

C929 Task

Shaynetta Williams

Western Governors University

Dr. John Sinanovic

A. Outsourcing Needs Summary

In the United States, Endothon Inc. operates as a leading manufacturer of seating and aircraft accessories. The company has relied on its current enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for nearly 100 years; however, the platform has now grown outdated. As technological advancements occur, it is imperative that the business needs evolve in tandem with these advances. As international demands and the need to maintain strategic alignment are crucial, it is also essential to stay aligned with major clients. Endothon recognizes that the current system, Epicor, cannot sustain long-term competitiveness. Now, to address this challenge, the company intends to transition to a modern SAP-based ERP system within ten months of contract initiation, ensuring its operations remain efficient, scalable, and globally integrated.

The primary motivator for outsourcing the current ERP system centers on two key considerations: cost and technical expertise. The leadership and Endothon have determined that offshore outsourcing is the most practical strategy to remain within the budget of the ten million dollars allocated for the project. Additionally, the internal information technology department lacks the subject matter expert level of experience required to implement and manage a modern SAP environment. For this reason, the selection of an outsourced vendor will oversee the configuration, implementation, and support of the ERP system, while also establishing a two-year transition plan to build Endothon's internal capabilities gradually.

Now, focusing on international growth, the broad and strategic aspect reveals that these services will encompass system design, customization, deployment, and ongoing support. Critical business functions such as financial accounting and controlling (FICO), human resources management, and sales and distribution. These modules are central to managing international financial transactions, maintaining personnel data, and ensuring integrated production across

Endothons' eight global manufacturing plants. Furthermore, extending beyond the essential functionality, the system must also provide full-bodied capabilities for encrypted data transmission, international procurement, and compliance with transfer pricing regulations, aligning with the strict requirements of global business operations (Endothon Inc., n.d.-a).

Endothon Request for Proposal provides further detail regarding vendor expectations and selection criteria. The vendor must conduct a comprehensive assessment of current operations, identify existing process gaps, and recommend best practices to optimize ERP adoption. To qualify, vendors must demonstrate at least ten years of experience implementing ERPs, provide references from comparable international projects, and maintain proven financial stability to deliver such a large-scale initiative. Doing so ensures that Endothon's partnership with the vendor is capable not only of executing the implementation but also of sustaining reliable support throughout the transition (Endothon Inc., n.d.-b).

Lastly, Endothon emphasizes the importance of compliance, risk management, and security in its outsourcing strategy. Vendors are required to meet international security standards, including AES-256 encryption and compliance with SOC 1 and SOC 2. Just as importantly, the company expects clear and cost-effective communication across both its U.S. and European operations to ensure seamless collaboration. The outsourcing partner must also facilitate knowledge transfer to Endothon's IT staff to establish long-term self-sufficiency after a two-year support period. This strategy reflects Endothon's effort to balance technological advancement with fiscal discipline, risk management, and the pursuit of international growth.

B. Project Stakeholders

After analyzing the organization's makeup, Maria Sousa, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), was identified as the project sponsor. Maria is the project sponsor because the ERP system

transition will impact the following primary business functions of finance, supply chain, sales, human resources, and IT. Understanding that the sponsorship must come from the highest level of leadership to ensure the project aligns with the organization's strategic goals, Maria Sousa has the authority to approve budgets, allocate resources, and guide cross-functional priorities. Her enterprise-wide accountability makes her the most appropriate option for project sponsorship (Endothon, 2023).

The stakeholders in this project are individuals and groups that will be directly affected by the business function areas, as mentioned earlier. The composition of that executive leadership team, internal staff, and external partners is as follows:

- John Prescott, Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Alice Trebold, Chief of Supply Chain Manufacturing
- Sam Goodwin, Senior Vice President of Sales
- Anne Scofield, Senior Vice President of Human Resources
- Kevin Cahill, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
- Jon Rasmussen, Chief Manufacturing Officer (CMO)
- Mei Lee, Chief Information Officer (CIO)
- Purchasing Department
- Plant Operations Staff
- External ERP Vendor
- Endothon Customers

