

OFFERING OVERVIEW

Unit4 Delivers People-Centric Cloud ERP

Humanization of Digital Processes Gives
Customers an ERP System with a Services Focus



R "Ray" Wang
Principal Analyst and Founder

Copy Editor: Jim Donahue

Layout Editor: Elle Froze

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The confluence of an improved market outlook, the shift to the cloud, the pressure of digital transformation and replacement cycle dynamics creates one of the biggest growth opportunities for enterprise resource planning (ERP) refreshes. New cloud deployments provide a catalyst for improving and automating back-office processes like never before.

The Market Overview of which this report is a part examines the wide range of cloud ERP offerings through a lens of product- versus services-centric solutions and unregulated versus regulated solutions. While the number of vendors in the market has gone down due to mergers and acquisitions, the consolidation has led to concentrated and beneficial platform investments in the cloud and in exponential technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, augmented reality, Internet of Things, 5G, and blockchain.

Successful deployments will achieve the elusive goal of improving efficiencies and preparing for exponential growth. The use of AI in the back office will power the next wave of ERP advancements.

This Offering Overview provides an overview of Unit4's People Experience Suite. This report identifies key differentiators, examines functional capabilities, considers the offering's strengths and weaknesses, and provides use cases. Technology buyers should use this report to evaluate Unit4's People Experience Suite for implementation.

Business Themes



New C-Suite



Future of Work



Technology
Optimization

ABOUT UNIT4

Overview

The Utrecht, Netherlands-based provider of enterprise applications generated more than €500 million in revenue in 2019 with 2,500 worldwide employees. The offering is available in 20 countries. Unit4 launched the cloud deployment option in 2013 and has more than 600 customers deployed in the cloud. With 2,800 Unit4 Business World customers, the vendor provides a full suite of services-centric enterprise resource planning (ERP) offerings in on-premises, hosted and cloud-based deployments.

The latest release takes advantage of the People Platform, which includes personalized experiences, industry-specific capabilities, smart automation services for self-driving ERP and the Extension Kit, which through its low-code/no-code approach makes it easier for Unit4 customers to quickly integrate with key information sources and external services. Customers tend to select Unit4 Business World for its flexible configuration capabilities, deep vertical expertise, midmarket focus and people-centered design philosophy.

Unit4's ERP offering, the Unit4 People Experience Suite, includes key components such as the following (see Figure 1):

A. Master Your Business includes the key Unit4 ERP modules:

- Financials Management
- Procurement Management
- Project Management
- Operational Reporting

B. Empower Your People includes Unit4 HCM:

- Core HR
- Talent Management
- Payroll

Figure 1. Unit4 People Experience Suite Focuses on ERP, Human Capital Management and Financial Planning & Analysis



Source: Unit4

C. Plan Your Future includes:

- Financial Planning
- Analytics and Reporting
- Statutory Consolidation

Market Segment

Modern global cloud ERP suites encompass a wide range of end-to-end business processes, including:

- Procure to pay
- Order to cash
- Hire to retire
- Assess to acquire
- Financial plan to report
- Project initiation to project closure

Constellation Research estimates the global cloud ERP market will be worth \$40.1 billion by 2025 and have a compound annual growth rate of 9.3%. Surveys among customers show that BFSI (that is, banking, financial services and insurance) is the top industry and North America is the top market. Key vendors in this Market Overview include: NetSuite, FinancialForce, Infor, Microsoft, Oracle, Oracle NetSuite, Sage, SAP, Unit4 and Workday.

Unit4's midmarket customer base ranges from US\$250 million to US\$1 billion in revenue and 200 to 1,000 employees. Unit4 Business World delivers a full ERP suite of financial management; human resources and payroll; planning, budgeting and forecasting; procurement management; project management; and enterprise asset management services-centric offerings. Unit4 releases two major updates a year. The focus on a people-centric approach aligns with the vendor's key industries of professional services, education, public services, nonprofits, real estate, wholesale and financial services.

