Acumatica
The Cloud ERP

Evaluating Acumatica and Epicor Prophet 21: Considerations for Wholesale Distributors

A Solution Brief for Distribution Executives and IT Managers

PROS AND CONS OF INDUSTRY VETERAN EPICOR PROPHET 21 AND ACUMATICA, THE FASTEST-GROWING CLOUD ERP PROVIDER

Founded in 1967 with half a century of industry expertise, Prophet 21 (P21) was once the king of midmarket ERP products for wholesale distributors. But that all changed when Activant acquired P21 and later merged with Epicor Software. Today, P21 users struggle with complex workflows on an unreliable cloud platform, and a greedy ERP publisher interested more in profits than customer service.

Distributors love P21's robust distribution capabilities and deep industry functionality. But read customer reviews, and you will clearly see that P21 is fraught with issues stemming from a poorly executed move to the cloud and buggy code that leaves users without access to their system for mission-critical functions like order entry, reporting, and even printing reports! Product complexity and weak reporting strain budgets with inefficient processes and inflated customization projects.

Distribution is different today as businesses offer extended services and online sales with customer self-service. Modern applications like Acumatica rip market share from legacy applications like P21 as users clamor for adaptable and cohesive systems to better support customer needs to fend off competitors.

Acumatica provides distribution executives with a reliable and native cloud framework improved in each product release to take advantage of the latest technologies. Investments in accounting, business intelligence, distribution, and connected applications help customers to streamline operations, boost sales, and cut costs. Acumatica's unique customer bill of rights is a refreshing approach to how ERP vendors should treat customers, protecting business investments for their mission-critical business applications.

This solution brief examines several factors to consider when evaluating Acumatica and Epicor P21, including industry features, complexity, customer support, integration strategies, partners, and business relationships. Read on to learn why Acumatica offers strategic advantages over Epicor P21 for growing distributors who must modernize operations and evolve their digital transformation.

ACUMATICA: AN ETHICAL PARTNER WITH A FUTURE-PROOF CLOUD PLATFORM



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PRODUCT HISTORY

A History of Platform Changes and Disparate Acquisitions

Founded in 1967 by John and Dorothy Meggitt in Yardley, PA, P21 went public in 1994 with a management buyout in 2002. Early versions of the software supported minicomputers running UNIX operating systems. P21 redesigned the product for Microsoft Windows in the 1990s. From 2003 to 2004, P21 acquired Faspac Systems (fasteners), Turns by Dynamic Data Systems DDS (medical products), Systems Design (tile and flooring), Distributor Information Systems Corp. DISC (fluid power), and Trade Service Systems (electrical).

Activant acquired P21 in 2005, having acquired an extensive portfolio of legacy vendors themselves, including Eclipse (electronics), Silk Systems (lumber and building materials), Prelude Systems (automotive, industrial, and consumer goods), Systems House (automotive and office products), and other niche vendors in the automotive aftermarket and lumber and building materials (LBM) industries. Activant merged with Epicor in 2011.

Founded in 2008, Acumatica is a native cloud ERP platform. Instead of acquiring disparate ERP platforms, Acumatica focuses on a single ERP application with acquisitions of complementary solutions built within the Acumatica xRP development platform.

"With Acumatica, it feels like they bring 110 percent of what we need because they bring integration, ideas, and automation. Acumatica is bringing functionality to the small/medium business sector that was out of reach budget-wise four years ago."

– SCOTT STARKWEATHER, PRESIDENT, BOULDER CREEK STONE

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TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

An Unreliable Cloud and Buggy Product Releases Leave Customers on a Shaky Foundation

Epicor made considerable investments in P21 after the Activant merger. Epicor's modern ICE platform was extended to P21 with continued enhancements to core distribution applications with further development for light manufacturing and commerce integration. The pressure to migrate features from Epicor's horde of legacy applications into P21 negated a fundamental need to update the underlying architecture delaying P21's cloud offering to 2017. P21's move to the cloud was a public failure, with many customers afraid of moving to the cloud platform.

IT administrators struggle to maintain systems with numerous patches and various "embedded" third-party applications that do not connect to all parts of the system. While the cloud platform has stabilized, users still complain about system lags and buggy releases resulting in frequent system crashes and downtime.

