



UNSTUCK

Navigating Disruption In
Enterprise Systems

James Stroebe

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Testimonials

What Others Are Saying

■ “James reduced the noise in my CV but kept the detail — the end result was sharp, strategic, and perfectly aligned to my industry.”

— **Procurement Transformation Lead, UK**

■ “James secured me a pivotal contract and continues to bring clarity around SAP market movements. He’s insightful, proactive, and always brings fresh thinking.”

— **SAP CloudALM, BPT, Activate, Data Archiving architect, UK**

■ “In just nine minutes, James helped turn a complex ERP message into clear, high-impact content. His way with words and audience understanding is rare.”

— **Global Head of Consulting, SAP BTP & Innovation, UK**

■ “James brings deep SAP insight, sharp content skills, and a vast network. He’s placed 500+ professionals and made a tangible impact on every project we’ve done.”

— **Founder and SAP AI and Data expert, Poland**

■ “James gave me clarity and direction with my CV — practical, useful, and easy to apply. I’d absolutely recommend working with him.”

— **Transformation Programme Manager, UK**

■ “I wasn’t expecting it to hit as hard as it did. I’ve reconnected with why I do this work — and now I’m being approached differently too.”

— **SAP S/4HANA Workstream Lead, USA**

Acknowledgements

This book was never meant to be written alone, and thankfully, it wasn't.

To the ERP professionals who opened up during on-screen recordings, interviews, catch-ups, and late-night Direct Messages: thank you for your honesty, your stories, questions, and quiet pivots that helped shape every chapter.

A special thank you to:

- Judith O'Callaghan, for her steady mentorship, belief in the long game, and for opening doors to a wider network of changemakers; her presence has anchored moments of uncertainty and helped shape this journey with clarity, courage, and connection.
- Dan Barton, for cutting through complexity and reminding us to focus on the simple wins.
- Vincent Kruse, for his sharp insight into decision paralysis and how real traction begins.
- Bernie Kelly, whose thinking on metrics, momentum, and meaning changed the way I see transformation.
- Anita Anello, for showing how micro-moves can still make a macro difference.
- Martyn Geddes, for grounding the theory in real-world diagnostics and digital twin application.
- Wayne Holtham, for naming what so many feel but few say — that misalignment, not budget, is the real blocker.
- Colin Ridlon, for always bringing clarity around talent and capability-building when it matters most.
- Jan Baan, for offering a legacy perspective rooted not in nostalgia but in relevance.
- Kaylor Acosta, for his ability to separate signal from noise and remind us that solving what matters doesn't always need a business case.
- Gerren Mayne, for articulating the quiet truth that preparation during stillness often defines the pace of progress when momentum returns.

To the professionals whose lived journeys became the heart of *Section 3* — Dave, Ellie, Ravi, John, Emma, Andrew — thank you for letting your stories be shared. You reminded us that behind every system is a human reality. You gave this book its pulse.

To the broader SAP and ERP community — consultants, leaders, sponsors, and the quietly brilliant minds working behind the scenes, your willingness to have deeper conversations gave this project shape and soul.

We also attribute the following organisations for research conducted and published: (Further details listed in resources section)

Gartner, McKinsey & Company, SAP Insights, Forrester, Deloitte, Accenture, World Economic Forum, Stanley McChrystal, Daniel H. Pink, and Patrick Lencioni.

And finally, to everyone who trusted me with their career story, offered feedback mid-draft, or simply asked, "When's it coming out?" — this is yours too.

Thank you.

About James Stroebel

I am a strategic growth partner for SAP professionals and the companies driving the next era of transformation.

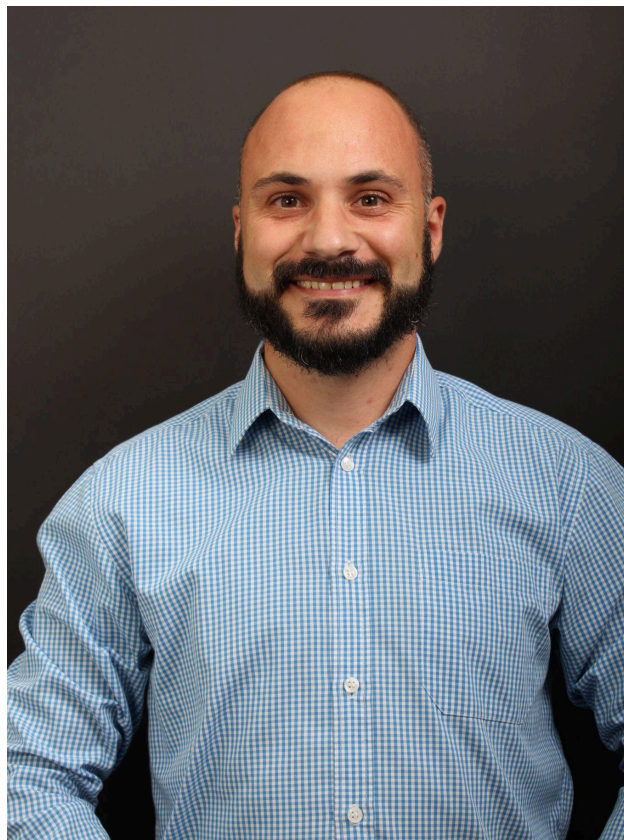
I work at the intersection of talent visibility, strategic positioning, and business growth, elevating the presence of ambitious individuals and growth-focused organisations, which creates clarity, credibility, and momentum that captures market trust, builds influence, and attracts opportunity.

I'm the founder of the Change Makers Collective, creator of the SAP Standout Positioning Pack, and author of the book Unstuck.

Together, these initiatives form a live ecosystem focused on helping professionals and organisations move forward with purpose.

What I bring isn't just recruitment. It's traction, visibility, and strategic growth — delivered from the inside-out.

If you're serious about standing out, scaling impact, or getting into the right rooms — let's talk.



Preface - What is this and who is it for

This isn't a CV writing guide and it's not a list of job search tricks or a shortcut to 'beat the market'.

It is a strategic realignment tool, built for experienced ERP professionals who are ready to step into the next phase of their career, with clarity, conviction, and control.

It's for the SAP consultant with years of impact but no clear message, the person who keeps hearing *"You've got great experience — but..."*

The Project Manager who has delivered under pressure, holding programmes together but hasn't translated that into visibility or value.

The Functional expert who has done the work, with a strong delivery record and is now ready to own their space.

If you're ready to move beyond "good experience" and start being recognised for the value you actually bring — this was built for you.

It's designed to cut through the noise, position you with clarity, raise your profile, and help you take control and make intentional, forward-moving career decisions, because in this market, waiting to be noticed is not a strategy.

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Section 1: Enterprise Systems in Flux: A Human History of Disruption, Adaptation, and What's Next

Chapter 1 - Introduction:- From Backbone to Battleground and Back Again

Enterprise systems have always sat quietly in the background, powering transactions, stabilising processes, and keeping business wheels turning, but today, they're no longer background infrastructure, they're front and centre in the storm of transformation.

Over the past few decades, enterprise systems, especially ERP, have evolved from inventory scheduling engines into central nervous systems of global enterprises. What began in the 1960s as MRP systems aimed at optimising material flow has now transformed into cloud-based, AI-enabled, modular ecosystems designed to support end-to-end business operations. This isn't just technical evolution, it's business reinvention on a timeline.

It's fascinating being immersed in and around ERP over the last decade. Working alongside others who've seen more than I have, you start to notice patterns—cycles of reinvention, bursts of innovation followed by burnout, and a constant tension between standardisation and adaptability.

And right now, that tension is hitting a boiling point.

If you're a professional in ERP today, you've likely felt the shift, pressure mounting from all sides, projects being rushed or paused, cloud migrations stalling, teams burned out, leaders unsure whether to innovate or stabilise, deadlines looming, and uncertainty growing. Priorities change weekly. And underneath it all, a feeling that something bigger is happening than just "project delays" or "roadmap decisions."

Talking about this with many ERP Professionals, it's clear, this isn't just another patch of turbulence. This is a foundational shift in how enterprise systems function, are delivered, and are perceived. To make sense of it all, we've found it's super helpful to step back and take a wider view. There's a larger shift underway in Enterprise Systems. This chapter is not a history book as such; it's a real-world, lived-experience view of what's been happening in enterprise systems over the past few decades, that provides context for what we are experiencing, especially in the last five years, since the dreaded COVID pandemic, because what we're experiencing now is the cumulative effect of decades of evolution:

- From on-premise monoliths to cloud-native, headless architectures.
- From record-keeping systems to intelligence-driven platforms.
- From rigid back-office software to modular microservices powered by AI, IoT, and Kubernetes.
- From top-down deployments to citizen developers creating no-code apps on the fly.

