

Plain Vanilla Does Not Work

Rescuing an Oracle ERP Implementation Through Practitioner-Led, Design-First Execution

INDUSTRY

Media
(~\$1B annual revenue)

SERVICE LINE

Scale Enablement:
Order-to-Cash

ENGAGEMENT FOCUS

ERP rescue, BI, and CX
optimization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A nearly \$1B media company implemented Oracle ERP “plain vanilla” to hit a six-month deadline—and inherited a system that fought the way the business actually ran. Manual workarounds, transaction errors, attrition, and stakeholder frustration followed. We took a step back, replaced shortcut thinking with a design-led approach, and used Agile delivery to reconfigure the platform around the client’s real processes. Within one quarter post-implementation, the client unlocked double-digit gains across Order-to-Cash, Accounting-to-Close, and Procure-to-Pay—without ripping and replacing the system.

+23 pts

ORDER INVOICE
ACCURACY

-64 hrs

ORDER-TO-CASH CYCLE
TIME

-4 days

FINANCIAL CLOSE CYCLE

Background

- The client was a media industry company with close to \$1 billion in annual revenue.
- Leadership needed to implement a new ERP to manage business operations and financial transactions.
- Oracle was selected as the system of choice.

The Problem

Leadership believed Oracle out-of-the-box, with only basic configuration, would be sufficient. The implementation approach was driven primarily by an aggressive six-month timeline rather than by the way the business actually needed to operate.

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- The out-of-the-box path was selected explicitly to compress the schedule.
 - Configuration and customization were minimized.
 - Time was instead spent on data migration and end-user training.
 - Rather than designing a system that supported leading practices, the client implemented a “plain vanilla” system and tried to bend their processes around it.
 - Designing the processes the ERP was meant to support was de-prioritized and de-emphasized by both client and project leadership.

Analysis of the Problem

The result was a system that neither supported the current way of doing business nor improved upon it. To bridge the gap, the organization stood up a series of manual workarounds—each of which introduced its own drag on the operation:

- Decreased throughput efficiency for transactions
- Increased transaction inaccuracy
- Increased organizational stress and dissatisfaction (two team members resigned)
- Decreased customer satisfaction
- Decreased vendor satisfaction
- Less time spent on high-value work, as the team was consumed by fixing system- and process-related errors

The Solution

Replacing the ERP a second time was impractical and would have repeated the same mistake at a higher cost. We took a step back and applied a design-first approach—engineering the processes first, then aligning the existing platform to support them.

- Documented the current state, surfacing the specific pain points and operational issues that needed to be resolved
- Co-designed the future-state process with the client, grounded in leading practices and the realities of their business model
- Translated the future-state process into system business requirements the ERP would need to support
- Compared those business requirements to current Oracle capabilities to pinpoint gaps requiring configuration or customization
- Built a technology roadmap with sprints and a prioritized backlog covering every required ERP update
- Executed against the roadmap using Agile, configuring, customizing, and testing in increments to deliver continuous, meaningful progress
- Delivered targeted training and stakeholder communications to absorb the change and reduce frustration with the legacy “plain vanilla” deployment

Results

Within the first quarter following the implementation work, the client posted measurable improvements across every business process touched by the ERP.

Order-to-Cash

KPI	Before	After (1Q post-impl.)
Order Invoice Accuracy Rate	68%	91%
Order Fulfillment Cycle Time	Baseline	-48 hours
Order-to-Cash Fulfillment Cycle Time	Baseline	-64 hours

Accounting-to-Close

KPI	Before	After (1Q post-impl.)
Financial Close Cycle Time	11 days	7 days
Reporting Accuracy Rate	Revisions required	100% (no revisions)
Reconciliation On-Time Completion Rate	Errors / revisions	100% on time

Procure-to-Pay

KPI	Before	After (1Q post-impl.)
Invoice Processing Cycle Time	9 days	3 days
Automated 3-Way Match (no manual intervention)	64%	91%
PO Compliance Rate	21%	68%

The Takeaway

Speed-to-go-live is not the same as speed-to-value. A “plain vanilla” ERP feels efficient on the project plan and expensive everywhere else—in error rates, cycle times, attrition, and customer experience. Real value comes from designing the operating model first and configuring the platform to support it. That is the discipline SPX brings: practitioner-led delivery, deep BI and process expertise, and an operating-partner mindset that aligns technology decisions with shareholder outcomes.

Considering an ERP rescue or scale-enablement initiative?

SPX delivers practitioner-led transformation for mid-market and private-equity-backed businesses.
