



Introduction



In times of economic crisis, when the focus is primarily on cost reduction measures, it seems only logical that many organizations will tend to postpone investments. However, in some lines of business, such as the automobile industry, the very opposite is taking place. Although this industry – like any other – is feeling the serious consequences of the current economic climate, considerable investments are being made with regard to new technologies.

Over the past few years, this line of industry has continued to invest in efforts to improve the combustion engine and, at the same time, in further innovations in the field of (plug-in) hybrid, full-electric as well as fuel-cell technologies. New brands have emerged, such as Tesla and possibly Google, with full-electric cars, which use greenfield technologies and can exploit alternative sales channels. All this is being done in the firm belief that investments and innovations are necessary in order to be or become relevant, also on a long-term basis.

In drawing this parallel, we do not mean to suggest that organizations should switch over to a new ERP package. We do observe a clear tendency that organizations are very active when it comes to getting more value out of existing ERP systems. The current ERP systems and management environments are being evaluated. In addition, organizations are particularly active when it comes to deciding the ways in which new technologies could and should be fitted in. Cloud solutions in the fields of applications, databases and infrastructures are good examples of relevant new technologies, but developments in the fields of mobility, app markets and in-memory techniques such as HANA likewise play an important part. These new technologies are usually positioned alongside the present ERP systems, making it seem as if the existing and fully developed ERP systems cannot further evolve.

Starting from scratch, as in the case of the Tesla car, may well be the best option, but what should we do with all the previous investments? Here, parallels with recent technological developments in the automobile industry come to the fore. However, these issues cannot simply be resolved with one single response, because technological developments are in full swing and are taking place in quick succession, while at the same time business models of organizations are changing far more rapidly than before.

In this edition of Compact we aim to shed more light upon a number of new options in the ERP domain that are either available already or may become so in the future. We are convinced that these new technologies will prove to be of lasting value to organizations: as essential investments to enable more efficient operations on the one hand and – perhaps even more importantly – to ensure greater competitiveness on the other.

We wish you happy reading!

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