boundaries, exceptions, decisions, actions, evidence, and continuing conformance. Changes in data, configurations, models, prompts, policies, integrations, permissions, and operating conditions should remain visible to the applicable validation and reassessment mechanisms.

Monitoring is continuous. Improvement is continuous. Validation is sampling-based during planned events defined by the Sponsor Intent Validation Plan.

Executive Sponsor question: Can this candidate produce the evidence required to validate Sponsor Intent during implementation and operations?

15. Risks, Assumptions, Dependencies, and Tradeoffs

Material risks, assumptions, dependencies, exclusions, qualifications, limitations, and tradeoffs belong inside the selection decision. These factors influence capability, scope, cost, timing, implementation credibility, Expected Value Feasibility, TCO, and the durability of expected outcomes.

Every material assumption should identify its source, affected scope, cost, timeline, Business Outcome, accountable party, required evidence, validation condition, Decision Authority, consequence, and reassessment trigger.

When a candidate materially diverges from Sponsor Intent, the Executive Sponsor determines whether to:

- Preserve Sponsor Intent
- Modify Sponsor Intent through explicit authorization
- Defer the decision
- Constrain the decision within a narrower or more reversible boundary

This preserves authority over tradeoffs that could otherwise become embedded through evaluation scoring, negotiation, configuration, schedule pressure, or interpretation.

AI-enabled and agentic capabilities should also be evaluated for dependencies involving data availability, model behavior, third-party services, interoperability, agent permissions, consumption economics, human oversight, evidence access, security, regulatory conditions, operational continuity, and future vendor Releases.

The Executive Sponsor does not need artificial certainty. The Executive Sponsor needs to understand which conclusions are supported, which remain conditional, which variables materially influence the decision, and which commitments should remain constrained until stronger evidence becomes available.

Executive Sponsor question: Which conclusions are supported, which remain conditional, and which risks, assumptions, dependencies, or tradeoffs require my explicit authorization?

Vendor Demonstrations Must Follow Sponsor-Controlled Scripts

Traditional ERP demonstrations commonly allow vendors to determine what to present, which capabilities to emphasize, which data to use, and which conditions to avoid. Each vendor presents a polished version of the product under preferred conditions, leaving evaluators to compare demonstrations that were not designed to produce equivalent evidence.

The CFO-TA creates the Demo and Evidence Script Pack from Sponsor Intent Assets, Conditions of Success, SIA Outcome Evidence and Measures, material risks, evaluation criteria, business scenarios, and evidence requirements.

The scripts establish:

- The business scenario vendors must perform
- The conditions under which the scenario must be performed
- The roles, data, decisions, exceptions, and boundaries involved
- The evidence the vendor must produce
- The limitations and dependencies that must be disclosed
- The evaluation and validation conditions
- The procedures for deviations, reruns, and supplemental evidence

Vendors follow Sponsor-controlled scripts and produce evidence under common conditions. This creates a stronger basis for comparing platform capability, partner understanding, configuration requirements, exceptions, dependencies, implementation implications, and Expected Value Feasibility.

AI-enabled demonstrations should also test how copilots and agents interpret business context, operate within authority boundaries, manage exceptions, explain consequential actions, interact with human Decision Authorities, and produce attributable evidence. Scenarios should include normal conditions, exceptions, conflicting objectives, incomplete data, unauthorized requests, and required escalation.

The vendor demonstrates within the Sponsor's business context. The Sponsor does not evaluate within the vendor's sales context.

Weighted Scoring Cannot Carry the Decision Alone

Weighted scoring creates useful structure, but a total score can conceal consequential differences among candidates. A candidate can mathematically offset a material weakness in a Sponsor Intent-critical condition by scoring well across numerous lower-consequence categories.

A strong user interface, broad feature set, favorable price, or optimistic value projection can increase the total score while the proposal contains an unacceptable gap in accountability, data integrity, evidence, scope, implementation readiness, Expected Value Feasibility, or contractual enforceability.

The CFO-TA advocated Evaluation Framework distinguishes among:

- Weighted comparative criteria
- Mandatory conditions
- Non-compensating criteria
- Evidence sufficiency requirements
- Disqualification conditions
- Governing Tradeoff Decisions
- Contract conditions

- Residual risks requiring explicit acceptance

Scoring supports the decision.