Market Trends

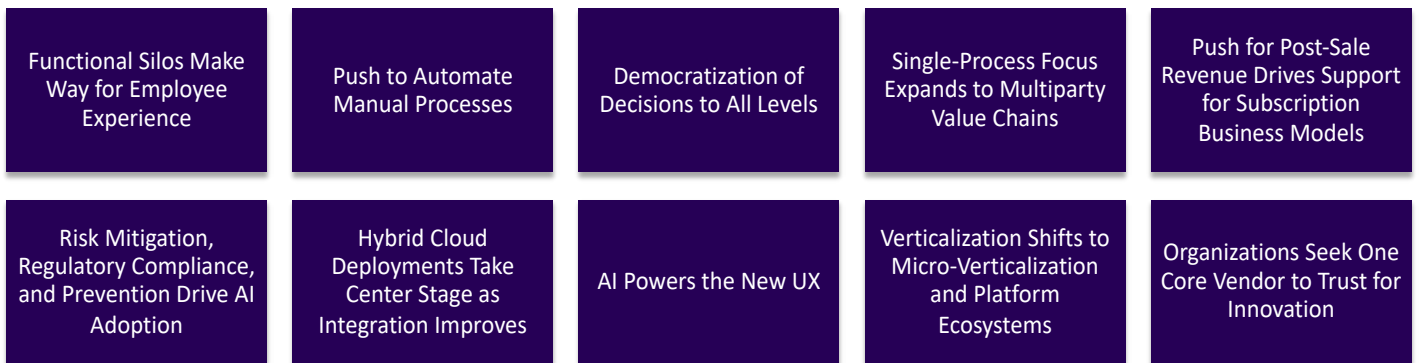
Global cloud ERP evolved from the post-digital ERP era to the artificial intelligence (AI)-driven back-office era. In fact, the post-digital ERP era began in 2010 with new architectures built for the cloud and massive data sets. Since then, innovations in post-digital ERP have ushered in a wave of new technology platforms, user experiences and intelligence as well as new opportunities to drive down the cost of ownership while enabling constant streams of innovation. Constellation sees a shift from transaction systems to AI-driven systems (see Figure 2).

In our conversations with more than 200 technology leaders, 10 major trends have emerged for 2020 and beyond for post-digital ERP users:

- 1. Functional silos make way for employee experiences.** When ERP systems emerged in the 1980s, they solved subdepartmental issues such as accounts receivable, accounts payable and treasury. Over time, ERP grew to include departmental components such as finance, HR applications, procurement, supply chain and manufacturing. As mega-ERP suites debuted, the notion of a single source of truth emerged for the back office. With information centralized in the cloud, ERP today can deliver the key system of record for an enterprise and the foundation for better employee experiences. These employee experiences augment human decisions to enable next best actions.

2. **The push to automate manual processes drives sustainable efficiency.** A plethora of human-managed manual processes often drives up the cost of ownership for ERP. Given the exponential volume of data, the highly repetitive nature of work and the massive nodes of interaction, over 70% of back-office processes make great candidates for automation. Early adopters often choose automation tools such as robotic process automation (RPA) and process mining to deliver a significant return on investment and help reduce operational overhead and costs.
3. **Organizations deliver democratization of decisions at all levels.** Information in older ERP systems mostly provided power users with key insights. Employees, casual users and partners didn't have the same level of access. However, modern back-office environments empower all users with contextually relevant information. The shift from hoarding information to delivering the right information at the right time, for the right context, in the right form factor and in the right security model now means every employee, contractor and partner can be empowered with information to speed decision-making, improve customer experience and mitigate risk.
4. **Single-process focus expands to multiparty value chains.** Classic mega-processes such as invoice to close, procure to pay, hire to retire and order to cash traversed functional fiefdoms. Early adopters of cloud ERP seek multithreaded value chains that support a multiparty-centric view. These parties could include the employee, customer, supplier, partner and others. The convergence of classic mega-processes makes way for multiparty value chains. Context is key as each role sees only the relevant information at the right time.

Figure 2. Ten Global Cloud ERP Trends for 2020 and Beyond



Source: Constellation Research

5. **Push for post-sale revenue drives support for subscription business models.** The shift from ownership to access requires ERP systems to support subscription business models. These new models enable post-sale revenue opportunities such as installation, warranty and vendor-managed inventory. Subscriptions also require regulatory compliance for revenue recognition rules such as ASC 606. Expect ERP to provide growing support to customer success management platforms and new outcomes-based pricing models.
6. **Risk mitigation, regulatory compliance and fraud prevention drive adoption of AI in ERP.** While AI has many use cases, fraud prevention is a particularly important one, as it helps organizations avoid bad outcomes. Prevention applies cognitive reckoning to identify potential threats. The goal is to mitigate risk, achieve regulatory compliance and prevent disasters. Customers also seek AI to augment human decisions and suggest next best actions.
7. **Hybrid cloud deployments take center stage as integration improves.** The shift to the cloud comes with multiple deployment options. Most organizations have cloud components tied to an on-premises core. Over time, an increasing number of deployments will shift from hybrid approaches to pure cloud models. Consequently, integration technology has improved in ease of use, ability to orchestrate and cost of ownership.
8. **AI powers the new user experience.** From chatbots to mixed reality, AI has entered the ERP market. Systems that mimic four out of the five senses—sight, speech, listening and touch—have entered the mainstream. Natural language processing and video intelligence enable large quantities of unstructured data such as documents, chats, log files and transactions to be ingested and organized into logical categories using techniques such as topological data analysis. Customers expect the ability to use voice as an interface as much as touch and gestures.
9. **Verticalization shifts to micro-verticalization and platform ecosystems.** Customers expect their cloud-based ERP solution to deliver on deep industry vertical functionality. Customers also expect their ERP vendor to provide integration support for adjacent solutions in the ecosystem. Why? Years of experience have taught customers that they need a platform to extend as well as one that is part of a larger ecosystem.