Now, addressing the steering committee make-up is the governance collective that is responsible for oversight, decision-making, and resolving escalated issues to keep the project on track. The

steering committee ensures the project aligns with the objectives of being within budget and operational needs. The steering committee is as follows:

- Maria Sousa, Project sponsor
- John Prescott, (COO)
- Kevinm Cahill, (CFO)
- Alice Trebold, Chief of Supply Chain Manufacturing
- Mei Lee, Chief Information Officer (CIO)
- Shaynetta Williams, Senior Director of IT

C. Bullzai Proposal Summary and Analysis

Bullzai Ltd.'s proposal for the Endothon ERP migration illustrates a comprehensive knowledge of the company's current business environment and future objectives. Their proposal outlines a thorough approach to evaluating Endothons' financial accounting, plant operations, human resources, IT systems, and maintenance functions, as well as its organizational structure and staffing. Bullzai's proposal states they will produce a specifications report to resolve deficiencies identified in the analysis and will create a personnel and resource plan to support the company's ERP needs over the next five years. Additionally, Bullzai recommends adopting a governance model based on CoBIT 5 and ISO 20000 standards to guide project decisions, ensure adherence to industry best practices, and support IT service management. Bullzai will collaborate with all levels of management, IT staff, and key stakeholders to determine current and future system capabilities, prioritize project actions, and document application and infrastructure criteria to support the migration to a web-based SAP Oracle Web Services environment (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).

Their proposal also provides an extensive project management and deployment plan for the three essential core SAP modules (FICO), Human Resources Management System (HRMS), and Sales and Distribution. Bullzai states that it will provide staffing, training, and ongoing technical support through its Extended Care Solution, including project timelines, cost projections, risk assessments, and gap analyses. The company emphasizes adherence to IT industry standards, best practices, and security protocols, including SOC 1, SOC 2, and AES-256 encryption, which aligns with the needs of the RFP. Bullzai's team, in collaboration with Oracle, brings the required ten years of experience in ERP system deployment and will deliver a fully operational system within ten months, complete with all necessary documentation, governance guidance, and training for Endothon staff (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).

Strengths of Bullzai's Proposal

- Comprehensive assessment: Bullzai provides a thorough evaluation of Endothon's finance, accounting, operations, HR, and IT systems, aligning with the request for proposal requirement to assess the current environments (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).
- Structured project methodology: The proposal outlines a phased project plan for planning, design, configuration, implementation, and extended support, meeting the request for proposal expectations for methodology (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).
- Governance framework adherence: Bullzai recommends CoBit 5 and ISO 20000 frameworks, supporting effective project decisions and aligning with industry best practices (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).
- Risk assessment and gap analysis: The proposal includes risk identification, threat mitigation, and gap analysis, ensuring proactive management of potential project obstacles. (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).

- Built-in operational intelligence: Dashboards and reporting features allow monitoring of performance and exceptions, providing transparency and measurable results (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).
- Experienced personnel and training: Bullzai offers a skilled implementation team and a two-year training plan to ensure Endothon staff can operate and maintain the new ERP system (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).

Weaknesses of Bullzai's Proposal

- Limited cost transparency: The proposal does not provide a detailed breakdown of costs for each phase of the ERP implementation, which is a key requirement of the request for proposal (Endothon, 2023).
- Heavy reliance on cloud deployment: Endothon staff may face challenges adapting to a cloud-based system due to their extensive experience with the outdated Epicor platform (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).
- Communication challenges: Bullzai's programming team is primarily based in India, which could lead to delays, miscommunication, or misunderstanding with U.S.-based staff (Bullzai Ltd., 2023).
- Limited focus on international compliance: The proposal provides minimal explanation of how it will address compliance across Endothon's European manufacturing operations (Endothon, 2023).
- Insufficient project references: While Bullzai mentions prior ERP experience, the proposal lacks detailed examples of similar large-scale projects, which the request for proposal dictates (Endothon, 2023).