Human Decision Authorities make the decision.

The final selection record preserves evidence, rationale, assumptions, accepted risks, authorized tradeoffs, rejected alternatives, economic conditions, decision conditions, and required contract controls. The Executive Sponsor can understand why the candidate was selected, which value expectations remain conditional, and what must remain true for the decision to remain valid.

The Evidence Repository Changes Decision Quality

ERP selection evidence commonly exists across questionnaires, spreadsheets, presentations, proposals, demonstrations, meeting records, emails, reference discussions, financial models, and evaluator observations. A Sponsor-controlled Evidence Repository stored on the client's infrastructure preserves this information as a governed lifecycle asset.

The repository maintains the distinction among raw evidence, evaluator observations, approved findings, scores, recommendations, decision rationale, financial analysis, and contractual use. It preserves traceability among:

- Sponsor Intent
- Business Outcomes
- Conditions of Success
- Evaluation criteria
- Demo and evaluation scenarios
- Raw evidence
- Evaluator observations
- Approved findings
- Expected Value Feasibility
- TCO assumptions

- Scores
- Risks and tradeoffs
- Decision rationale
- Contractual obligations
- Implementation controls
- Validation requirements

This governed evidence chain allows the Business-Side to trace a selection decision back to its supporting evidence and carry a Sponsor Intent condition forward into contracting, implementation, Sponsor Intent Testing, Value Realization, and sustainment.

Evidence produced by AI-enabled and agentic capabilities should remain attributable to the applicable agent, configuration, model, data, instructions, permissions, operating conditions, and human authority. This context allows authorized reviewers to understand what occurred, why the action was permitted, and whether the resulting behavior conformed to Sponsor Intent.

Evidence becomes a lifecycle asset rather than a temporary input to a scorecard.

The Contract Is Part of the ERP Selection Decision

Contract negotiation should preserve the basis on which the preferred candidate was selected. Applicable Sponsor Intent, scope boundaries, Units of Transformation, responsibilities, evidence obligations, acceptance requirements, validation conditions, remediation duties, retesting rights, payment milestones, escalation paths, change controls, and reauthorization requirements should be translated into the Sponsor-controlled contract framework.

A vendor or implementation partner should be accountable for the capabilities, behaviors, resources, evidence, responsibilities, and obligations within that party's control. Business Outcomes can also depend on adoption, operating-model change, leadership, policy, data, market conditions, and other factors owned by the client or influenced by external conditions.

The contract should preserve these accountability boundaries while ensuring each party remains responsible for the contribution and evidence within its control.

AI-enabled and agentic capabilities should receive explicit contractual treatment when they materially influence the selection decision. Relevant provisions can address current capability, future Releases, licensing and consumption, data treatment, agent permissions, monitoring, evidence access, model or configuration changes, validation, security, privacy, continuity, support, remediation, and reassessment rights.

A negotiated change that materially affects scope, cost, risk, staffing, evidence, accountability, implementation approach, Expected Value Feasibility, TCO, or another component of the selection basis should receive reassessment by the appropriate Decision Authority.

The Complete Selection Standard

The right ERP choice depends on the complete model required to produce operating value. The decision should consider the platform, implementation partner, implementation approach, commercial structure, governance model, evidence, validation readiness, economic exposure, risks, assumptions, dependencies, and contractual commitments as connected elements.

A Sponsor-governed ERP selection strengthens:

- Candidate comparability
- Decision defensibility
- Scope clarity
- Capital Protection
- Outcome Confidence
- Expected Value Feasibility
- Economic transparency
- Commercial and Contractual Enforceability
- Implementation Readiness
- AI & Data Integrity
- Accountability

- Evidence continuity
- Value Realization readiness

Tradeoffs remain part of every ERP selection. The ERP Software Selection Criteria make those tradeoffs explicit, evidence-based, attributable, and subject to the correct human Decision Authority before they become embedded in contracts, configurations, data structures, operating procedures, financial commitments, or AI-enabled behavior.

The right ERP is the platform, implementation partner, commercial structure, and implementation approach that provide the strongest governed evidence that they can operationalize Sponsor Intent and support the value the investment was authorized to create.