- *"Our employees have used P21 in the past (desktop version) and loved it. IF we can get through the setup then it [the cloud version] might be good. But I have my doubts! It has been a nightmare trying to get setup. I get error message EVERY DAY just trying to get things worked out . . . Do NOT buy cloud version—too many bugs."* **SoftwareConnect.com, 2019**
- *"This software can be very glitchy at times. There are times where you can be in the middle of doing something and it will completely shut down on you and close you out of the application."* **Capterra, 2019**
- *"Any company that wants to move forward into the modern age of automation should never consider using this software. You will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to automate ANYTHING . . . The data is terrible and the software is SLOW . . ."* **TrustRadius, 2021**

Acumatica's ongoing technology strategy maintains a future-proof platform with every release. This approach is drastically different from P21 where applications are redesigned as needed when the underlying technologies become outdated. Acumatica receives high customer praise for usability and system reliability.

"Our success is ultimately tied to Acumatica's success, and they are building a strong and healthy product. They have a vibrant customer and development community and a product that's growing, not stagnant. We can really craft Acumatica to do what we need it to do."

– BEN ROTHE, GM AND CEO, PREMIER 1 SUPPLIES

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APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Rich Industry Functionality Plagued with Rigid Financials and Meager Reporting Tools

Users complain that P21's robust distribution applications are too complicated. They note that a lot of functionality does not apply to their industry. These features create complexity, making the system rigid and challenging to adapt to unique business requirements. Conversely, users and industry analysts praise Acumatica for ease-of-use, intuitive design, and flexibility.

Epicor's focus on adding industry features from nearly a dozen legacy systems and the cloud redesign prevented them from addressing core system gaps and usability issues related to accounting and reporting. Acumatica has several distinct advantages in accounting, including automated bank feeds, fixed assets, native payroll, deferred and recurring revenue, project accounting, and mobile expense management. Acumatica's general ledger, accounts receivable, and accounts payable applications offer deeper functionality with more flexibility.

P21 users despise the native business intelligence applications noting difficulty getting accurate and timely data and challenges formatting data or reports, inquiries, and dashboards. Acumatica's role-based dashboards, low-code and no-code reporting, and Generic Inquiries are far superior to P21. Dashboard, report, and inquiry design and modification are more intuitive with automation tools to streamline creation and modification processes.

P21 provides robust wireless warehouse features for picking, packing, shipping, and put-away with group and zone picking, inventory movement, and physical inventory. Procurement, sales, and inventory are full-featured with leading demand forecasting, automated replenishment, and customer and vendor managed inventory. Users like the native CRM app but complain about limited marketing automation. Acumatica offers similar warehouse management, order processing, and inventory features without complexity with native marketing automation and integration with HubSpot for modern marketing strategies.

Epicor also integrated several acquired technologies into P21 for document management; data analytics; configure, price, quote (CPQ); and human capital management. Most of these products reside on external platforms with varied integration to the core P21 ERP system. For example, customers complain that the P21 field service requires a separate log-in with little integration between the two systems. On the other hand, Acumatica provides a holistic business solution with native document management and robust business intelligence with deep connectivity between functional areas.

Acumatica offers value-added distributors a much deeper manufacturing suite with engineering change management, scheduling, material planning, product configurator, and other advanced features. Acumatica best serves distributors with construction or service requirements with a full suite of connected applications.

P21 also offers native rental management and service and maintenance features including call center management, service orders, contracts, scheduling and dispatch, preventative maintenance, and warranties. Acumatica's service management, equipment management, and connected rental management applications offer comparable functionality.

Discover Why Distributors Rely on Acumatica for their Success

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PARTNER STRATEGY

Dwindling Partner Channel and Limited ISV Applications for Extensibility

P21 used to have a vibrant reseller and developer community. However, that is no longer the case. Epicor direct sales teams historically compete with resellers. The channel is almost gone except for a few lingering consulting firms that offer P21 services and a handful of Epicor Kinetic partners who dabble in P21 sales. In fact, Epicor's Partner Directory includes only one VAR.

The P21 ISV community is equally barren. Epicor's strategy is to pick a single ISV solution to fill functional gaps. These hand-picked applications are sold on Epicor paper as connected applications. Other ISVs are shut out from the market without access to source code or even test systems to build and support integrations. Consequently, users are forced to use the limited ISV solutions available or invest in many one-off integrations where they actively participate in integration projects to assist outside ISVs with discovery, development, maintenance, and support.