Each era of ERP—MRP in the 60s, MRP II in the 80s, traditional ERP in the 90s, cloud ERP in the 2000s, and intelligent ERP in the 2010s—told a story about business needs and technical limitations of the time. Now we’ve entered a sixth chapter: decentralised, composable, innovation-ready ERP—where microservices, APIs, and “Internet of Business Processes” are rewriting the rulebook.

And yes, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift. It exposed the fragility of brittle, centralised systems and pushed every organisation into digital decision-making at record speed. ERP systems, once thought of as too complex to change, suddenly had to become flexible, agile, and even empathetic to real-world volatility.

Drawing on conversations and insights from transformation leaders, ERP veterans, cloud architects, and frustrated project sponsors. People who’ve seen what ERP really looks like in action: messy, political, human and occasionally brilliant.

Because the truth is, ERP isn’t just about technology, it’s a part of the wider context. It reflects how we lead, how we structure teams, how we adapt, and how we decide what’s “good enough” in the face of complexity.

It’s about leadership, not just of systems, but of people and leadership in a time of disruption, which requires a different lens. Leadership of your career, leadership in businesses. Leadership in the next wave of Enterprise Systems. And it’s already happening.

Chapter 2: The Long Road to Now

If you want to understand where we're going, you have to understand where we've been.

From Mainframes to Modern ERP

In the 1960s and 70s, enterprise computing was driven by mainframes, the old "green screen". These were custom-built systems, often designed to manage inventory or payroll. They were expensive, slow to evolve, and heavily siloed.

Then came the 1990s and the explosion of client-server systems. SAP R/3 was a landmark shift, a modular architecture that promised standardisation, scalability, and global reach. This was ERP's golden age. Businesses aligned their processes around the software, not the other way around. Efficiency was king.

By the 2000s, ERPs were ubiquitous. The question wasn't "should we implement ERP?" It was "which one, and how fast can we do it?"

But success stories were mixed, some programmes failed spectacularly, others delivered major gains. The difference? Often, it wasn't the tech, it was the people, the planning, and the pace.

Then came the 2010s, and Cloud became a reality

With the rise in Cloud computing, pressure on legacy systems began, which marked the beginning of a new era and Cloud moved from novelty to necessity. ERP platforms designed decades earlier began to creak under the weight of real-time expectations, with the need for mobility, simplified interfaces, and seamless integrations triggering re-evaluations of traditional IT architectures. Businesses were no longer just implementing, they were reimagining.

We now stand at another crossroads. The next phase isn't just about upgrading systems, it's about rethinking how enterprise technology supports the business.

This is the era of cloud transformation, but it didn't start yesterday, and it won't end tomorrow.

In fact, cloud is just one of many converging forces shaping enterprise systems today. What we're seeing is not a single-threaded evolution, but a multi-dimensional shift driven by exponential increases in data capture, processing power, connected technologies, storage capacity, and information distribution.

This convergence is propelling us into the second half of the exponential curve, where the pace of change stops being linear and becomes destabilising by nature. As Bernie Kelly describes it, we're sprinting now, not jogging and the systems, leadership mindsets, and metrics we used during the first half of this curve are no longer enough.

Enterprise systems sit squarely in this reality. Leaders can no longer rely on traditional dashboards, metrics, or assumptions. We're facing what Bernie Kelly calls "The Metric Black Hole," where existing KPIs can't capture the scale or nuance of what's really happening. And

yet, the temptation is to keep showing up with legacy thinking because it's familiar, measurable, and safe.

But evolution doesn't wait, it accelerates.

This decade isn't simply "the cloud era". It's the collision point of technological, social, and economic evolution where cloud, AI, edge, IoT, microservices, and new organisational models combine into something entirely new. What matters now is how quickly we build our capacity to lead, adapt, and experiment under pressure.

Because what's coming next will demand more than upgrades, it will demand new thinking.

Anecdotes from the Front Lines

In conversation after conversation, the same patterns surfaced:

- **Dan Barton** described clients frozen in place by fear of budget overruns and disruption, yet simultaneously sitting on easy, affordable wins. "Most don't realise you can modernise the user experience or automate workflows without a full system upgrade."
- **Keylor Acosta** talked about the difference between noise and signal: "When you focus on what matters, like the real pain points users face, you can act without waiting on a transformation budget."
- **Bernie Kelly** challenged us to think differently: "What if being a thought leader meant lighting the spark in others?"
- **Jan Baan** reminded us that while systems evolve, the purpose must stay the same: to enable better business outcomes. He often warns against using tomorrow's tools to rebuild yesterday's structures.
- **Wayne Holtham** observed that the organisations that struggled the most weren't the least funded, but the least aligned. "You can feel when a leadership team isn't moving together. Everything slows down."
- **Colin Ridlon** added, "Talent is drying up. If you're not thinking about capability-building now, you're already behind."

These stories aren't theoretical, they are drawn from boardrooms, programme war rooms, and transformation trenches.

In the sections and chapters ahead, we'll unpack these recurring themes from strategic calm to the real battleground of talent and explore how small moves, done well, are shaping the future of enterprise systems.

Chapter 3: The Disruption Decade (2015–2030)

If the 1990s and 2000s were about ERP implementation and expansion, the past decade has been about reckoning and reinvention.

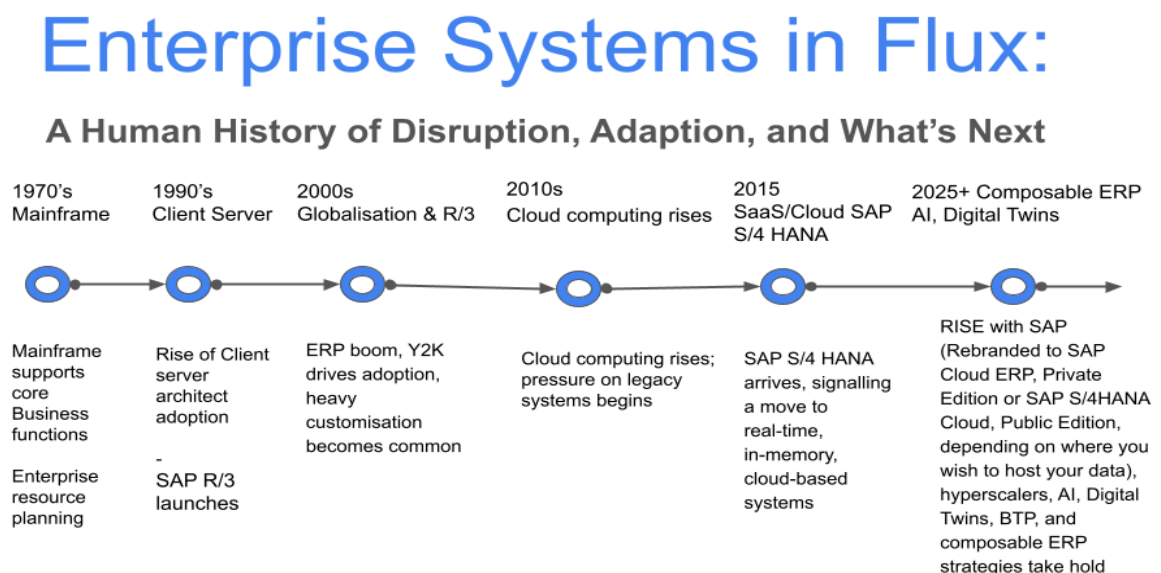
In 2015, a convergence of pressures, technological, regulatory, and organisational, began reshaping the ERP landscape. SAP S/4 HANA was born, marking a turning point: a real-time, in-memory, cloud-optimised system designed for speed, integration, and clarity. It wasn't just a new platform, it came with a crucial new expectation: clean up legacy customisations and simplify processes.

At the same time, the rise of SaaS models, growing regulatory demands, talent shortages, collapsing project timelines, and calls for agility forced organisations to rethink everything.

Business Technology Platform (BTP) emerged as SAP's modular engine for innovation, allowing businesses to extend and innovate without disrupting the core.

Today, RISE with SAP (now rebranded to SAP Cloud ERP, Private Edition or SAP S/4HANA Cloud, Public Edition, depending on where you wish to host your data), hyperscalers, BTP, and composable ERP strategies take hold. This era is defined by “platform thinking”. Organisations begin assembling capabilities like building blocks, embracing agility over rigidity. Hosting on AWS, Azure, or GCP become the norm, and the conversation shifted from ownership to outcomes.

