Hi, Carlie –

After spending some time researching ERPs, I am going to recommend SAP Business One. I looked at that one, Microsoft Dynamics 365, and Oracle Netsuite. Netsuite seems to be the go-to for many big businesses and I can understand. They’ve got the Oracle name behind it and they are very good. I’m not recommending it though because it is developed for large companies. We’re one store right now, soon to be 3. We don’t need anything as involved as Netsuite.

I also researched Microsoft Dynamics 365 as it is geared toward smaller businesses. It’s a fairly new system that came out in 2018. Every feature they offer is optional, so you can pick and choose what you want to purchase. It may become expensive if we’re interested in most, if not all, of the options. Since it’s a Microsoft product, it performs best when integrated with other Microsoft apps and to be able to integrate it with non-Microsoft products, we’d need a qualified Dynamics partner. I’m not a fan of being locked to one brand.

My choice would be SAP Business One. It offers all the core functionalities with the option to add on later as we grow. Integration with third party applications is easier so switching is more comfortable. It is adaptable, consistent, and versatile during this unusual business environment occurring right now. As we grow and expand to other areas, SAP Business One will help by giving us an edge over the competitors and leverage the benefits of advancing technology to help make our expansion successful. And it’s affordable.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks –

Leah

Hi, Carlie -

As far as scalability, network topology, and processing go, here are my thoughts.

The network topology should be set up in a star configuration. This setup is easy to expand since you just add more computers, up to the limitation of the hardware. Also, a fault on one of the computers will not affect the rest of the network. The system is also centralized, so it makes it easier to manage. We would want to make sure the switch purchase is big enough for expansion in the future as it determines the performance and number of nodes the network can handle. We would also want to consider a backup switch system in case the main switch fails.

The company will want to go with a combination of online and batch processing. The online processing will be used during transactions, inventory updates, and data entry. Reports and accounting updates will occur during batch processing. The combination will keep everything up to date, but then run the accounting and sales reports later since they aren’t needed on a minute to minute basis.

We will want the system to be scalable. We already know the 2 store expansion is coming up in a couple years, so that will definitely need to be included in the set up. If all goes well, we could be looking at another few stores opening over the next 5-10 years and we won’t want to have to worry about how we’re going to expand the SIM again. I would look at setting up the system with at least 5 stores in mind. The switches will need to be able to handle all the computers that would be needed in each store. We’ll need to support multi-OS platforms, unless we use a web browser as the software client. Then it becomes a non issue. The ERP system we use will need to be set up so new employees are easily added and the cost isn’t a surprise.

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to ask.

Leah

Hi, Carlie -

Security is going to be very important in this setup. Here are my thoughts on who needs what access.

Customers

* Their own accounts
* Appointment scheduling, if we’re offering it online
* Online shopping

Management

* Owner - access to everything but mainframe
* Store Manager - Human Resources, Customer, Parts, Sales, Service departments
* Store Assistant Manager - Human Resources, Customer, Parts, Sales, Service departments
* Admin Assistant - Customer, Parts, Sales, Service departments
* Human Resources specialist - Employee accounts
* Accounting - Financial information
* IT department - Mainframe, computer systems

Appointment Schedulers

* Employee calendars and schedules
* Customer accounts

Technicians

* Schedules and calendars
* Customer accounts
* Parts inventory

Parts Department

* Schedules and calendars
* Parts inventory
* Parts Reports

The first thing to protect the systems is to train everyone in cybersecurity. We’ll also want to run an antivirus program on the servers and nodes. Keeping track of user logon and logoff activity will also help. And the servers will need to be updated on a regular basis as well as the antivirus software.

If all the above is done, the system will be as secure as possible.

Thanks -

Leah