How The CFO-TA Operationalizes ERP Software Selection

The CFO-TA is the Executive Sponsor Platform. It is a Business-Side platform purpose-built for Executive Sponsors responsible for major transformation investments. The platform helps Executive Sponsors govern their three Sponsor-owned responsibilities: Business Intent, Scope Intent, and Transformation Approach Intent.

Together, these responsibilities form Sponsor Intent, the Executive Sponsor-owned expression of purpose and foundation of the Transformation Definition. The CFO-TA supports Executive Sponsors through guidance, methodology, authoring, analysis, deliverable production, validation, review, coordination, decision support, continuity, and Sponsor Intent Lifecycle Management across the Enterprise Transformation Program lifecycle.

The CFO-TA supports the canonical 30-step Alentra Methodology across Transformation Strategy, Solution Selection, Govern Implementation, and Prove Outcomes. During ERP selection, it supports application of the 15 ERP Software Selection Criteria through:

- The Evaluation Framework
- Sponsor Intent Assets
- Meaning-Aligned Requirements
- Demo and Evidence Script Pack

- Vendor Evaluation Instructions and Protocol
- Sponsor-controlled Evidence Repository
- Comparative Proposal Analysis
- Expected Value Feasibility assessment
- Total Cost of Ownership analysis
- Partner Delivery Risk assessment
- Governing Tradeoff Decisions
- Decision Rationale Register
- Sponsor-controlled contract framework
- Implementation-transition controls
- Sponsor Intent Validation Plan
- Sponsor Intent Test Cases

Sponsor Intent Lifecycle Management Studio is a major platform capability used to establish, preserve, validate, monitor, improve, and prove Sponsor Intent. SILMS maintains the relationships among Sponsor Intent Assets, Business Outcomes, evidence requirements, evaluation criteria, candidate evidence, approved findings, risks, assumptions, decisions, contractual obligations, validation activities, changes, and lifecycle status.

The CFO-TA supports human Decision Authorities while preserving their accountability. Executive Sponsors, Finance, Legal, Procurement, Technology, Security, Compliance, and other authorized specialists retain their respective decision, review, calculation, and approval responsibilities.

The CFO-TA helps ensure that what leadership intended, what candidates represented, what the organization selected, what the parties contracted, what the implementation delivers, and what operations ultimately produce remain connected through a governed artifact chain.

Executive Sponsor Review Questions

Before authorizing an ERP selection decision, the Executive Sponsor should be able to answer the following questions:

- Is Sponsor Intent sufficiently explicit to govern the selection?
- Are the Business Outcomes and Conditions of Success reflected in the evaluation?
- Does the proposed scope cover the complete business change required to produce those outcomes?
- Can each candidate preserve required business meaning, Decision Authority, accountability, boundaries, and exceptions?
- Are the ERP platform and implementation partner being evaluated separately and together?
- Have candidates demonstrated required capabilities under common Sponsor-controlled conditions?
- Is material candidate evidence observable, attributable, accessible, and traceable?
- Are future capabilities, dependencies, estimates, assumptions, and workarounds clearly classified?
- Does the implementation model provide a credible path to operating reality?
- Is the organization sufficiently prepared to mobilize implementation?
- Does expected value justify the complete TCO, risk, time, dependencies, and organizational commitment?
- Are material risks, assumptions, dependencies, and tradeoffs visible?
- Have consequential tradeoffs been authorized by the correct Decision Authority?
- Will the reasons supporting the selection remain enforceable in the contract and Statement of Work?
- Can the selected platform and partner produce the evidence required to validate Sponsor Intent during implementation and operations?

- Can AI-enabled and agentic capabilities operate within explicit purpose, authority, accountability, evidence, validation, and human-governance conditions?
- Can the organization defend why this complete candidate position represents the strongest decision?

The ERP Selection Decision Should Remain Connected to the Business Purpose It Must Serve

A defensible ERP selection decision is grounded in explicit Sponsor Intent, disciplined comparison, governed evidence, visible uncertainty, authorized tradeoffs, realistic value and cost analysis, enforceable commitments, and confirmed implementation readiness.

Use The CFO-TA to apply the ERP Software Selection Criteria within the Alentra Methodology and preserve the authoritative basis of the decision throughout the Enterprise Transformation Program lifecycle.