Visual Timeline: Evolution of Enterprise Systems



- **1970s:** Mainframes, custom business logic
- **1992:** SAP R/3 launches — client-server ERP becomes global standard
- **2000s:** ERP boom, Y2K drives adoption, heavy customisation becomes common
- **2010s:** Cloud computing rises; pressure on legacy systems begins
- **2015:** SAP S/4 HANA arrives, signalling a move to real-time, in-memory, cloud-based systems

- **2020s:** RISE with SAP (Rebranded to SAP Cloud ERP, Private Edition or SAP S/4HANA Cloud, Public Edition, depending on where you wish to host your data), hyperscalers, BTP, and composable ERP strategies take hold

So What Changed?

- The cloud stopped being an option and became the default.
- Business users began to expect the same usability from ERP as they did from their consumer apps.
- SAP introduced RISE as a bundled offering that redefined not just what customers bought, but how they engaged.
- Transformation deadlines were no longer internal targets, they were driven by vendor end-of-support dates.

And all of this happened while teams were stretched thinner than ever.

Real-World Flashpoints

In a conversation with **Vincent Kruse**, we heard how even well-resourced clients can become paralysed by competing priorities: "They know they need to act, but don't know where to start. The pressure to get it perfect blocks progress."

Anita Anello spoke about consultants left in limbo, waiting for programme clarity, direction, or funding, who nonetheless managed to make micro-improvements to reporting, UX, and analytics. "You don't need a signed business case to start making things better."

Martyn Geddes outlined how clients using Digital Twin simulations in Phase 0 were avoiding costly missteps: "You can pressure-test decisions before writing a line of code. That alone changes the tempo."

And **Gerren Mayne** captured the core message in a single line: "The ones who prepare during the quiet moments move fastest when it's time to go."

This is truly a Decade of Lessons

From these stories and others, we can extract some hard-earned lessons:

1. **Clarity beats certainty.** You won't have all the answers, but you must have alignment.
2. **Transformation is cumulative.** The small things you do today shape your capacity for the big ones tomorrow.
3. **Waiting is not neutral.** It either erodes confidence or strengthens your foundation, depending on how you use it, of course.

This decade has taught us that disruption doesn't have to paralyse you, the opposite in fact, it can prepare you, and the difference lies not in budget or structure but in true leadership.

Let's be clear: we're not emerging from disruption, we're standing squarely in the middle of it. This isn't the new normal; it's the eye of the storm. Cloud may have kicked things off, but it

was only the opening act. What comes next is a wave of converging, accelerating forces, data, automation, AI, microservices, and human-centric design, all compounding in speed and complexity. The pace has moved beyond linear. The rules are being rewritten in real-time, metrics can't keep up, roadmaps are out of date before they're signed off and yet, amid the chaos, a new kind of clarity is emerging, one that demands not just new tools, but new leadership. What's ahead isn't "just another tech upgrade", it's a reinvention of how we think, plan, and act. The next chapters unpack what this means in practice and why those who move now, with intention, will shape the systems of the future. Keep going, it gets real from here.

Section 2: Disrupted, Not Defeated: How ERP Professionals Are Rewriting the Rules

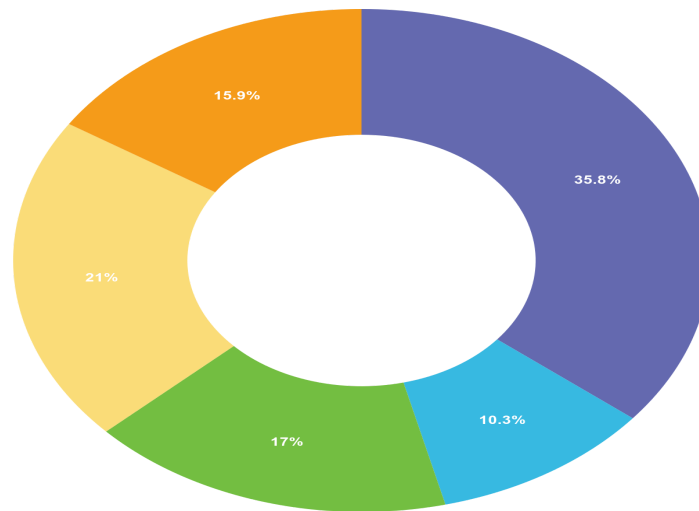
Chapter 4: From Credentials to Contribution: Redefining Value in a Disrupted Landscape

In quiet one-to-one chats, transformation workshops, and even tense project reviews, a common theme keeps showing up, professionals asking themselves, *“Where do I fit into all this?”* It’s an honest question, and an increasingly urgent one. The ground beneath us is shifting, not just in how ERP systems are built and delivered, but more importantly, in how individual value is seen, measured, and rewarded. This is no longer a world where technical proficiency and branded certifications alone can carry a career. Those things still matter, but they’ve become the entry ticket, not the differentiator. What really counts now is your ability to translate your expertise into momentum for the business, whether that’s through simplifying decisions, removing blockers, spotting opportunities others miss, or bringing calm where there’s uncertainty.

It used to be enough to follow a straightforward path, Get certified, Deliver a couple of successful projects, Move up. The hierarchy was clear, and progress followed a predictable rhythm. You could point to your qualifications and your tools of choice, SAP, Oracle, Dynamics, Workday, and be seen as ready, but that version of ERP work is fading. Today’s landscape is faster, messier, and full of moving targets. The questions being asked are different, clients want to know how you think, how you collaborate, and how you help them move forward when priorities are shifting weekly and solutions don’t come with guarantees. “What business value do you bring to a long-term visionary?”

Job Status of ERP Professionals

Q. What's your current job status?



	Choice	Totals
●	Actively job hunting	97
●	Between contracts	28
●	Employed but anxious	46
●	Just exploring options	57
●	Other: _____	43

35.8% of ERP professionals say they're actively job hunting — the traditional linear career model is no longer normal.

This is leading to a meaningful shift in how professionals are evaluated, with conversations being less about ticking boxes and more about contribution. What impact you've had, how quickly you deliver value, and how well you understand the human side of systems. Can you explain technical complexity in business terms? Can you help align stakeholders with competing interests? Can you walk into a programme that's stalled and find a way to restart it with momentum? These are the traits that stand out now. In many cases, candidates with fewer formal credentials are winning roles because they demonstrate stronger insight, sharper business instincts, and a clearer understanding of what the client actually needs. That's where the edge is forming.

Chapter 5: When the Work Changes, the Model Breaks

The shift in mindset is mirrored by a change in how work is structured. The traditional model of large transformation programmes with fixed roles, phased plans, and multi-year contracts hasn't disappeared, but it's no longer assumed to be the best or only way forward. Increasingly, clients are favouring smaller, more flexible delivery teams. They're slicing work into bite-sized outcomes, focused sprints, enhancements, pilot launches, and expecting visible progress within weeks, not quarters.

We've seen programme sponsors who were once drawn to large, "comprehensive" transformation blueprints now pushing back against that scale. They've experienced the delays, the spirals of over-planning, the fatigue that sets in before value is delivered. What they want now is proof that something is moving, something is changing, something is getting better in real business terms. This has led to a rise in lean squads, outcome-based contracts, and demand for professionals who can wear multiple hats, not to do more for less, but to stay flexible, connected, and useful as the shape of the work evolves.

This means that traditional role definitions are dissolving. The line between functional and technical is blurring, and the difference between a business analyst and a UX designer is no longer just skillset, but rather a mindset. You might be asked to lead a sprint one day and unblock a stakeholder group the next. The professionals thriving in this space are those who step in where needed, contribute beyond their job description, and take ownership of results even when their name isn't on the RACI chart. This kind of work is less comfortable, but far more valuable and clients are noticing who shows up with that attitude.

But it's not just the roles that are shifting. Governance, decision-making, and success criteria are changing too. Instead of steering committees waiting for a milestone report, more organisations are embedding rapid feedback loops into delivery. Sponsors want to see working software early. Business users expect to test and comment in real time. And if value isn't visible, trust quickly erodes. That puts more pressure — and more opportunity — on those who can translate ambiguity into action.

This also means the old hierarchy of expertise is being challenged. Ten years of experience matters less if you're rigid. What's valued now is responsiveness: your ability to grasp the business context, experiment safely, and make things work in messy, evolving environments. The best people aren't always the ones with the most knowledge — they're the ones with the most range.

In response, the most effective professionals are building new muscles: facilitation, prioritisation, expectation management, and stakeholder storytelling. They're learning how to articulate trade-offs in a language executives understand — not hiding behind technical jargon, but pulling insight to the surface. They're not just managing delivery. They're shaping belief.