10. Organizations seek one core vendor to trust for innovation. The ERP market landscape has shrunk from hundreds of vendors to a dozen core providers. During the merger and acquisition binge over the past decade, customers have emphasized the stability of a vendor over innovation. With a refresh cycle ahead, customers have increased their expectations to obtain both stability and innovation from one core vendor.

Partnerships and Alliances

The Unit4 partner ecosystem includes a wide range of local niche vertical providers, regional specialists and global system integrators. Key international partners include BearingPoint, Capgemini and Microsoft. Specialized industry partners align by professional services, public services, higher education, nonprofits, financial services and travel.

FUNCTIONAL CAPABILITIES

The Unit4 team has spent the last three years making significant investments to rearchitect the core Unit4 Business World offerings. Constellation highlights the main functional requirements that align with people-centered industries, next-generation features and capabilities built for change (see Figure 3).

Revamped Investment in New Architecture and Microservices Creates a Modern People Experience

For a long time, usability and, with that, the user experience of ERP systems has been cumbersome. As ERP systems have been traditional systems of record, the record creation, record keeping and analysis have been more important than the usability of the overall process. Today, many ERP systems still make their users suffer from that legacy because it is hard to overcome the underlying concepts built into the ERP design and architecture. Effectively, only platform and functionality innovation can address the usability challenge that ERP users face.

Unit4 has addressed that challenge with platform innovation, via the Unit4 People Platform on the technology side (see Figure 4, p. 11). More importantly, Unit4 is also addressing people productivity

Figure 3. Unit4 ERP Road Map for 2020–2021

New capabilities for People centered industries	Automated, Forward looking and Conversational	Built for change
<p>Configuration Manager</p> <p>Augmented Invoice Management</p> <p>Open Banking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Account services Payment services Account reconciliation <p>ERP vertical capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Projects Enhanced Project Financing / Multi-client billing Enhanced Revenue Recognition Grants Management <p>FP&A capabilities for verticals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFP, PSA, PS, Higher Ed 	<p>Compliance as a Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Tax service with Avalara integration Global eInvoice service with Pagero integration <p>Rebuild of localizations as micro-services</p> <p>HCM capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Resources / Global organizations Recruitment and onboarding Diversity and mobility Global salary review Smart salary packages 	<p>Smart Invoice Processing Service</p> <p>Smart Period Close Service</p> <p>Natural Language (Wanda) for Managers and Employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytics & Reports Exceptions & Alerts Forms (Voice) <p>ERP Mobile experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasks (extended) Purchasing <p>AI enhanced FP&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forecasting Analytics
		<p>New REST APIs within Financials, Procurement, Projects and HCM.</p> <p>Customization as a Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlook extensions Collaboration extensions Registers extensions Partner built extensions Customer built extensions <p>Accounting Hub</p>

Source: Unit4

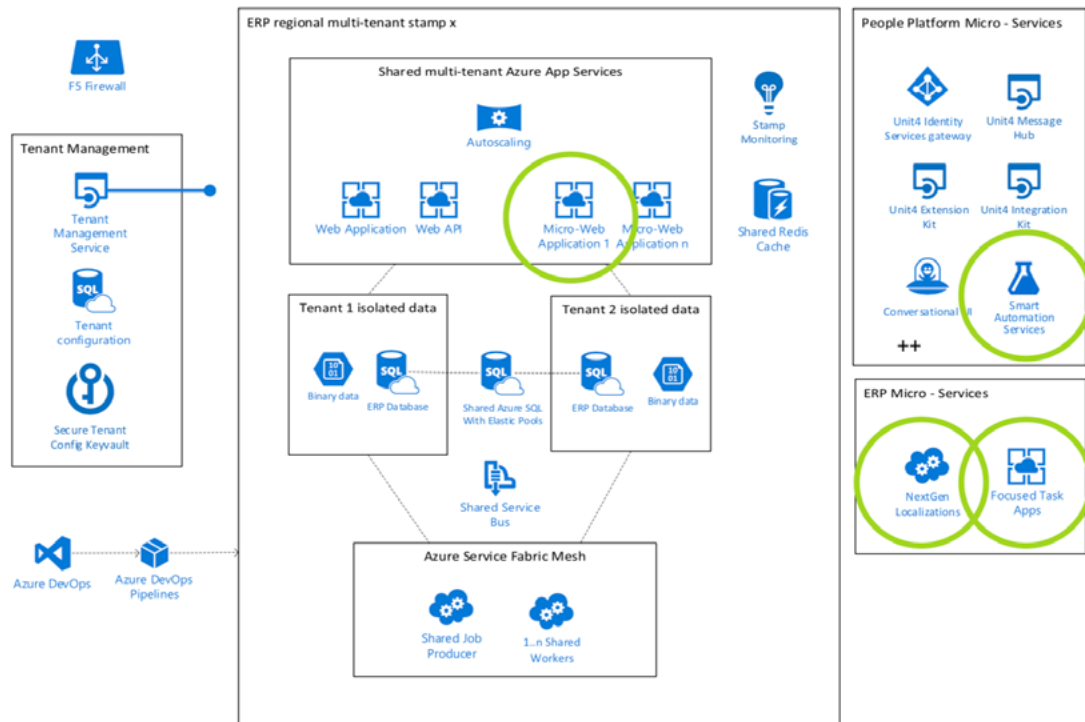
with a more holistic approach than is found in typical user experience design—that is, with people experience. Traditionally, user experience has been narrowed down to the experience of a user of a system.