Bullzai Proposal Gaps

- Insufficient References and Examples: The Request for Proposal requires vendors to provide “the names of at least three (3) clients...similar to Endothon in that they are international companies and are of a similar size” along with an example of a completed ERP selection and implementation plan (Endothon, 2023, p. 8). Bullzai only references the Louisville Water Company and Metropolitan Sewer District, which are utility companies rather than international manufacturers, and it does not include a completed ERP plan as evidence of prior large-scale ERP successes. (Bullzai Ltd., 2023, p. 13).
- Five-year Budget and Staffing Projections Gap: The request for Proposal explicitly requires a “five-year plan and detailed budget” including “projected costs associated with ongoing staffing to support the system” (Endothon, 2023, p. 6). While Bullzai provides subscription costs and some staffing details, it does not forecast a whole five-year cost structure or staffing plan to cover post-implementation sustainability (Bullzai Ltd., 2023, pp. 22-23).

D. Synesthor Proposal Summary and Analysis

During the review of Synesthor Ltd.’s proposal, it was identified that this organization possesses extensive experience as a trusted SAP ERP provider with a superb portfolio of international clients, including 19 Fortune 100 companies and partnerships with 175 authorized resellers. This company highlights its ability to understand Endothon’s requirements from both OEM and end-user perspectives, presenting itself as a reliable long-term partner. Synesthor commits to providing the deliverables requested in the RFP for FICO, HRMS, and Sales and Distribution. The methodology being used would be the Business Implementation Process (BIP). Their proposal outlines a phased approach that includes planning, design, configuration,

implementation, HyperCare, and ongoing maintenance, reinforced by certified project managers and ITIL-trained staff, ensuring adherence to best practices and quality assurance.

Synesthor provides a detailed statement of work and a service level agreement to ensure accountability, project transparency, and measurable service delivery. The proposal includes a comprehensive training plan for the Endothon staff, offering certifications and courseware to build internal capabilities for long-term ERP management. Synesthor also commits to producing comprehensive documentation, risk assessments, and analyses with periodic reporting tailored to the varied stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the service level agreement specifies clear service parameters, escalation processes, and financial recourses for missed performance standards, demonstrating Synesthor's willingness to be held accountable for outcomes. Overall, the proposal structures Synesthor as a collaborative, standards-driven partner focused on minimizing risks, enhancing governance, and ensuring the long-term success of Endothon's SAP ERP transition and implementation.

Strengths of Synthesor's Proposal

- Clear methodology and governance: Synesthor outlines its Business Implementation Process (BIP) with phases such as planning, design, configuration, implementation, HyperCare, and maintenance. This phased approach aligns with the Request for Proposal requirements for a detailed work plan and schedule (Endothon, 2023, p. 8; Synesthor Ltd., 2023, p. 5).
- Strong vendor qualifications: The company highlights its service to 19 Fortune 100 companies and partnerships with 175 authorized resellers. This demonstrates extensive experience and credibility, fulfilling the Request for Proposals request for vendor qualifications and prior performance references (Endothon, 2023; Synesthor Ltd., 2023).

- Comprehensive training plan; Synesthor includes certification programs and courseware for Endothon staff, preparing employees for long-term ERP management. This responds to the RFP for “staff resources and training required to implement the entire ERP plan” (Endothon, 2023, p. 7).
- Detailed service level agreement (SLA): The SLA outlines escalation processes and financial penalties for missed performance standards. This reflects Synesthor’s commitment to accountability and measurable performance outcomes (Synesthor Ltd., 2023).

Synthesor Proposal Weaknesses

- Limited financial Planning: The proposal does not include the “five-year plan and detailed budget’ required by the RFP. Instead, it emphasizes service agreements and training, leaving a gap in long-term financial transparency (Endothon, 2023, p. 7; Synesthor Ltd., 2023).
- Insufficient international compliance detail: While Synesthor references international experience, it provides limited specifics on meeting Endothon’s European compliance needs. The request for proposal requires vendors to address “domestic and international” operations and applicable international laws (Endothon, 2023, p. 6).
- Early risk mitigation gap: The SLA and governance structure focus on accountability but provide little detail on proactive measures during early implementation. This omission creates uncertainty, given Endothon’s IT staff’s limited experience beyond Epicor. (Endothon, 2023; Synesthor Ltd., 2023).