We've seen this shift play out in real-time — teams who once asked, "What are the requirements?" now ask, "What problem are we trying to solve, and what's the first step we

can test?” That change may seem subtle, but it reflects a complete reorientation: from fixed process to adaptive momentum. And the people who can operate in that mode — fast, honest, focused on real impact — are not only thriving, they’re redefining what transformation looks like.

Chapter 6: Where the Money's Moving (and Where It's Not)

Budgets are not necessarily disappearing, but it is flowing toward different types of work. Instead of massive end-to-end overhauls, clients are focusing on what we often call “value unlocks.” These are small, often modular projects that create visible change without requiring a full system replacement. Think automation of manual reporting processes, integration of data sources for cleaner visibility, redesign of interfaces that reduce training costs, or simplification of approval chains that speed up decision-making. These aren't the glamorous projects that win awards, but they are the ones being funded consistently because they improve business performance quickly.

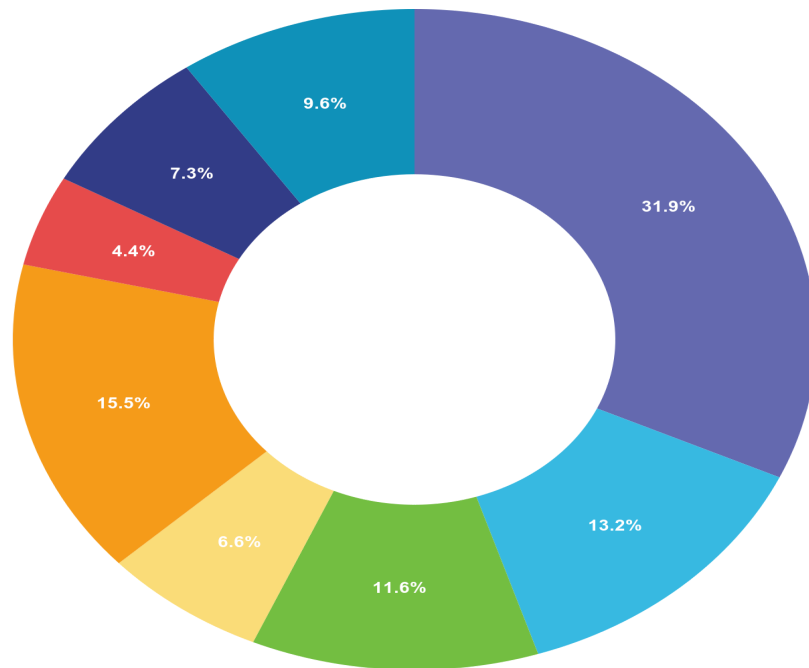
In many cases, clients are working with reduced headcounts and tighter timelines, so they need solutions that work within constraints. They don't want promises of transformation in two years they want pain points resolved in two months. That means professionals who know how to prioritise, who understand business language, and who can identify low-hanging fruit are now being hired not just for implementation, but for insight.

There's also a growing appetite for platform-based thinking, rather than prioritising replacing one system with another, clients first look to build capabilities on top of what they already have. SAP BTP, Microsoft Power Platform, Boomi, Mendix, and other ecosystem tools are being used to extend functionality, automate workflows, and test new ideas without destabilising the core. This has shifted investment away from traditional build-and-deploy models and toward composable, API-connected ecosystems. Professionals who can work within these new architectures, who understand integration, data flow, and how to “make things talk to each other”, are being pulled into more interesting and strategic conversations.

When we are new to the situation or haven't been in supportive environments for these disruptive situations, we all tend to patterns that can be self-sabotaging.

Top Job Search Pain Points

Q. What's been the hardest part of your job search or career planning? (Select up to 3)



	Choice	Totals
●	Finding the right roles	179
●	Standing out with recruiters	74
●	Keeping skills up to date	65
●	Resume or LinkedIn not getting traction	37
●	Interview rejection or ghosting	87
●	Confidence / motivation	25
●	Not sure what to do next	41
●	Other: _____	54

When over 65% of ERP professionals say they struggle to stand out or find the right roles, it's no wonder old career models are breaking down.

This ladder is helpful for seeing patterns in self or others we care about to set more good professionals up to successfully navigate this disruptive environment of Enterprise Systems.

▼ Most likely to be Disrupted Ladder

The Strategic Mover – Focused, driven, open to help and clarity. Gets moving quickly and confidently.

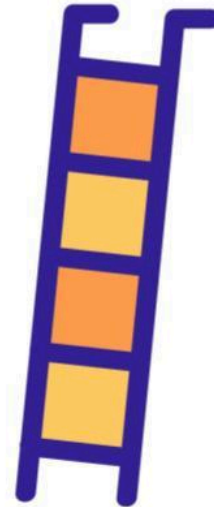
The DIY Hustler – Full of energy and action, but often lacks a strategy. Busy, but not progressing.

The Hopeful Drifter – Waits passively, sticking to outdated tactics. Slow to respond to change.

The Burned-Out Bouncer – Worn out from past setbacks. Feels invisible, struggles to regain rhythm.

The Frozen Pro – Skilled but paralysed by uncertainty. Overthinks, under-acts, quietly stuck.

The Golden Spoon – Wants results with no investment. Resistant to change, often left behind - Greatest Risk of Career Disruption



🔭 The Strategic Mover is someone who seeks clarity, not chaos. They aren't just chasing roles, they're after traction, direction, and a deeper sense of momentum. This individual often finds themselves progressing faster and on better terms because they're willing to reflect, ask for help, and do the work. They're the ones who take bold but considered steps, sometimes asking family for support or making real sacrifices to move forward. The result? Confidence returns, interviews improve, and they become the version of themselves they always suspected was there, just buried beneath the fog.


🔧 The DIY Hustler shows up with energy and intent, putting in effort daily, tweaking CVs, applying to roles, and staying active across job boards. But without a guiding strategy or a clear message, all that action becomes noise. They often get a few nibbles but struggle to build real traction. This can lead to underpaid, short-term gigs and mounting fatigue. From the outside, it looks like they're doing "everything right," but inside, doubt starts to creep in. Their challenge isn't effort, it's direction.

🌱 The Hopeful Drifter means well. They rely on old recruiter lists, outdated job boards, and the belief that something will eventually click, but with no real strategy or sense of market positioning, they're often left waiting. Rejections, silence, and slow progress chip away at their confidence. Sometimes, they do land roles but it takes far longer than it should, and they often miss better-fit opportunities that would've been within reach had they shifted course sooner.

🔄 The Burned-Out Bouncer has been through the wringer. They've worked short contracts, bounced between recruiters, and are now jaded not due to lack of effort, but because they feel let down. They want results, but they're too exhausted to try something different. The cycle of burnout, short-term work, and frustration keeps them stuck. Their skills are still there, but the weight of past disappointments makes it harder to show up as they once did.

🧊 The Frozen Pro carries deep experience, but also quiet fear. They see the shifts in the market, the new tools, the faster pace and they feel overwhelmed. They're not refusing to

adapt, they're just unsure where to begin. Paralysis sets in. They think deeply, plan cautiously, but struggle to take that first real step. Meanwhile, opportunities pass by. Over time, they start to doubt whether they've still "got it" even when they absolutely do.

 The Golden Spoon tends to expect results without personal investment. They often demand tailored help but resist putting in the time or energy to support their own journey. Their frustration is real, but their unwillingness to adapt creates a self-imposed bottleneck. They might say, "Surely that's what recruiters are for," or "I'll just wait for something to come up." But while they wait, peers move ahead. Months slip by, confidence dips, and when reality hits, they often settle for far less than they're capable of or disappear from the market altogether.

▼ And it's these personas who are at the Greatest Risk of Career Disruption!

Chapter 7: AI as an Enabler, Not a Threat

There's been no shortage of anxiety around AI, with headlines about job losses and automation making many wonder whether their skills are becoming obsolete, the reality on the ground tells a different story and more hopeful. AI isn't replacing ERP professionals, it's raising the expectations around them. Tasks that used to take days can now be handled in minutes, but that doesn't remove the human. It frees the human up to focus on more meaningful, complex work.

We've seen consultants use AI to generate draft documentation, identify anomalies in datasets, or prototype workflows in record time. What used to slow projects down is now accelerated, the value isn't in the output, it's in what you do with the time that's saved. Professionals embracing AI as a partner are not just more productive, they're more strategic. They show up with ideas, not just artefacts, they help teams move faster, test more, and focus energy on the real business problems.

The people who will struggle in this shift are those who cling to low-value, repeatable tasks, but for anyone willing to adapt, AI becomes a multiplier, one that increases your impact and allows you to spend more time solving real business problems. It's not about being replaced, it is about being enhanced. And the ERP professionals who learn how to work alongside AI are becoming irreplaceable.