Given the layered and multisystem nature of ERP, and the addition of often acquired systems thrown into the mix, the ERP user experience has been fragmented and incongruent at best (see Figure 5, p. 12). Unit4 is aiming at a consistent and holistic user experience across the company’s solutions, focused on people productivity. That means, for instance, that integration to other key people applications (Microsoft Office, for example) needs to be enabled because users spend time in ERP and document applications.

Specifically, here are some examples of how the Unit4 People Platform enhances and enables the people experience:

- **Loosely coupled integration.** To enable “mash-ups” of business capabilities at the speed that service industries need, Unit4’s People Platform allows for loosely

Figure 4. New Microservices Architecture (in Development) Will Develop Flexibility for Customers



Source: Unit4

7

coupled message-based integration combined with REST-based APIs. This allows the automation of business needs on a faster and more agile basis, ultimately enabling a better people experience.

- **Dynamic data interoperability.** Being able to exchange and interoperate on data without having to move it across systems is a key factor for faster and better insights. Instead of having to wait for IT resources to move and prep data, Unit4 users can bring the data together when they need to answer their business questions.
- **Business object taxonomy.** What sounds like a boring technology topic is the enabler for Unit4 users to achieve a better people experience. People in service industries must combine capabilities in a dynamic way, and a common taxonomy of business objects is needed so that their systems can speak to each other.

Figure 5. People Platform Serves as the Foundation for Services-Centric Delivery



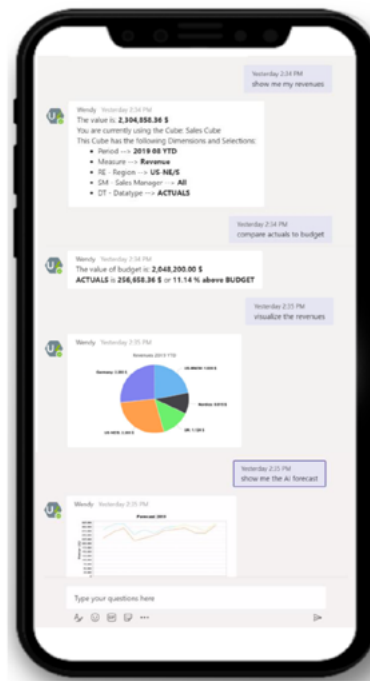
Source: Unit4

- **Message hub.** Modern systems achieve scalability and agility with a low-latency, asynchronous messaging architecture. Being able to integrate and communicate via a messaging hub makes applications and integration using the Unit4 People Platform easier to integrate. The benefit is that users of the Unit4 applications have to spend little or no time for integration of their service applications.

Digital Assistant Wanda Delivers Intelligent Engagement

Using natural language, continuous learning and task coordination, Wanda is Unit4's digital assistant. As a conversational interface, it pervasively applies machine learning (ML) and AI to recognize patterns, automate tasks and suggest next best actions (see Figure 6). Users can add Wanda as a contact in Slack, Skype and Microsoft Teams. Wanda bots can be found for purchasing, time recording, travel and expenses, employment (HR), workflow approvals and company policy.