As the fastest-growing cloud ERP product, Acumatica attracts the top value-added resellers (VARs) with more than 300 partners globally. Multiple VAR options allow distributors to collaborate with the best partners based on their geography and unique industry needs. Further, Acumatica's marketplace of connected applications includes more than 200 market-leading business applications to extend the application even further.

"Acumatica's unlimited user licensing model and cloud-based platform has saved ProPharma $120,000 annually when factoring in a reduced need for hardware, an IT staff member to support it, and less money spent on licensing costs."

– CHARLES SNYDER, IT DIRECTOR, PROPHARMA DISTRIBUTION

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CORPORATE GREED

Epicor, Driven by Greed, Not Customer Satisfaction

Epicor has a bad reputation for overcharging customers, cutting out channel partners, and limiting customer support options. Corporate culture curator Comparably ranks Epicor with a low net promotor score (NPS) of just five. NPS tracks whether a vendor's customers recommend using the product on a scale of -100 to 100. Few ERP vendors score above 10.

Inflated costs burden IT budgets, straining access to working capital. Unreliable customer service leaves customers stranded with inoperable systems or manual workarounds until the issues are resolved. This wreaks havoc on internal processes causing increased work, delaying information, frustrating customers, and impacting employee morale and confidence in the business system and data.

Epicor P21 customers voice concerns on multiple peer review sites noting greedy business practices:

- *"Very pricey and have to buy every module to get anything to work."* Capterra, 2022
- *"They try to charge us for everything and they charge a LOT."* TrustRadius, 2021
- *"In order to get many things to work you have to pay extra charges."* G2, 2019
- *"Pricing is very high compared to other ERP systems I have implemented."* G2, 2019
- *"Add-ons are too prolific . . . Nickel and dime pricing."* G2, 2019
- *"Epicor is pricey on custom fixes/solutions."* Capterra, 2019

According to Comparably, Acumatica scores among the top ERP vendors with a hefty 37 NPS (October 2022). Acumatica provides dual levels of support from certified channel partners and world-class customer support services. Acumatica Distribution Edition is a comprehensive suite of business applications, including core distribution and accounting applications with affordable options for WMS, commerce storefronts, retail, and service. Acumatica's customer-friendly business practices protect customer investments as outlined in the customer bill of rights, ensuring:

- **Consumption-based licensing that does not inhibit business growth**
- **Sustainable pricing with annual increases of no more than 3%**
- **ERP implementations without hidden fees**

"It's all about how Acumatica listens to you and how quickly they respond . . . I drink a lot of coffee and love the way I'm treated at Starbucks. It's the same with walking into an Apple store—you almost feel like you walked into Heaven—and everyone wants to help you right away. To me, those are two of the highest customer experiences you can have, and Acumatica is right up there."

– KELLY BURNS, ERP DEVELOPER AND FORMER COO M3 TECHNOLOGY GROUP

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SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Outsourced Customer Support Challenges

First-tier support is outsourced to an off-shore organization. User frustration is rampant with dozens of reviews detailing difficulty communicating, slow responses, and unprofessional technicians. This is just one example from a frustrated president in 2019 via G2.com:

"I would not recommend this software. The product is actually pretty good however the support is horrible. I can't stress to potential customers how bad it is . . . I am at a point now that I feel obligated to let other people know they are just too hard to work with. The cost and support is hindering my ability to grow as a company. It actually is at a point now that I am going to have to look at alternatives even with how much I have invested in the product."

Acumatica is dedicated to customer success. Customers access support through certified channel partners and Acumatica's direct support services. The Acumatica customer bill of rights ensures consistent, 24/7 customer service, local business expertise, and dual layers of support. Acumatica's Community is a thriving online forum where customers interact with each other, partners, and Acumatica employees to share ideas and solve business and technical problems.

G2.com 2022

☆☆☆☆☆ Aug 10, 2022

"Are there any other companies out there that support P21"

What do you like best?

There aren't many good things I can say about P21. It works most of the time. Until you update, that usually brakes something. Wouldn't know anything to compare it to.

What do you dislike?

Downsides?

Support is awful! Especially first tier. Takes way too long to resolve issues, can't understand them. (Very broken English) They give you articles instead of helping. For the amount of money we spent they shouldn't have to outsource the support to another country.

I am 55 years old, been in IT for 33 years. My current job is the best job I have ever had and I think about quitting every day that I have to deal with P21 support or consulting. It is beyond frustrating.