We're already seeing new skillsets emerge as part of that shift — not technical, but interpretive. Being able to frame the right questions for AI, sense-check its answers, and translate raw outputs into business-relevant actions is fast becoming a core part of the role. It's no longer just about knowing the system, but about knowing how to interrogate it with the right intent.

This also means the value of domain knowledge is rising, not falling. AI can accelerate delivery, but it still lacks the judgement that comes from experience — the kind that knows when a data model doesn't reflect reality on the ground, or when an implementation plan looks good on paper but won't land well with end users. ERP professionals who combine deep system fluency with business empathy are becoming the bridge between speed and substance.

What's changing is where time is spent. Less in the mechanics of documentation, and more in shaping conversations, aligning stakeholders, and making smarter trade-offs. Less about input volume, more about navigating ambiguity. That's where AI can't reach — and where people become most valuable.

The next generation of ERP professionals won't just be system experts. They'll be outcome navigators — using AI not to automate what they've always done, but to elevate what they're capable of doing next.

Chapter 8: Experience is Essential, but It's What We Do Together That Really Moves the Needle

In the current ERP landscape, experience isn't just helpful, it's essential. The complexity of today's enterprise systems demands people who've been through high-stakes delivery, seen the ripple effects of design decisions, and know how to navigate uncertainty with clarity, calm and presence, without losing direction. Not because they've seen it all, but because they've seen enough to recognise patterns, avoid costly missteps, and bring stability when everything else is moving fast.

We see this all the time, experienced professionals often act as the bridge between what the system can do and what the business actually needs. They understand that transformation doesn't just happen in a blueprint, it happens in workshops, compromises, moments of alignment, and sometimes in the space between "good enough" and "not quite ready." Their presence often brings a grounding effect. In tense steering meetings, in late-night cutovers, or in integration testing that isn't going to plan, it's usually experience that stops panic from taking over, not because they have all the answers, but because they know what questions to ask.

But here's the thing: experience isn't a gate to guard. It's something to share. Because just as experience is essential, so too is momentum. And that often comes from the newer generation of ERP professionals, those who bring fresh thinking, confidence with emerging tools, and a natural curiosity about how things could be done differently. They challenge assumptions and move quickly. They're not afraid to ask "why are we doing it this way?" And in the right environment, that energy is gold.

The most effective teams I've seen are those where these generations work *together*, not in silos, and not in hierarchies, but in collaboration. A senior consultant stepping aside to let a junior lead a design demo, staying close enough to guide but far enough back to let them learn. A graduate developer introducing a way to prototype a solution in hours instead of days, and an experienced architect helping refine and deploy it without introducing risk. A business analyst in their second year shadowing a stakeholder alignment session, watching how complex dynamics are navigated in real time. These are the moments where capability is built. Where knowledge is transferred and where trust is grown.

The organisations that understand this, that build delivery models where wisdom meets energy, and where learning is baked into the rhythm of work, consistently outperform the ones that rely on any one generation alone. They produce stronger outcomes because decisions are pressure-tested from multiple perspectives. They adapt faster because they're not stuck in legacy thinking or overconfident in the new. And they retain talent better, because people feel seen, stretched, and supported.

This isn't about handing over the torch. It's about running alongside each other, to the moment when the torch is handed over by choice.

In transformation, where systems are complex, people are diverse, and the stakes are high, the real advantage isn't youth or experience, it's the connection between them. The humility

to learn, the courage to teach, and the shared commitment to building something that actually works together.

Support ERP Professionals Want Most

Q. What support would help you MOST right now? (Rank top 3)



The most requested support isn't more tools — it's clarity, strategy, and community. ERP professionals are seeking direction and connection.

Chapter 9: Your Work Life, Reimagined

So what does all of this mean for your day-to-day life?

It means your career probably won't follow a straight line, and that's no longer something to be afraid of. You might find yourself working across three different clients in a year, each with their own systems, cultures, and definitions of success. You might take on a delivery lead role in one project, an integration advisor in another, and a mentoring role in a cross-functional hackathon. Your job title may not always reflect your contribution, in fact, some of your most meaningful work might happen in conversations that aren't captured in any status report, and that's not a glitch, that's the new rhythm.

You'll be expected to adapt quickly, to stay curious, and to learn in public, sometimes in front of stakeholders, sometimes mid-meeting. There's less room now to hide behind polished plans. Value is found in how you respond when things shift. You'll need to move between technical and business conversations fluidly, reading the room and adjusting your lens accordingly. In this context, your ability to communicate clearly, bringing others along with you, becomes just as critical as your own technical competence.

Remote work is no longer a novelty, it's the default in many cases, but that doesn't mean it's easier. It means you'll need to be visible without being physically present. You'll need to advocate for your ideas in shared documents, asynchronous channels, and camera-on calls with people you've never met in person. You'll have to create connection and clarity without relying on hallway chats or body language, and more than ever, you'll need to manage your own energy, knowing when to push, when to step back, and when to rest. The work won't slow down to check in on you, which means you'll need to do that for yourself.

Self-leadership is no longer a soft skill, it's core to your effectiveness. Your ability to stay grounded when everything is moving, to ask for help before it's critical, and to maintain momentum without burning out isn't just good for you, it makes you someone others can rely on and in a market full of uncertainty, that kind of reliability is gold.

But perhaps the biggest shift is this: in this disrupted, transformative environment, you will need to ask yourself and others better questions. Not just, "What do I know?" but "Where can I make the biggest difference right now?" Not just "What can I deliver?" but "How does this move the business forward, or help someone else succeed?" Not just "How do I stand out?" but "What would make me truly useful to this team, today?"

The professionals who are thriving aren't the loudest, the trendiest, or even the most technically advanced. They're the ones who bring curiosity, relevance, and emotional intelligence. They know how to zoom out and see the bigger picture, but also when to zoom in and get things moving. They show up with a steady hand when tensions rise. They know that trust is built in small moments, not grand gestures.

Because in this new era of ERP, fast-moving, deeply human, and relentlessly focused on value, your real edge isn't just your skillset, it's Your mindset, Your adaptability, Your presence and Your ability to stay useful, honest, and open in moments where others freeze. That's what makes the difference now. That's what makes you invaluable.

To better understand the human reality behind these shifts, I surveyed over 270 ERP professionals. Their responses revealed patterns that echo across the personas and trends described in this chapter.

Chapter 10: From Credentials to Contribution: What Value Really Looks Like Now

The following sources provide additional context, validation, and further reading for the ideas explored in section 2. These references reflect both the latest research and the lived reality of ERP professionals navigating today's fast-moving landscape.

1. **Gartner, “Composable ERP is the Future of ERP”, 2023.**
Gartner forecasts that by 2026, 70% of large enterprises will adopt composable ERP strategies to increase agility and reduce vendor lock-in. This reflects the shift from monolithic ERP systems toward modular, API-driven solutions that support rapid adaptation.
2. **McKinsey & Company, “The New Capabilities Needed for Digital Transformation”, 2022.**
McKinsey's research found that organisations investing in cross-functional skill-building and adaptive mindsets saw a 50% improvement in transformation success rates.
3. **SAP Insights, “Composable ERP: Business Agility in a Modular World”, 2023.**
SAP BTP clients reported up to 40% faster delivery of business functionality when using composable services and workflow automation, without touching the digital core.
4. **Forrester, “Outcome-Based Delivery Models in the Age of Agile”, 2023.**
Organisations using outcome-based teams and agile delivery models reported being 2.5x more likely to realise early returns on transformation investments compared to traditional phased programmes.
5. **Deloitte, “ERP Talent 2023: Redefining Capability in a Changing Market”, 2023.**
Deloitte's ERP talent report highlighted that 63% of hiring managers now prioritise adaptability, collaboration, and communication over deep technical specialisation.
6. **Accenture, “Reimagining ERP Talent Models”, 2022.**
Accenture's research shows the increasing demand for hybrid ERP roles blending business acumen, UX fluency, and platform extensibility knowledge — especially in lean delivery models.
7. **World Economic Forum, “Future of Jobs Report 2025”, WEF, 2023.**
The top three skills needed in digital transformation environments, according to the WEF, are analytical thinking, active learning, and emotional resilience — directly reflecting the shifts ERP professionals now face.

8. **Stanley McChrystal, “Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World”, 2015.**

McChrystal explores how decentralised, trust-based teams outperform rigid hierarchies in fast-moving environments — highly applicable to modern ERP delivery.

9. **Daniel H. Pink, “Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”, 2009.**

Pink argues that autonomy, mastery, and purpose drive high performance — aligning with your argument for self-leadership and meaningful contribution.