Figure 6. Inside Wanda, Unit4's Digital Assistant



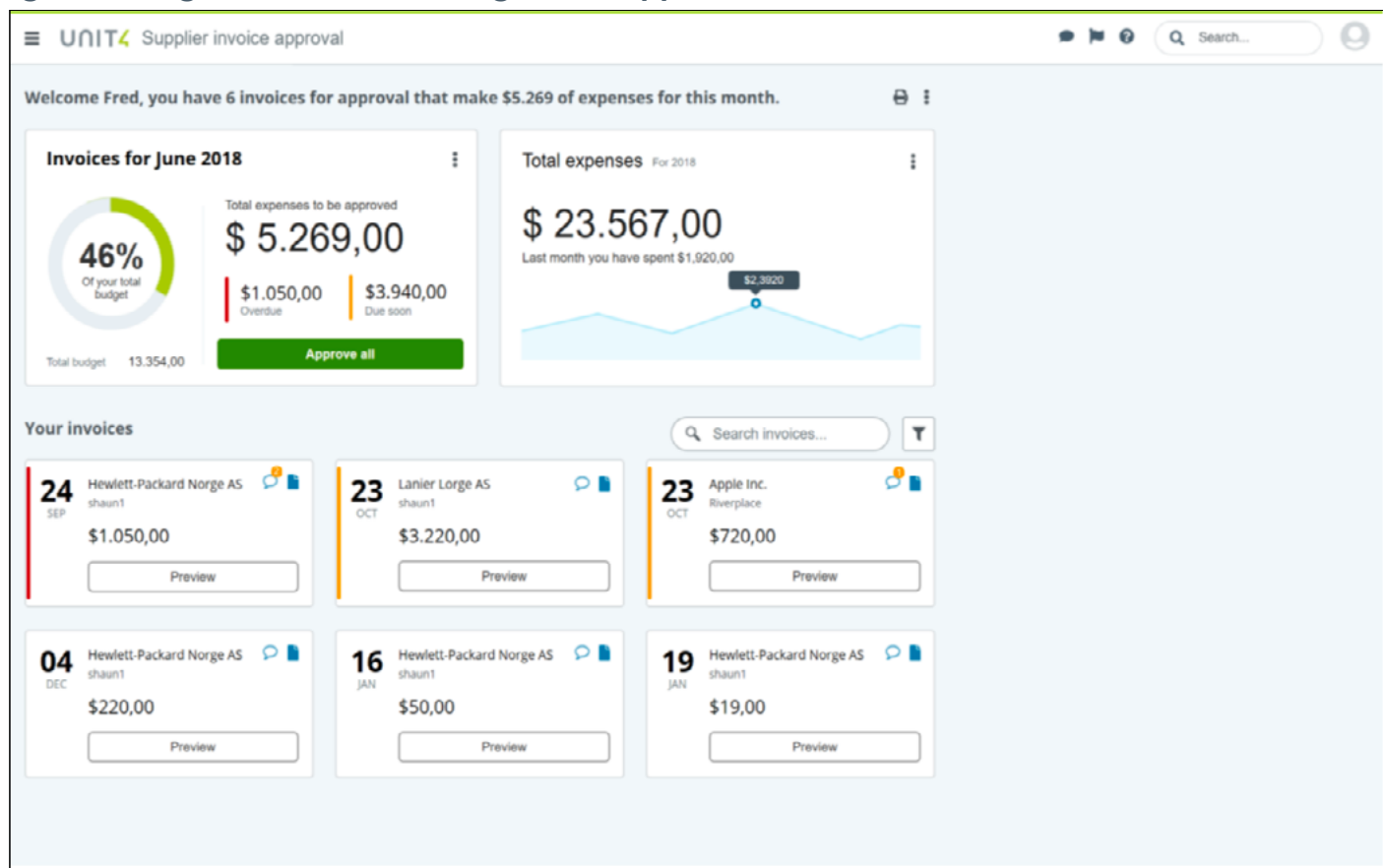
Source: Unit4

AI and Automation Brings Finance Closer to Intelligent Automation and Next Best Actions

As part of Unit4 Labs' development pilots, Augmented Invoice Management delivers end-to-end automation of the accounts receivable process (see Figure 7). Using self-learning ML invoice processing services in accounts payable and general ledger functions, the system delivers automated ledger transaction registration, workflow automation and exception-based invoice approvals. The solution uses Wanda, the digital assistant, to manage approvals to speed up processing, reduce errors and improve payment rates. Expected release to market is in 2021.

In 2020, Unit4 plans to deliver AI-enhanced analytics and forecasting. For AI-enhanced analytics, users can rapidly assess deviation of budgets, revenues, costs and key financial metrics. Users gain time savings for discovery of an anomaly. In many scenarios, users will understand dependencies and correlations better. In AI-enhanced forecasting, Unit4 applies neural networks to forecast revenues, costs, payments arrivals and other similarly repetitive metrics (see Figure 8, p. 15). Early adopters cite improved forecast quality and precision.

