10 Ways a Free NetSuite Implementation Can Cost You

Whenevaluating differentsoftware solutions, it may be tempting for organizations to consider vendors offering a free implementation. While the promise of a no-cost setup can be appealing, it’s important to recognize that hidden costs often accompany these offers. This ebook outlines how so-called “free” NetSuite implementations can come with significant limitations and unexpected expenses.



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1 Omissions from the Statement of Work (SOW)

Organizations considering NetSuitemaybeimpressed byits capabilities and what is demonstrated during the sales process. However, it is critical to review the Statement of Work (SOW) carefully, especially when a free implementation is being offered.

While some features may be included in a basic setup, most businesses require more than a standard, one-size-fits-all implementation. It is important to verify that the specific capabilities needed are explicitly covered in the SOW.

If essential functionality is excluded from the initial scope, those additions can come at a significant cost.



2 Unique requirements not addressed

Everyorganization operatesdifferently, and software requirements often reflect those unique needs. A mission-critical solution should be tailored to fit the business, not the other way around. Free implementations that come with limited scope rarely allow for customization or adjustments. As a result, specialized requirements are frequently left out.

Starting with a restricted, no-cost implementation and planning to expand later may appear to be a budget-conscious strategy. However, many organizations discover they lack the time or resources to complete a second phase. This often leaves them with a solution that does not fully support their operations.



3 Forced to conform to NetSuite's processes



Some businesses may assume that light customization or minor scripting will be enough to meet their unique requirements. However, NetSuite's own Professional Services documentation makes it clear that customers are expected to modify their internal processes to match the standard functionality of the NetSuite platform.

This means the burden is on the customer to adjust their operations to fit the software, not the other way around. The "alignment call" that is part of the NetSuite sales process is designed to align the business with their software model, rather than tailoring the solution to fit the organization.

4 SuiteApp Marketplace solutions are extra

For organizations thatrely on SuiteApps,which are applications or bundles available through the SuiteApps marketplace to support specific industry or business needs, it is important to understand the implementation requirements. Many of these extensions require core NetSuite to be configured in a particular way.

A free implementation is unlikely to account for these more complex scenarios. As a result, additional work may be needed to reconfigure the system to support SuiteApp integrations. These unexpected adjustments can lead to additional costs on top of the SuiteApp solution itself.



5 Integrations are extra

An accounting or ERP solution doesnot operatein isolation. It needs to exchange data and integrate with other systems already in place. For example, in healthcare, connections with electronic medical records (EMR) systems are often considered specialized requirements and are typically excluded from the scope of a free implementation.

It is essential to review all required integrations and confirm whether additional costs will apply. These components are not usually included by default. If a vendor says, “Don’t worry, we’ll take care of you,” that does not necessarily mean those services are provided at no cost.



6 Edition and/ or Service Tier upgrades increase costs

Itisnot uncommonforadditionalrequirements tosurface during the implementation process. These may include more users, expanded functionality, increased transaction volume, or improved integration performance. None of these elements are typically covered under a free implementation.

If upgrades to the Edition or Service Tier are needed, they may eliminate any previously offered discounts or price caps. In many cases, this can also trigger a need to renegotiate the contract, adding further cost and complexity to the project.



7 Substantial time investment from you – the customer



Free implementationsfromNetSuite often require internal teamstotake on the majority of the work. Whiletemplates and instructions are provided, along with a limited number of consulting hours for data migration, these resources may not be enough to support the entire process.

If much of the allocated time is spent learning how to use the tools or mapping data, there may be little left for actual execution or troubleshooting. Should a data upload fail, for example, it is likely the internal team will be expected to resolve the issue without additional support.

This can lead to delays, frustration among staff, and significant time pulled away from day-to-day responsibilities. The outcome may not be a complete failure, but the added stress and disruption can create costly and avoidable setbacks.

8 Project delays: Time is money

Anyof the implementationchallenges discussedso far can lead to costly project delays. While NetSuite customers do have the option to reach out for support, there is no guarantee on how quickly assistance will be provided. Prolonged wait times can further disrupt timelines and increase overall risk to the project.



9 Failed implementation

A basic,one-size-fits-allimplementation withlimited support and little flexibility for unique requirements carries a higher risk of failure. In contrast, a properly scoped implementation that aligns with specific business needs is far more likely to succeed. A failed implementation is one of the most significant hidden costs of a so-called free offering.