10. **Patrick Lencioni, “The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else”, 2012.**

Lencioni emphasises the importance of culture and clarity, both of which are critical in building high-performing, cross-generational ERP teams.

Section 3: Lives in Transition: Real Stories from the Heart of ERP Disruption

Chapter 11: Human Stories in a Disrupted World: Disrupted and Repositioned

Big shifts in ERP aren't just playing out in boardrooms or strategy decks — they're showing up in people's lives. In careers paused, reimagined, or quietly rebuilt. In the tension between what's expected and what actually works. This chapter gives voice to the professionals behind the projects. The humans behind the change.

These are not perfect CVs or neatly branded thought leaders. They're real people navigating real disruption — with all the fear, creativity, resistance, and quiet determination that comes with it.

You'll meet strategic generalists, quiet fixers, displaced stream leads, re-energised veterans, reinvented independents, and transformation leaders holding the line between chaos and progress — each adapting in their own way to a system that's still rewriting the rules.

Each story shows a different response to the same wave of change. Each one is a lesson in how careers bend and continue when the system around them doesn't follow the old rules. And beneath each one sits a deeper question: *How do we hold onto our values or redefine them when the map no longer fits the terrain?*

David – The Strategic Generalist

For those who don't speak first in meetings, but always spot what matters most.

While some professionals make noise, David, referred to as Dave, made momentum. Quiet, curious, and observant, he entered the ERP world with no technical background as a PMO analyst fresh out of university and a fascination with how things worked. He wasn't a functional consultant nor a developer and he didn't pretend to be. Early on, he noticed something few others did: there were too many smart people wasting time on avoidable tasks.

His first project was already behind. Spreadsheets ruled everything, meeting notes were half-finished, test cases were scattered, and documentation lagged weeks behind actual conversations. It felt chaotic, but strangely fixable. Dave started experimenting, feeding meeting transcripts into ChatGPT to auto-generate action logs, creating templates to speed up test scripts, and summarising process flows visually for non-technical stakeholders.

At first, it was just for himself, a way to stay on top of things, but soon, people started asking for his outputs. "How did you pull this together so fast?" "Can we use that in the team deck?" He was helping without calling attention to it. He assumed people would be glad, but truthfully, not all of them were.

Some leads saw his shortcuts as risky, "You're cutting corners." "We need to follow the proper documentation process." One manager even accused him of undermining the

delivery plan. Dave felt like he'd overstepped, naturally, he started pulling back. For a few weeks, he went quiet, sticking to safe tasks, letting the delays pile up again.

But then the Programme Director, who'd been copied on one of his summaries, asked him for a one-on-one. "How long did it take you to put this together?" Dave answered honestly: fifteen minutes. The director shook his head. "We've been waiting on that information for two weeks. Keep going."

That small moment changed everything. Dave leaned in.

He built a dashboard that automated weekly reporting. Co-created new sprint rituals that improved cross-team clarity and became a bridge between PMO, testing, and development, not because he had technical depth, but because he saw where things got stuck. He learned to ask better questions, he watched how senior stakeholders handled pressure, and when he made things easier for them to act, they noticed.

Now, Dave's been promoted, not because he made noise, but because he made things move. He's shaping delivery plans, coaching juniors in AI-assisted ways of working, and quietly becoming known as someone you want in the room when things feel messy.

"I thought I needed to be technical to be useful, but sometimes, what you really need is to make clarity happen."

Dave showed us how value can come from clarity, not noise, and how momentum doesn't always start with a title, but rather what happens when your career has range, not a clear lane. When you're not just outside the box, but when you've worked across all sides of it.

Ellie's story begins here, she's the kind of professional who doesn't fit the mould but keeps finding ways to fix what matters most.

Ellie – The Unlikely Architect

For those who never quite fit a job title, but always find a way to deliver outcomes anyway.

In an ERP landscape obsessed with clearly defined roles — functional, technical, architect, developer — there are professionals who don't slot neatly into any one box. They've moved across domains, industries, and disciplines, not because they lacked focus, but because they chased relevance. Ellie is one of them. She never had a perfect CV. She had something better: range.

Ellie didn't plan on working in ERP. She started in business operations, fell into a junior testing role during an SAP rollout, and slowly built a career around whatever needed solving most. She moved across defect management, UX, process mapping, even bits of integration — not chasing hierarchy, just gravitating toward the places where things broke and nobody else was looking closely.

For a while, this left her feeling adrift. Recruiters skimmed her profile and asked, "What exactly do you do?" She couldn't offer a tidy answer — just a long list of messy wins. Then a

former colleague asked if she could help with a high-profile S/4HANA rollout that was falling apart. The UX was clunky, the users were frustrated, and adoption was flatlining. “Come in and help us fix it,” they said. So she did.

What she walked into was a programme in freefall. Tickets were piling up. Processes weren’t being followed. The core delivery team was in damage-control mode, and the change team was being drowned out. Ellie wasn’t given a team, a title, or even clear scope. Just access to the dev team’s Jira board and a vague remit: improve adoption.

She started by listening. Sitting in on user calls no one else had time for. Watching how people actually navigated the system — not what the documentation said they were supposed to do. She spotted patterns no one else had noticed. In order management, for example, users had to toggle through three screens just to approve a request. It made no sense, and it was costing real time.

Ellie sketched out a fix. A lightweight, low-code UI tweak that merged those steps into one. Nothing fancy — just functional. She piloted it with two team leads on the side, under the radar. Within a week, processing time dropped by 35%.

That should’ve been a win. But instead, it triggered pushback. “This isn’t part of the scope.” “That’s not your stream.” “You need to escalate that through the proper channel.” Her prototype was sidelined. She was told to stay in her lane.

For a few days, she almost walked. The resistance didn’t make sense. She wasn’t trying to be a hero — she was trying to help. But then the users started emailing her directly. “Whatever you changed last week — it actually made our lives easier. Can we talk?”

So she kept going. Quietly fixing things others didn’t notice. Mapping workflows, listening to real pain points, building trust with the people actually doing the work. And over time, that trust spread. Her designs were picked up by two other workstreams. Teams that had been stuck started moving. She didn’t change the entire programme — but she changed its direction.

Six months later, Ellie’s prototype is part of the global template. The delivery team, once sceptical, now asks her to review high-friction flows. She mentors junior consultants in how to research user needs and explain fixes in business terms. She still doesn’t have “architect” in her title. But she’s doing the work — leading by relevance, not hierarchy.

She’s now building a lightweight framework for empathetic design in ERP, helping other teams see what she sees: that transformation happens not in the specs, but in the experience.

“I used to think my CV looked messy. But now I realise, it’s full of purpose.”

Ellie reminded us that transformation doesn’t always need a blueprint, sometimes it just needs someone who pays closer attention. But what happens when your story isn’t heard at all? When experience meets silence, and relevance begins to slip through the cracks?

That's where Ravi's journey picks up, he is a seasoned consultant forced to rebuild not just his CV, but his belief in what he still has to offer, facing a version of the market he never expected.

Ravi – The Rebuilder

For those who've been through silence, setbacks, and still showed up.

Ravi used to be one of the go-to names for Order-to-Cash. With over 12 years of SAP project experience and a solid track record, he rarely had to look for work, it found him. Clients came back, and Recruiters followed him. And he assumed, when his last contract ended, that something new would turn up within weeks.

It didn't.

One month became two. Two became four. Applications were sent, messages ignored. He was getting interviews, but not the right ones. "Too senior." "Too specialised." "We went with someone cheaper." He told himself it was just a bad market, but privately, doubt was setting in.

He'd been so embedded in delivery for so long that he hadn't updated his CV in five years. His LinkedIn was empty. His network had gone quiet, and for the first time in his career, he felt like a ghost in his own industry.

He tried everything, cold messages, job boards, and a new certification, but nothing stuck. He started to wonder if he was "past it." If maybe the shift to S/4HANA, BTP, AI — all of it — had left him behind. He stopped talking about his job search, even close friends didn't know how much he was struggling.

Eventually, he took a quiet leap and asked for help. Not from an agency, but from a peer group, other consultants, people who'd also felt invisible and through those conversations, something shifted. He realised his problem wasn't lack of experience, it was lack of story. He wasn't making his value visible, he was still talking like it was 2016.

Together, they rebuilt his CV. Not as a list of tasks, but as a collection of outcomes. Reframed his LinkedIn. Practised how to speak about the business impact of his work, not just the modules he'd touched. Slowly, his voice returned and he started sharing again. One post about project turnaround got 20 reactions and a DM from a hiring manager. It wasn't magic, just traction.