Figure 7. Augment Invoice Management Applies AI and ML

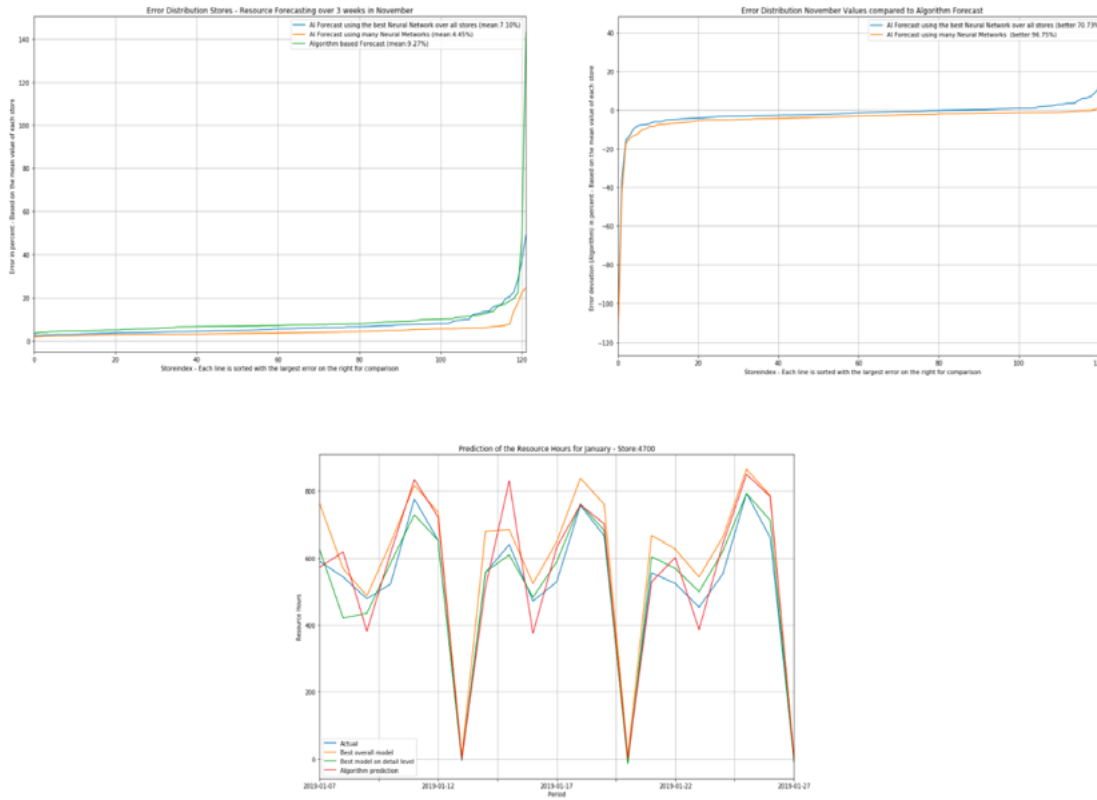


Source: Unit4

HCM Gets a Boost

Upcoming HCM capabilities include global organizations, recruitment and onboarding, diversity and mobility, and global salary. Global organizations add employee mobile, global organization charts, global employees, employee turnover analytics, positions and career paths. Recruitment and onboarding add new capabilities in vacancy funds check and an integration with application tracking systems. Diversity and mobility are improved because of features to manage employee movement; career and succession planning; diversity analytics; contractual changes, promotions and rejoiners. Global Salary Review capabilities deliver on planning salary reviews in advance, planning salary increase amount and salary cascading, and organizational planning and forecasting analytics.

Figure 8. AI-Enhanced Forecasting Applies Neural Networks to Models



Source: Unit4

Vertical Enhancements Add Deeper Industry Capabilities

Core to Unit4's value proposition is continued investment into vertical capabilities. The following serves as an update for 2020:

- **Professional services organizations.** Global projects roll out with resources managed as a global pool. User experience enhancements help simplify resource processes and time and expense transactions. Revenue recognition gains useful features such as defining performance obligations, managing revenue recognition at main project level, using hours as a unit of measure, managing loss making projects, collectability calculations and long-term project treatments. In financial planning and analysis (FP&A) for Professional Services Organization (PSO) V2, improvements include

analytics and reporting on utilization, project margin, work in progress, revenue and cost planning, and revenue forecasting.

- **Nonprofits.** Higher-education clients gain new admissions, academics, billing, community and student-life modules for Unit4's student management FP&A business intelligent add-on. Public services clients receive extended mobile purchasing capabilities, open banking, income manager and FP&A Public Sector V2. The new forecasting and planning module has top-down and bottom-up budgeting, approval and denial process of budgets, process status dashboards, and updated council dashboards and reports.

PRICING

Unit4's pricing works around three key dimensions:

- **User number.** A common metric for enterprise software, customers pay per user accessing the system.
- **User type.** As different users use different functionality and consume different IT resources, user-type pricing is a common best practice.
- **Engines.** To capture value created by automation, many enterprise software vendors use engine-based pricing.