Synthesor Proposal Gaps

- Five-Year Budget Gap: The RFP requires vendors to provide “a five-year plan and detailed budget to install and support the ERP environment” (Endothon, 2023, p.7). Synesthor’s proposal does not include a comprehensive long-term financial projection; instead, it focuses primarily on training and service-level agreement commitments (Synesthor Lts., 2023).
- Risk Assessment Gap: The Request for Proposal requires vendors to provide an “executed risk assessment” along with their proposal (Endothon, 2023, p.8). Synesthor only outlines its governance and SLA structures but does not include a completed risk assessment document as evidence of its proactive risk management (Synesthor Lts., 2023).

E. Outsourcing Proposal Selection and Recommendation

After reviewing both vendor proposals, Synesthor Ltd is the strongest choice to meet Endothon’s ERP needs. The Request For Proposal requires vendors to provide “a proposed work plan and schedule/timeline for all phases of the project” (Endothon, 2023, p. 8). Synesthor’s proposal satisfies this requirement through its proprietary business implementation process, which details six phases: planning, design, configuration, implementation, HyperCare, and long-term maintenance (Synesthor Ltd., 2023, p. 9). This structured methodology demonstrates Synesthor’s ability to provide a clear and comprehensive approach to ERP deployment, ensuring accountability and alignment with Endothon’s long-term strategic goals.

The Request for Proposal also requests that vendors outline the “staff resources and training required to implement the entire ERP plan” (Endothon, 2023, p. 7). Synesthor

directly addresses this requirement by including a robust training plan that incorporates certifications, courseware, and structured workshops for Endothon employees (Synesthor Ltd., 2023, pp. 14-15). This emphasis on knowledge transfer is particularly valuable given that Endothon's IT staff "does not have sufficient experience in other, more advanced systems" beyond Epicor. (Endothon, 2023, p. 4). By providing structured training and certification, Synesthor ensures that Endothon's staff will not only be prepared for the implementation phase but will also be capable of sustaining the system independently in the long term.

Another critical requirement referring to the governance and framework is to guide and ensure optimal project decisions and investments. Synesthor's proposal meets this need through a detailed SLA that specifies escalation procedures, reporting schedules, and financial penalties for missed performance standards. This SLA reflects the organization's commitment to accountability and ensures that project oversight is not only well-documented but also enforceable. Compared to generic governance assurances, the SLA provides Endothon with measurable safeguards that align with best practices, thereby providing confidence in Synesthor's performance.

Concluding, the request for proposal highlights the importance of evaluating "vendor's credentials as related to this project," including prior experience with companies "similar to Endothon in that they are international companies and are of a similar size" (Endothon, 2023, p. 8). Synesthor demonstrates strong vendor qualifications by citing its work with Fortune 100 companies and partnerships with authorized resellers. The international experience and broad client base illustrate the vendor's scalable solutions. While the proposal could benefit

from more detailed client references, its demonstrated experience with global enterprises positions Synesthor as a reliable partner meeting the international expansion goals.

F. Proposal Modification Recommendations

Although Synesthor's proposal is strong overall, specific adjustments are necessary to better align with Endothon's requirements. One major weakness is the absence of a "five-year plan and detailed budget to install and support the ERP environment," which the Request for Proposal explicitly requires (Endothon, 2023, p. 7). Synesthor's proposal emphasizes training and governance but does not project long-term costs beyond the implementation phase, leaving ambiguity about future financial obligations. Additionally, while Synesthor details its global experience with Fortune 100 clients, it does not provide detailed references or specific examples from companies, similar to Endothon (2023, p. 8). Expanding the proposal to include specific case studies and reference contacts would increase confidence in Synesthor's ability to manage a multinational ERP project of Endothon's scope.

By incorporating a comprehensive five-year budget and providing detailed client references, Synesthor can enhance its proposal and directly address these gaps. A long-term cost projection would help Endothon anticipate resource needs and avoid financial surprises, ensuring alignment with the company's capital and operating budgets. Similarly, case studies from comparable international manufacturing firms would provide tangible proof of Synesthor's ability to deliver measurable results in environments like Endothon's. These modifications would not only satisfy the requirements outlined in the RFP but also give Endothon greater assurance of Synesthor's transparency, financial reliability, and international project management expertise (Synesthor Ltd., 2023).

