

# Should I upgrade my Enterprise Asset Management software?

(This discussion uses a Maximo upgrade as an example, but it is also valid for other EAM software.)

## Background

A majority of current Maximo users are still using version 4.x. A significant number also remain on 5.x. Relatively few long-term Maximo users have upgraded to Maximo 6.x (a.k.a. MXES).

Companies have stayed with their current version for many reasons. The chief reason is entropy; staying with their current product is seen as easier than upgrading or implementing a new software package. Complaining about the current version's shortcomings is much easier than making the effort to get something better.

Another typical issue is resource availability. Virtually every company is "running lean" with fewer people and lower available funds. With everyone already fully employed, whose time can be redirected to manage an EAM project/upgrade? Likewise, is there anyone in the organization who has the knowledge and confidence to guarantee a quick Return on Investment?

Other departments may not understand the value of a software upgrade. Operations may view the current system as fully adequate. Likewise, the Maintenance department may not see value in a newer version when their current product is under utilized. People from all parts of the organization may be concerned that they must be trained again and current reports will have to be recreated and data they rely upon could be more difficult to obtain (until they understand the new system).

Most managers are under extreme pressure to produce short-term quarterly results. It can be difficult for a Project Manager to get the resources to start the upgrade. It's even more difficult to get a commitment for the funding to required to complete the full implementation . . . especially user training.

Software and process upgrades are by their nature long-term investments that require high expenditures early in the process. Most of the money has to be spent before business benefits are easily recognizable. Past experience with software implementations and upgrades that didn't produce the promised results have taught managers to be cautious about starting another round of changes.

Likewise, executive decision-makers typically don't know much about maintenance processes, EAM software or the business benefits of proactive maintenance. They often relate maintenance and repair to their personal experience. For example; they are more likely to have made a surprise automobile tire purchase than to have practiced the tire rotation and tire air pressure monitoring that would have extended tire life and lowered the total cost of ownership.

Maximo administrators also face new technical challenges. Many sites have highly tailored screens and reports. They may also have unique customization which adds complexity to any upgrade. Because the upgrade program only uploads data these screens and reports must still be addressed. At present there is no direct upgrade path from 4x to 6x. Additionally, there could be data integrity issues which might require data cleansing before any upgrade can begin.

An upgrade may also require changes in how Maximo is administered. The change from Windows-based to web-based computing raises both hardware and user training issues. The older system architecture permits a non-technical department – outside of IT – to manage the system. But with 5.x or 6.x the technology has changed. There are new hardware requirements, new reporting software setups and user administration concerns. The screen design tool has changed, which means all 4x tailored screens will need to be retouched using the new (6x) application designer. Likewise, the reporting tool changed from the older style SQR tool to a more robust Actuate tool.

### **Given this background, is it reasonable to upgrade?**

In most cases the answer is still YES. Here's why.

Maximo 6.x has dramatically improved in functionality, ease of use and scalability. Its architecture allows for easier integration to other applications. Most importantly, the business case for upgrading is good. Systematic maintenance and upgrades of software should be viewed in the same way as equipment maintenance. Deferring cost typically decreases efficiency and increases the risk of failure. Getting too far behind on software versions can also leave a company with an unsupported product.