People compensated for ambiguity. Autonomous agents amplify it.

Request a Confidential ERP Selection Briefing

Determine Whether Your ERP Evaluation Standard Is Complete, Sponsor-Governed, and Decision-Ready

If your organization is preparing to select, contract for, or implement a major ERP platform, Alentra Advisory can help your leadership team determine whether the evaluation standard is sufficiently aligned with Sponsor Intent, supported by governed evidence, economically justified, contractually protected, and ready to support a consequential investment decision.

ERP selection determines more than which software the organization will acquire. It materially influences operating processes, data structures, decision rights, implementation scope, commercial commitments, organizational change, AI enablement, Total Cost of Ownership, and the Business Outcomes the Enterprise Transformation Program can produce.

A confidential ERP Selection Briefing will help your leadership team:

- Determine whether Sponsor Intent is sufficiently explicit to govern the ERP selection decision
- Evaluate whether Business Outcomes, Conditions of Success, scope boundaries, and Transformation Approach Intent are reflected in the evaluation
- Assess whether shortlisted platforms and implementation partners are being evaluated against a common Business-Side standard
- Determine whether Meaning-Aligned Requirements preserve the business purpose behind requested capabilities
- Evaluate whether vendor demonstrations follow Sponsor-controlled scripts and produce decision-relevant evidence
- Distinguish native, configured, customized, extended, integrated, planned, manual, and third-party-dependent capabilities
- Assess whether the 15 ERP Software Selection Criteria are being applied to the complete candidate position
- Evaluate whether expected value justifies the complete Total Cost of Ownership, risk, timing, dependencies, and organizational commitment
- Identify material assumptions, evidence gaps, dependencies, risks, and tradeoffs requiring Executive Sponsor attention
- Determine whether material candidate representations and commitments are reflected in the contract and Statement of Work
- Assess whether the organization and preferred candidate are ready to mobilize implementation
- Understand how The CFO-TA can preserve Sponsor Intent, evidence, decisions, commitments, and validation requirements throughout implementation and operations

Request a Confidential ERP Selection Briefing

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About Tim Hourigan

Tim Hourigan

Founder and Chief Business-Side Advisor
Alentra Advisory

Tim Hourigan is an enterprise transformation advisor with more than 35 years of experience leading and supporting more than 185 Enterprise Transformation Programs spanning ERP, CRM, analytics, data, AI-enabled operations, automation, and business process modernization.

Tim originated Business Intent Design and created The CFO Transformation Agent, The CFO-TA, the Executive Sponsor Platform. The platform helps Executive Sponsors govern their three Sponsor-owned responsibilities: Business Intent, Scope Intent, and Transformation Approach Intent. Together, these form Sponsor Intent, the Executive Sponsor-owned expression of purpose and foundation of the Transformation Definition.

The CFO-TA provides guidance, methodology, authoring, analysis, deliverable production, validation, review, coordination, decision support, continuity, and Sponsor Intent Lifecycle Management across the Enterprise Transformation Program lifecycle. During ERP selection, the platform helps Executive Sponsors connect Sponsor Intent to Meaning-Aligned Requirements, Sponsor-controlled demonstrations, candidate evidence, evaluation decisions, Expected Value Feasibility, Total Cost of Ownership, contractual commitments, implementation conditions, and outcome validation.

Sponsor Intent Lifecycle Management Studio is a major platform capability used to establish, preserve, validate, monitor, improve, and prove Sponsor Intent. A governed artifact chain operationalizes Sponsor Intent throughout the Enterprise Transformation Program lifecycle and preserves the basis of the ERP selection decision as participants, decisions, assumptions, evidence, and operating conditions change.

About Alentra Advisory

Alentra Advisory helps Executive Sponsors define, govern, validate, monitor, improve, and prove the purpose of major transformation investments.

Business Intent Design and Intent Governance establish and preserve the Sponsor Intent that shapes Solution Selection, Statement of Work scope, commercial commitments, implementation decisions, operations, validation, and increasingly autonomous behavior.

The CFO-TA is the Executive Sponsor Platform. It operationalizes the Alentra Methodology and Sponsor Intent Lifecycle Management across the Enterprise Transformation Program lifecycle.

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