Three weeks later, he landed an interview, then a contract. Not for less, but for more. A client who valued his depth, his calm, and his ability to handle tension without adding to it. He's now leading an O2C stream with clarity and presence.

"I thought I was finished. I wasn't. I just needed to show the market the version of me that had evolved."

Ravi found his way back by reframing his story and reconnecting with his value, but what happens when the industry starts to treat your experience like a liability? When time served becomes something to explain away?

John lived that reality, and shows us what it looks like to step back into the ERP world not to catch up, but to contribute in a new and deeply meaningful way.

John – The Returner

For those re-entering the space after being made to feel like they were past their prime — only to find they still have more to give.

John had built his career over 25 years, SAP logistics, then programme leadership within a global rollout. He wasn't chasing the spotlight, rather laser-focused on getting good work done, but by his early 50s, something had shifted.

He started to notice he was the oldest person in most rooms. Recruiters began asking about his “energy for fast-paced environments.” He would apply for roles he was qualified for and hear nothing or, worse, get asked if he was “too experienced” or “close to winding down.”

He hadn't lost his edge, but the market treated him like he had.

At first, he tried to push through, he kept applying, kept trying to explain that he was still hands-on, still adaptable, but the silence took a toll. He started to wonder if the industry had moved on without him. He felt invisible, and that invisibility turned into self-doubt and returning felt even more impossible.

Truthfully, he hadn't touched S/4 HANA in real time, and he wasn't sure who to call, he saw job descriptions and didn't recognise half the acronyms, and quietly, he wondered: *Am I too late?*

Eventually, a friend invited him to an informal peer catch-up. Just a Zoom. Ten ERP professionals reflecting on how burned out they all felt. That hour reignited something. He shared stories, patterns and calming insights that others hadn't seen. People listened in.

That led to a mentoring invite, then a short advisory call, then a paid engagement, not as a delivery lead, but as a transformation sounding board. He didn't need to be on-site, or on-call, he just needed to show up with clarity and relevance.

Now, John isn't trying to get back to where he was, he's building forward from where he is.

He works 3 days a week, supports two major ERP transformations as a board-level sparring partner and helps one internal delivery team reflect on ways of working. He's not competing with the rising generation, he's guiding them. Not clinging to control but offering clarity.

He doesn't feel “behind” anymore, he feels needed, just in a different way.

“I didn't come back to catch up. I came back because I knew what I still had to offer and how I wanted to live while doing it.”

John's return wasn't about reclaiming status. It was about showing that depth, when recognised, still has power. What happens when you've always delivered and yet still find yourself in the loop of proving it, contract after contract?

That's where Emma stands, a freelancer who stopped selling time and started shaping her value into something clients could instantly recognise.

Emma – The Freelancer Becoming a Service

For those who've delivered for years and are ready to shape how the work lands, not just where.

Emma spent over a decade freelancing in SAP Finance and Controlling. She'd worked with top-tier SIs, led workstreams in the UK, Germany, the Middle East. Her name opened doors. Her references were solid, and yet, around 2022, something shifted.

Clients started asking for more "value clarity." Shorter engagements. Faster impact. Less discovery, more delivery. At the same time, she noticed something in herself, fatigue. Not with the work, but with the way she had to chase it. Every new contract meant another scramble: tailoring a pitch, proving capability, and learning the culture from scratch. She was delivering the same outcomes, but reinventing the wheel each time.

She kept wondering: *What if I packaged the part of my work that's consistently valuable?*

At first, it felt unnatural. She wasn't a marketing person, she wasn't building a "personal brand." She was a delivery consultant, but the more she looked at her past projects, the more she saw patterns. A recurring gap in finance data visibility. The same issues in reporting reconciliation, the same fire drills at month-end close. She didn't just solve those things, she had a repeatable approach, she just hadn't codified it.

So she carved out time between contracts. Gave the approach a name, built a 12-week offer that blended assessment, replatforming, and stakeholder alignment, created a short outcomes deck and began talking to past clients, not about availability but about outcomes.

And it didn't land at first.

One client said, "That's not how we buy services." Another asked, "Are you a consultancy now?" There were awkward Zoom calls and quiet months, but she stuck with it. Learned how to articulate the *result*, not the resume. Tested pricing, added a discovery workshop and started framing herself not as a freelancer, but as the owner of a focused capability.

Now? She's not chasing work, she's attracting aligned clients who want the result she's known for. She still consults, but only within her own framework. She's booked for 6 months ahead, with optional extensions. Her delivery feels lighter, clearer and more energised.

She's not a brand, she's not a startup, she's a professional with process clarity and a service clients can say yes to without a 30-slide pitch.

"I stopped trying to prove I was available. I started showing what I could solve."

Emma changed the game by codifying what worked, not to scale herself, but to make her impact repeatable. But what happens when you're not on the edge of delivery, but right at the centre of it? Where risk, legacy systems, and boardroom pressure meet?

Enter Andrew, Head of Transformation, leading not with slogans, but rather navigating tension, with trust, traction, and a deep belief in small wins done well, which build the overall picture.

Andrew – The Head of Transformation

For those who live at the intersection of vision, politics, risk, and renewal — daily.

When Andrew took the Head of Transformation role at a well-respected and recognised FMCG company, he knew what he was walking into. The board wanted rapid modernisation. The IT team was still nursing wounds from a failed CRM rollout, and his predecessor had been moved sideways after two years of executive stalemates. It wasn't a promotion, it was a mission.

He wasn't trying to be flashy. He wanted to make it land.

First came the ERP audit, dozens of systems patched together through acquisitions, no shared view of data, and Finance, HR, and Supply Chain were speaking entirely different languages. Stakeholders wanted simplicity, everyone else wanted not to get blamed.

He didn't start with a roadmap, he started with conversations.

He held 1:1s with every SLT member, asked what they feared, not what they needed, and walked the warehouse. Shadowed finance, ate lunch with developers, mapped pain instead of process.

What emerged was a plan, not for technology, but for business traction.

He didn't call it "transformation." He called it "stabilisation first." Defined a 90-day window where they would fix the most visible gaps, no massive programme name, just "small wins, fast." His board hated it. "Where's the ambition?" His CIO pushed back. "We need to be bold."

He held his ground.

When the first sprint unlocked real-time reporting for the CFO, everything changed. When the second sprint removed four manual steps from a key logistics flow, morale lifted. When a single workflow improvement was featured in a company town hall, the tide turned.

Now? Andrew leads the most trusted transformation office the business has ever seen. Honestly, he's still fighting fires, but they're smaller, contained, and he's proving you can lead change without burning down trust.

"You don't always need a 'transformation vision.' Sometimes you just need to get the room breathing again — then move."

These stories weren't shared for inspiration alone — they were shared for recognition.

Because behind every ERP shift is a human system: people navigating identity, relevance, and pressure in real time. Some are rebuilding after silence, while others are reframing what impact looks like. All are carving new paths entirely - this is true transformation.

Together, they remind us that transformation isn't just a programme or a strategy, it's a human process. Careers don't break cleanly or rise in straight lines. They adapt, stall, reconfigure, and sometimes restart.

This is what that looks like.

And for every person still in the middle of their own messy chapter, let this ring true:

You're not behind. You're not alone, and most importantly, your next move is closer than it seems.

Section 4: The Topics That Need to Be Addressed in this ERP Disrupted Landscape

Chapter 12: What Needed to Be Said: The Patterns Behind the Noise

After speaking to over 270 ERP professionals, digging into their career stories, and listening closely to what was going on both in the industry and in real life, some patterns stood out.

I kept hearing the same thing from capable, experienced people, not because they lacked skill, but because the world around them had changed. The old way of finding new opportunities wasn't working anymore.

There was noise, confusion and people feeling stuck, unsure what direction to move in.

So instead of jumping into "solutions" or quick fixes, I asked a different question:

If the market is changing, and the old rules don't work anymore... what actually needs attention here?

These four themes that came up again and again, and the more thoughtful, grounded response that shaped everything that followed.

1. The job market has changed, but most people's approach hadn't.

You could feel it in every conversation.

Some professionals had already recognised it, while others couldn't quite name it, but everyone I spoke to felt that *something* was off. People were getting fewer calls, hearing back less often, interviews that didn't go anywhere and getting ghosted, even after years of delivering great work.

In almost every conversation, they'd say things like:

"I used to just get calls," or

"Recruiters always came to me," or

"Not sure why it's taking so long this time."

People were still doing things that had once worked: tweaking CVs, chasing job boards, relying on agency lists and waiting for roles to appear.

But here's the truth: the market isn't the same, it has tightened, and the way people and organisations are finding new opportunities has changed.