As with all pricing, CxOs negotiating with Unit4 should make sure they are aware of the current and future metrics that determine pricing. CxOs are well advised to project future demand and needs and include them in the negotiation process.

Recently, Unit4 has been reviewing its pricing to get more in line with the business value created by the company's products. That is a fair approach but typically involves more negotiation than the "hard" metrics used so far. CxOs need to prepare for negotiation. Ultimately, value-based pricing, when negotiated fairly for both sides, is the better approach for enterprise software customers and vendors.

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS

Here's what Constellation sees as the strengths and weaknesses of Unit4's People Experience Suite (see Figure 9):

Strengths

- **Supports a people-centric ERP approach.** Unit4 design philosophy starts with a human-centric design point. Software should work for people, not the other way around.
- **Invests in a modern technology architecture.** Investment over the past four years on platform provides customers with a more modern tech stack built on microservices, designed to support more ML and AI enablement.
- **Using Azure at its best.** When vendors build on a public cloud platform, they need to use it to its fullest. And Unit4 is doing this—for instance, with the uptake of the Azure Services Mesh and some of the conversational assistant capabilities.
- **Revamp of leadership team.** Within a 12-month time frame, Unit4 has brought in new talent, including Mike Ettl as CEO, Mike Slater as CRO, Andy Brockhoff as president of North America, and Julie Knight as CMO.
- **Proven services-centric industry vertical solutions.** Unit4 has shown proven expertise in service-based industries such as financial services, higher education, nonprofits, professional services and public services.
- **Growing investments in automation.** Early adoption of chatbots and digital assistants such as Wanda moves clients toward operational efficiency. Augmented invoice management, AI-enhanced forecasting and AI-enhanced analytics show customers a path for greater automation.

Weaknesses

- **North American presence.** Unit4 is in the process of reinvesting in North America. The appointment of a serious customer leader, customer success managers, technical leadership and partner network show great promise for expansion into the largest global ERP market.
- **User group and community resources maturity.** The North America Customers Group for Unit4 is emerging and today exists as a LinkedIn group. Expect more investment as Unit4 adds more customers to North America.
- **Azure is a good choice for AI but not the best.** Azure is a very good choice for a public cloud provider, and Microsoft is continuing to invest in Azure capabilities in data center capacity from location as well as compute and volume perspectives. The only area where Microsoft falls behind its competition is in AI/ML, where Microsoft has not unveiled its own dedicated AI inference chips. Consequently, Unit4 is extending AI/ML capabilities on its own, using ML.NET.

Figure 9. Unit4 People Experience Suite's Strengths and Weaknesses

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports a people-centric ERP approach• Invests in a modern technology architecture• Revamp of leadership team• Proven services-centric industry vertical solutions• Growing investments in automation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North American presence• User group and community resources maturity• Azure is a good choice for AI but not the best

Source: Constellation Research

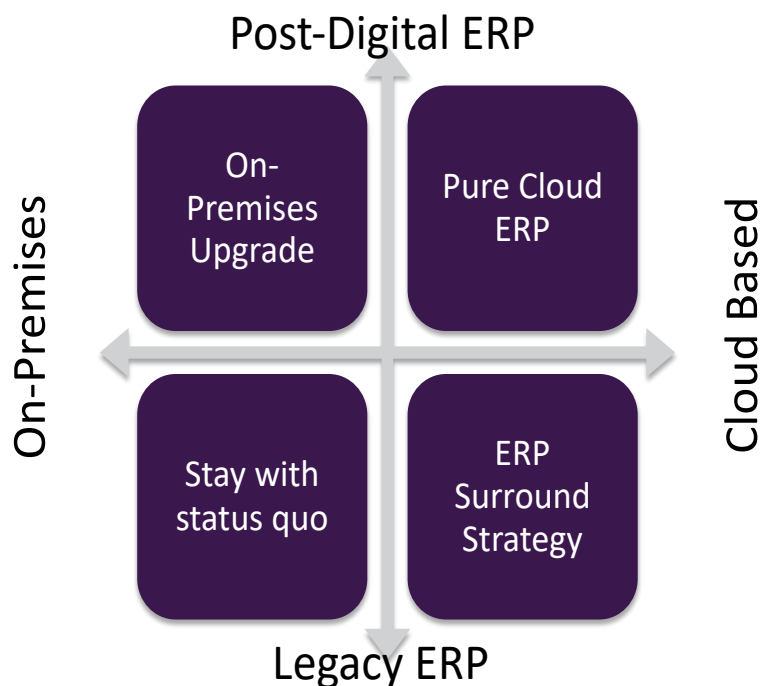
RECOMMENDATIONS

Start Optimization and Innovation with the Cloud, Then Build for AI

The road to post-digital ERP comes with many approaches. Evaluations should consider on-premises versus cloud and legacy ERP versus post-digital ERP (see Figure 10). Constellation recommends that customers do the following:

1. **Surround legacy systems with cloud innovation and hybrid integration.** Organizations seeking to try cloud ERP can start with adjacent cloud solutions, such as pricing, forecasting, demand planning, recruiting planning and budgeting, and talent management to get started. The goal is to understand the ease of use while accessing innovation at the edge. Teams should select integration tools that will enable hybrid models and long-term cloud-to-cloud orchestration.