G. Recommended Negotiation Strategy

Applying a problem-solving negotiation strategy increases the likelihood of securing a revised contract that directly satisfies Endothon's RFP requirements. By clearly defining the negotiation structure around shared interest, Endothon can push for commitments to a multiyear cost projection, stronger compliance measures, and more detailed reference support without straining the relationship. At the same time, Synesthor benefits by demonstrating flexibility and accountability, which reinforces its position as a trusted long-term partner. Ultimately, referencing the framework from Malhotra's (2015) "*Control the Negotiation Before It Begins*". Endothon can transform the negotiation into a cooperative process that delivers both contractual improvements and a stronger foundation for the success of the ERP implementation process.

A negotiation approach consistent with Malhotra's (2015) "*Control the Negotiation Before It Begins*" involves shaping the negotiation environment before formal discussions take place. Malhotra emphasizes that negotiators who set the agenda, process, and expectations in advance are better able to guide the conversation toward collaboration rather than confrontation. For Endothon, this means initiating discussions with Synesthor by highlighting shared objectives, such as international compliance and system sustainability, rather than immediately debating contract details. Establishing this context early encourages Synesthor to view the process as a collaborative problem-solving exercise rather than a transactional bargaining session.

This strategy is particularly effective in addressing the weaknesses identified in Synesthor's proposal, such as the absence of a five-year financial plan and insufficient detail regarding compliance for European operations. By organizing the negotiation agenda so that these issues are nonnegotiable priorities, Endothon ensures they remain central to the discussion. Malhotra (2015) "*Control the Negotiation Before It Begins*". Stresses the importance of "designing the process before designing the deal," Which allows Endothon to reframe the negotiation around

solving systemic challenges like cost predictability and regulatory risks. This positions Synesthor to improve the proposal rather than a vendor defending its initial submission from a recommendation that would likely be more aligned with satisfying the client with minimal adjustments.

H. Training Recommendations to Mitigate Potential Cultural Issues

As a mitigation effort for potential misunderstanding in cultural communication between Endothon employees in the U.S. and Synesthor employees in Romania, a cross-cultural communication training program will be implemented alongside the technical training already included in Synesthor's proposal. Cross-cultural training is imperative because it helps employees become more aware of differences in communication style, approaches to time, and decision-making practices that can vary across countries. By building this awareness, teams are better equipped to collaborate effectively. The program would begin with workshops introducing cultural dimensions relevant to U.S.-Romanian business interactions, such as differences in power distance and uncertainty avoidance, which influence communication and negotiation patterns. Role-play exercises, case studies, and facilitated discussions will allow employees to practice resolving misunderstandings in culturally sensitive ways. These sessions will be integrated into Synesthors' broader two-year training plan and delivered digitally, allowing them to be reproduced internally by Endothon for ongoing use.

Building on the cultural preparation, Synesthor's proposal includes a comprehensive technical training program designed to enhance staff expertise in ERP system operation, configuration, diagnostics, and maintenance. Synesthor will provide digital courseware, syllabus materials, and reproducible artifacts, while also covering all costs for training resources, certification exams, and instructional delivery. Within one year, 50 employees will complete

ITIL Fundamentals V3 training and 15 employees will complete ITIL Practitioner V3, providing the staff with internationally recognized credentials in IT service management. The ITIL framework is widely regarded as an authoritative source of best practices for governance and service delivery. Incorporating this ensures the Endothon's employees gain both technical proficiency and governance competence by combining ITIL training with intercultural communication nodes. Endothon can reduce the risk of communication breakdowns by strengthening collaboration with Synesthors' Romanian staff and aligning system management with globally validated standards.