Updating the system that happens 1 or 2 times a month, always breaks something.

Their new website, Epicweb has got to be the worst to navigate. Especially if you are trying to customize something. They are telling me it will be several weeks before I get a response from someone, which will no doubt cost 5k to 10k or more to get help with customizing labels. Just as one example.

I've had multiple meetings with the higher-ups about the issues we are having and yet nothing has changed. They just don't care once they get your money.

EXCERPT FROM FREDERICK BLOCK, BRICK, AND STONE CASE STUDY

*After demos of the five remaining solutions, two final ERPs remained in consideration: **Epicor** and Acumatica Cloud ERP.*

"We wanted a solution that could grow with us and Acumatica, by far, seemed a better choice in that regard."

– STEVE SLAUGHTER, PRESIDENT/CEO
FREDERICK BLOCK, BRICK & STONE

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HEAR WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE TO SAY:

EXCERPT FROM KEVINS WORLDWIDE CASE STUDY

*Kevins' executives began . . . reviewing Acumatica, **Epicor**, and SAP . . .*

"For the investment dollars and energy, Acumatica showed a lot of promise . . . Acumatica is easy to learn, and I find it very intuitive . . . We'll be able to grow infinitely and the efficiencies we gain having a one-stop shop for everything from accounting to inventory to sales to purchasing and so on is rare. It's also rare for everything to work well without hacks or workarounds, and Acumatica works really well."

– CRAIG MATUSINKSI, E-COMMERCE DIRECTOR
KEVINS WORLDWIDE

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EXCERPT FROM YOUNGEVITY CASE STUDY

Youngevity looked at several traditional solutions such as SAP, **Epicor**, Microsoft Dynamics GP, Microsoft Dynamics NAV, Escalate, and a few others. Acumatica was the best solution because it offered the benefits of Cloud software along with an API that could easily connect with their existing Genealogy System.

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Acumatica: A Trustworthy and Innovative ERP Partner

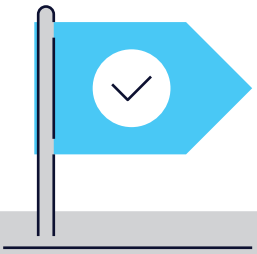
Epicor P21 is a suitable product for larger distributors with complex industry requirements. However, product complexity challenges users with multi-task workflows. Buggy software and dreadful technical support leave customers reeling with each release and product update.

Excessive costs for adding features and costly customizations inflate IT budgets, restricting working capital to invest in the business. Further, limited accounting and rigid business intelligence applications create barriers to information for strategic business planning.

Conversely, Acumatica provides P21 users with a comprehensive, modern, and intuitive suite of business applications on a reliable cloud platform. Legions of delighted customers rate Acumatica among the top distribution ERP applications for usability. Acumatica's ethical business practices protect customer investments with unlimited user licensing, sustainable pricing, and a two-tier, onshore support model with 24/7 customer service.

Simplify inventory management with matrix items, lot and serial tracking, and configurable unit of measure conversions. Boost sales with flexible pricing, promotions, and integrated CRM for marketing and sales automation. Commerce, point of sale, and field service applications extend Acumatica for distributors who sell online (B2B or B2C) or provide on-site installation services. Leverage automation, workflows, and document management to connect data and processes throughout all parts of the distribution business for improved customer service, customer retention, and growth.

Acumatica Distribution Edition provides ease of use and rapid integrations to connect modern technologies, including cloud computing, big data and analytics, robotics, and the Internet of Things (IoT), for streamlined processes and meaningful insights into distribution operations. Acumatica delivers an unparalleled experience for users and customers alike. It is built on a scalable and future-proof cloud ERP platform with open architecture and backed by the industry's best value-added reseller (VAR) network.



"If you want a modern forward-thinking ERP that's easy to implement, flexible, and a joy to use, put Acumatica on your evaluation shortlist."

– JO YOUNG,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ADDITIVE-X

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Acumatica
The Cloud ERP

Acumatica Cloud ERP is a comprehensive business management solution that was born in the cloud and built for more connected, collaborative ways of working. Designed explicitly to enable small and mid-market companies to thrive in today's digital economy, Acumatica's flexible solution, customer-friendly business practices, and industry-specific functionality help growing businesses adapt to fast-moving markets and take control of their future.

For more information on Acumatica, visit www.acumatica.com or follow us on LinkedIn.