ERP Professionals were relying on a version of career movement that had once made perfect sense. In the past, if you did good work, you stayed busy. Your career was shaped by stable job titles, trusted networks and the belief that good delivery would be enough to keep things moving.

And Truthfully, it was a model built for a different time, when delivery work flowed more predictably, when roles were defined earlier, and when good people could expect to stay in motion without having to explain themselves.

But that version of the world started fading, especially after 2020. The system had been disrupted, programmes got leaner, teams got smaller, the gaps were harder to define and harder still to spot. Things stopped being so predictable.

And that's where I began, not by fixing anything, but by sitting with the reality of that mismatch, recognising that the system had changed shape and asking what kind of career model might need to emerge alongside it. I realised then that we need a new approach to how careers move forward in this new reality.

2. Clarity about who they are, what they've delivered, how it connects to the present, and how to focus that toward future growth opportunities

Once people realised that the old way wasn't working, they often hit a wall. Some people felt stuck in frustration, while others just felt disorientated.

They began to understand *why* things were different and weren't landing like they used to, but they didn't yet know what to do differently, understandably because even when you realise the market has changed, it's hard to re-tell your own story when you are in the middle of it.

Many professionals had spent years focused on delivery, doing what was asked, stepping in where needed and fixing what was broken. Their company and roles changed, their titles slightly shifted, but projects blurred into each other, and they lost track of how it all connected.

So one of the most important steps I took was, before anything could be rewritten, people needed space to go back and look at what they'd actually built. Not from a place of self-justification but from one of recognition.

The aim wasn't to list out skills, tasks or dust off old project plans. The purpose was to start noticing patterns:

What kind of problems do I usually to solve?
Where have I made things better, even quietly?
What do people always come to me for?

And perhaps more importantly:

What parts of that still feel relevant in the way I want to work now?

Because once you see the patterns clearly - what you've contributed, what you're proud of, what kind of work brings out your best, and what type of work actually suits you, it becomes easier to shape what comes next - Not just in your story, but in your decisions.

And in a market that no longer guarantees movement, that kind of clarity puts you back in control of how you move.

It stops the spiral of reactivity, applying for roles that don't fit, chasing calls that don't come, tweaking your CV without knowing what you're really trying to say.

Instead, you make clear choices, you begin to recognise the kinds of work that makes sense for you now, the roles that suit how you work, the conversations where you know you can contribute, and the environments where you add the most value.

And from there, future movement becomes less about guessing and more about alignment. You start identifying opportunities that aren't just possible, but purposeful. You start seeing where your work fits into the future of the business, not just where you've been in the past.

That clarity becomes the basis not only for telling your story but for backing your direction. It becomes a filter for what to pursue, and a foundation for the conversations that will move you forward.

And you start making choices with more intention, and once that happens, your voice shifts, it's not louder, it is clearer, and you have much greater presence.

3. Sharpening the message and how to talk about it in today's market

Once people had the space to reflect, to look properly at what they had done, what mattered to them, and where they wanted to go, the next challenge became clear.

It wasn't about what they knew, it was about how to talk about it.

Some people hadn't needed to explain themselves in years, the work spoke for itself, and peers knew them. Word-of-mouth carried them forward.

But now, with uncertainty in the market, many professionals were being asked to introduce themselves again, to unfamiliar stakeholders, internal recruiters, automated systems, or even peers who didn't know their depth.

And when that happened, the words didn't always come easily.

They either reached for safe, generic language such as "hard working", "Great team player", or "experienced SAP consultant with strong delivery skills" Alternatively, they overcompensated, trying to sound more technical, more senior or more polished than they needed to be.

And neither of those approaches secured them a new role.

The people who stood out, the people who landed new roles, were the ones who could speak simply, specifically, and with relevance. Not selling themselves, not overstating, just clearly naming what they'd done, how they work, and where they're best placed to contribute next.

Getting to that point wasn't about writing the perfect headline or tagline, it was about learning to speak in the language of business outcomes and with business purpose, explaining your work in a way that made sense to real people, especially those deciding whether to speak with you, hire you, or recommend you.

That meant being able to describe a project without listing every skill or task.

To explain how they work with teams, not just how they manage processes.

To name real impact without needing to dress it up.

When the job hunter reached that level of clarity in how they talked about their work, it did something important: it made it easier for others to recommend them.

Managers remembered what they had done, peers confidently recommended them, and talent acquisition and recruiters could see the match faster.

It became easy to understand and harder to overlook.

4. Traction — getting noticed, getting interviews, and making real-world movement

When the message became clearer, things started to shift.

People who had been stuck for months finally started getting responses again, and roles that once felt out of reach were now being secured. Their momentum returned, granted not all at once, but enough to make success possible again.

This wasn't just about landing a job, it was about re-entering the market with a sense of direction and purpose.

They started being remembered for the right things, referred more often and taken seriously in conversations where they previously felt dismissed. No, not because anything about their skillset had changed, but because how they were showing up and what they had to say made more sense to the people around them.

And because they had already done the deeper thinking about what they bring, where they fit, and how they want to contribute, they were less reactive and far more intentional.

And that intention resulted in momentum. Importantly, they weren't waiting in the same old way, they didn't need to explain themselves in circles, and they weren't chasing roles that didn't fit. Conversations opened up, and the opportunities that came along were far better aligned and decisions felt easier to make because they were more meaningful, they were the right fit.

They were making clearer moves, with a clearer voice, and they were being met differently because of it, and this wasn't surface-level change, it was real structural change.

And once it clicks, direction returns, for the individual, for the team and for the work ahead, with direction, presence, and purpose.

Resources

Additional support, tools, and communities to help you move forward with clarity, confidence, and traction.

Strategic Tools

- **The SAP Standout Positioning Pack**
A practical toolkit designed to help SAP professionals clarify their value, sharpen their message, and gain visibility in today's disrupted market.
Includes: Outcome-based CV structure, LinkedIn strategy, positioning framework, and interview prep materials.
- **Capability Ladder Diagnostic**
Based on personas in Chapter 6, this tool helps you identify where you are today and what small steps can build your forward momentum.
- **Career Message Builder**
A set of prompts to help articulate your value clearly — whether in interviews, networking, or thought leadership.

Peer-Led Communities

- **The Change Makers Collective**
A growing network of ERP and transformation professionals committed to doing work that matters — with integrity, purpose, and collaboration.
- **Weekly SAP Catch-Ups**
Informal, real-time spaces where professionals can talk shop, unpack real challenges, and share working strategies, within an informal setting.
Not a webinar. No slides. Just humans sharing how they're navigating the shift.

Further Reading

- Gartner, Composable ERP is the Future of ERP, 2023
- McKinsey, The New Capabilities Needed for Digital Transformation, 2022
- SAP Insights, Composable ERP: Business Agility in a Modular World, 2023
- Forrester, Outcome-Based Delivery Models in the Age of Agile, 2023
- Deloitte, ERP Talent 2023: Redefining Capability in a Changing Market, 2023
- Accenture, Reimagining ERP Talent Models, 2022
- World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025, 2023
- Stanley McChrystal, Team of Teams, 2015
- Daniel H. Pink, Drive, 2009
- Patrick Lencioni, The Advantage, 2012

Working with James Stroebe

I work with individuals and organisations who are ready to step into their next chapter, with clarity, momentum, and direction.

Whether you're navigating career movement, leading transformation, or building capability inside a business that's growing fast, I'm here to help make that movement visible, structured, and aligned to what matters most.

Mentoring & Strategic Career Support

For high-potential professionals ready to sharpen their message, reposition with intent, and get recognised for the impact they bring.

This is about more than career advice, it's strategic partnership, tailored to your stage and your goals.

Advisory for Organisations & Transformation Leaders

I work with transformation leaders navigating complex environments, where delivery pressure is high, internal alignment is fragile, and expectations from the top are shifting fast.

This isn't coaching from the sidelines. It's embedded, real-time support focused on clarity, traction, and strategic movement, designed to cut through noise and build momentum where it counts.

If you're tasked with leading change and need a partner who understands the weight, pace, and politics - I'm with you.

Strategic Talent Engagement & Embedded Growth

I work with SAP partners, consultancies, and end clients where delivery pressure is high, expectations are complex, and trust is hard-earned.

This isn't about headcount. It's about strategic clarity, diagnosing where delivery risk sits, where capability needs to shift, and how to protect reputation while maintaining momentum.

Talent is just one lever. I advise on how to use it with intent, aligning people to purpose, removing noise, and supporting leadership when the pressure is high and the room is tense.

When the stakes are real, I'm not brought in to fill roles, I'm brought in to protect outcomes.



Stay Connected

If you're serious about direction, presence, and impact — let's talk.

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