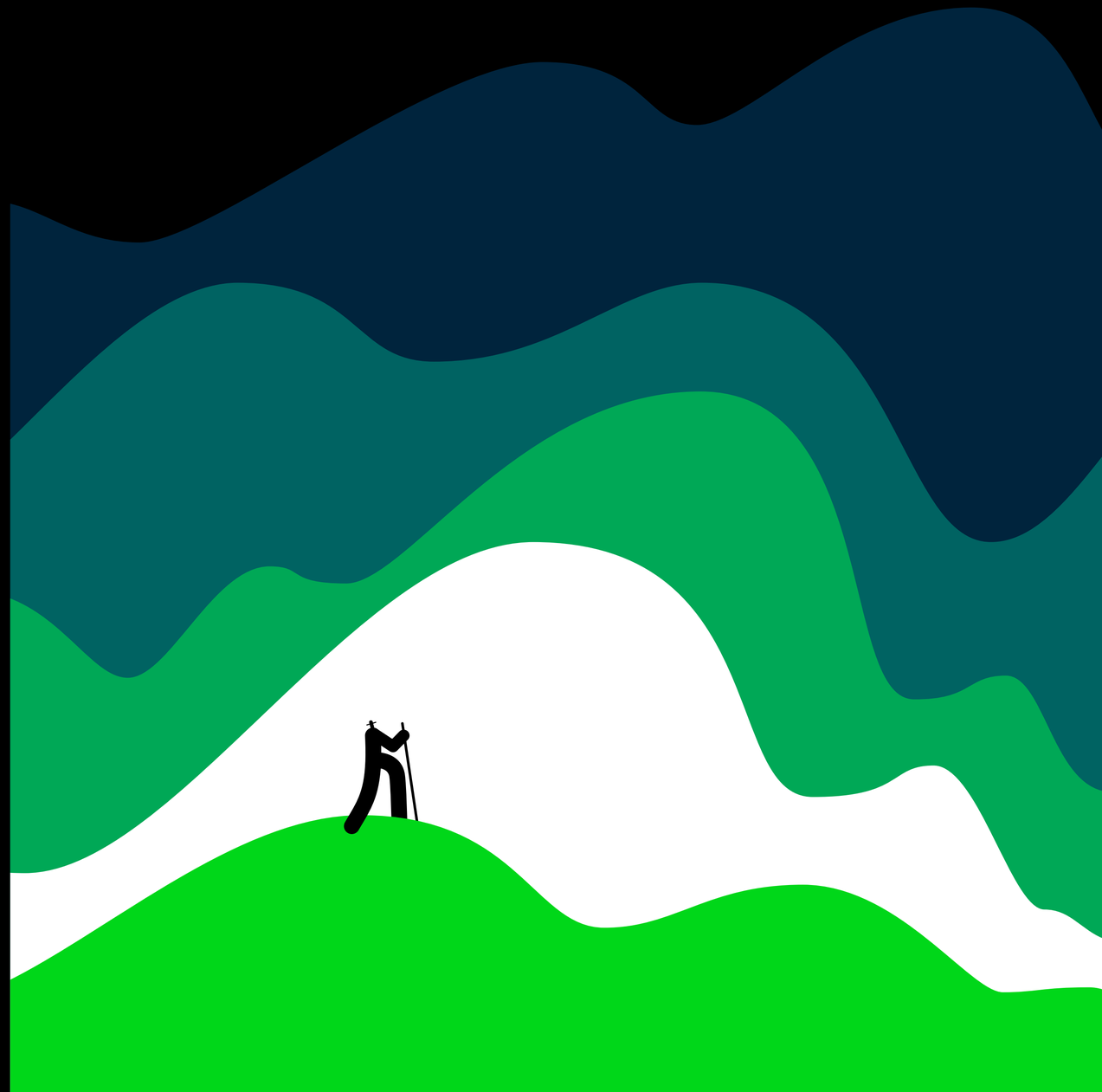


10 Project rescue fees

Thevolume of failed NetSuite implementations has led to the emergence of a niche market of firms that specialize in project recovery services. These providers offer to step in and fix broken deployments, but doing so comes at a cost. In addition to service fees, organizations often face further expenses to add essential NetSuite functionality that was excluded from the original free implementation.



Being informed is the first step toward making the right technology decisions. This ebook is designed to help organizations evaluate the real costs and potential risks associated with free NetSuite implementations, and to support a more strategic, well-informed selection process.



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