Figure 10. A Post-Digital View of ERP Modernization



Source: Constellation Research

2. **Consider a two-tier approach to cloud ERP.** Start an upgrade or replacement project inside a division, geographic region or separate business unit. Take the time to redesign processes for both efficiency and automation. Apply lessons learned from the upgrade or replacement experience to drive future adoption across the enterprise.
3. **Make the shift to pure cloud ERP.** Explore the requirements to move to a pure cloud ERP solution. Map previous customizations to new or promised functionality on the road map. Consider the impact of integrations. Design the system to address key business questions. Assess processes for automation capabilities. Design for digital feedback loops.
4. **Incorporate digital feedback loops.** Use each choice to create digital feedback loops that deliver insights. Insights power next best actions along the data-to-decision continuum. The creation of feedback loops mitigates risk, ensures compliance, optimizes operations, increases revenue, improves experience, informs product offerings and enables brand promise.
5. **Democratize decisions in the front office and the back office.** Employees throughout the enterprise can take action to improve customer experiences, but only if they have the right information presented in context at the right moment. Renew existing transactional systems from ERP, customer relationship management and supply chain by abstracting the transactions and enabling orchestration of new experiences. Taking these new journeys to the front lines will enable the ability to democratize decisions across all stakeholders.
6. **Deliver mass personalization at scale with automation and AI.** As organizations light up their data-driven digital networks, organizations can finally deliver mass personalization at scale. Intelligent enterprises will use AI and ML tools to automate this personalization and build autonomous and self-learning systems over time.

When to Consider Unit4 People Experience Suite

Based on conversations with over 20 Unit4 customers and 400 ERP prospects, organizations that meet the following requirements should consider this offering for their short list:

- Customers seeking strong services-centric ERP capabilities
- Organizations seeking deeper project-based and professional services automation capabilities
- Two-tier ERP strategy where corporate may be on a different ERP, but subsidiaries and new entities are on Unit4
- Customers who seek deep vertical experiences in financial services, higher education, nonprofits, professional services, public services and travel

RELATED RESEARCH

R “Ray” Wang, “Constellation ShortList™ Enterprise Cloud Finance,” Constellation Research, August 21, 2019. <https://www.constellationr.com/research/constellation-shortlist-enterprise-cloud-finance-5>

R “Ray” Wang, “Innovations Abound in Global Cloud ERP Suites,” Constellation Research, October 3, 2019. <https://www.constellationr.com/research/innovations-abound-global-cloud-erp-suites>

ANALYST BIO

R “Ray” Wang

Founder and Principal Analyst

R “Ray” Wang is Founder, Chairman and Principal Analyst of Constellation Research, Inc., and the author of the popular enterprise software blog, “A Software Insider’s Point of View.” He previously was a Founding Partner and Research Analyst for enterprise strategy at *Altimeter Group*.

A background in emerging business and technology trends, enterprise apps strategy, technology selection and contract negotiations enables Wang to provide clients and readers with the bridge between business leadership and technology adoption. Wang has been recognized by the prestigious Institute of Industry Analyst Relations (IIAR) as the Analyst of the Year, and in 2009, he was recognized as one of the most important analysts for Enterprise, SMB and Software. In 2010, Wang was recognized on the ARInsights Power 100 List of Industry Analysts and named one of the top Influential Leaders in the CRM Magazine 100 Market Awards.

Wang graduated from the Johns Hopkins University with a B.A. in natural sciences and public health. His graduate training includes a master’s degree from the Johns Hopkins University in health policy and management and health finance and management.

 [@rwang0](https://twitter.com/rwang0)  constellationr.com/users/r-ray-wang  [linkedin.com/in/rwang0](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rwang0)

ABOUT CONSTELLATION RESEARCH

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Organizational Highlights

- Named Institute of Industry Analyst Relations (IIAR) New Analyst Firm of the Year in 2011 and #1 Independent Analyst Firm for 2014 and 2015.
- Experienced research team with an average of 25 years of practitioner, management and industry experience.
- Organizers of the Constellation Connected Enterprise—an innovation summit and best practices knowledge-sharing retreat for business leaders.
- Founders of Constellation Executive Network, a membership organization for digital leaders seeking to learn from market leaders and fast followers.



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