I. Analysis of Potential Technical and Security Challenges

When outsourcing to Synesthor in Romania, Endothon must consider several technical and IT security challenges that go beyond simply deploying a new ERP system. As Siepmann (2011) explains, offshore outsourcing raises concerns about compliance with international standards for data protection, particularly when sensitive financial and personnel data move across borders. Romania's IT sector has developed quickly, but risks such as an inconsistent enforcement of cybersecurity measures and potential gaps in vendor oversight remain. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST, 2020), organizations must adopt layered defenses such as encryption, access controls, and continuous monitoring to protect against unauthorized access. For Endothon, applying these safeguards will be essential to ensuring that confidential business data remains secure in Synesthors' cloud-based environment.

Physical security also presents challenges in outsourcing arrangements. In Romania, technology firms like Synesthor often operate in large office complexes where building access and monitoring standards may differ widely. Siepmann (2011) notes that insufficient physical access restrictions, such as weak visitor controls or limited surveillance, can expose systems and

devices to tampering or theft. For a company like Endothon, the concern is not just local disruptions but also the potential compromise of ERP servers, which could impact global operations. This highlights the need for strict physical access controls, facility audits, and contractual requirements to ensure that Synesthor maintains reliable physical safeguards for all IT infrastructure.

The protection of intellectual property (IP) is another critical concern. Romania is an EU member state that follows European IP regulations; however, enforcement can be uneven in practice compared to the United States. Siepmann (2011) stresses that when proprietary processes or system configurations are shared with offshore vendors, the risk of IP threat or misuse increases. To mitigate this, Endothon must incorporate strong contractual clauses, nondisclosure agreements, and ongoing audits to protect sensitive designs and ERP-related innovations. Aligning these protections with EU law and international best practices while also requiring compliance with NIST-recommended security controls will help safeguard Endothon's intellectual property while enabling collaboration with Synesthor.

J. EAR Regulations and Compliance

As Endothon exchanges information with Synesthor, compliance with the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) is a critical factor, especially regarding the transfer and use of encryption technologies. EAR Category 5, Part 2 regulates the export of encryption software and technology, which means that whenever Endothon transmits proprietary data such as ERP system configurations, design files, or secure communication protocols, these exchanges may fall under controlled exports (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022). Even though Romania is a NATO and EU member state, which eases some export restrictions, Endothon must still classify encryption items correctly and confirm that Synesthor's systems meet compliance requirements

before sharing any technical data. This ensures Endothon avoids unintentional violations when transferring sensitive software to Synesthors' employees.

Another important aspect comes from Category 5, Part 1, which covers telecommunication equipment and technology. Endothon will rely heavily on secure communication channels with Synesthor to coordinate ERP implementation, support, and some of the underlying telecom systems may fall under EAR controls. For example, advanced networking hardware or secure communications tools used to link Endothon's Atlanta headquarters with Synesthors' Romanian offices could be classified under these provisions. Endothon must verify that these tools are appropriately licensed for export and that Synesthor is authorized to receive them under U.S. export law. In practice, this means that Endothon's IT and compliance teams will need to build EAR review into the communication strategy, ensuring that project timelines do not overlook potential licensing delays.

From a strategic perspective, Synesthor will also need to interact with Endothon's legal department to establish clear policies around EAR compliance. Endothon's legal team will ensure contractual language requiring Synesthor to adhere to U.S. export control obligations and to protect sensitive information appropriately. Beyond Endothon's internal controls, communication with external stakeholders, such as subcontractors that provide telecom solutions, will be necessary to confirm the EAR classifications of their products. This coordination ensures that all third-party technologies integrated into the ERP solution align with export regulations, protecting Endothon from potential compliance failures.

Lastly, EAR compliance extends to government interaction, where both Endothon and Synesthor may need to demonstrate due diligence to U.S. regulators. Endothon's legal department will serve as the primary liaison with the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)

within the Department of Commerce in the event that licensing questions or audits arise. At the same time, Synesthor will need to provide complete transparency about how Endothon's technology is used and stored in Romania, particularly regarding encryption methods. By embedding EAR compliance into communications, contracts, and vendor oversight, Endothon can protect intellectual property, avoid regulatory penalties, and maintain trust with both U.S. regulators and international partners.

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