



How an integration strategy can help migrations move more quickly and with fewer headaches



The Double Edged Sword of the SAP S/4HANA Transition

Organizations that run their most mission-critical applications and systems on legacy, on-prem SAP platforms are well aware of the challenges ahead of them.

ECC (ERP Central Component) is scheduled to be sunset by SAP in 2027. Staring down a scheduled end date means new features aren't being built, so no new innovations are not being added. No IT department wants to start paying for support because it isn't otherwise available, which can happen if you wait too long to migrate off the legacy solution. Couple that with the reality that ECC and other legacy systems simply weren't built for today's demands and today's technologies, and the net is that migrating off these platforms is a pretty straightforward decision to make.

The other side of the risk are the rewards for migrating to S/4HANA. Built for today's cloud-centric world, S/4HANA promises more flexibility for today's ever-changing demands, as well as potential cost savings associated with moving away from on-prem hardware, maintenance upgrades, etc.

But migrating isn't easy. The ecosystem built to support and enhance an organization's core SAP platform - particularly at enterprise organizations - involves several disparate platforms and tools. The proprietary nature of SAP systems means integrating and migrating are challenging. For most organizations, this is a multi-year, multi-step, multi-solution, multi-million dollar process, with many unplanned roadblocks popping up along the way.

This paper aims to address some of the specific challenges you face on this migration journey, and introduce how the right integration strategy can both speed up and simplify the process - and in some cases make the migration possible at all.

WHY MOVE TO SAP S/4HANA?

For most organizations that run SAP ERP, it acts as the hub with a very complex and intricate set of spokes. The interdependencies are complicated. For those facing end-of-life of their legacy deployments, an attempt to move away from SAP altogether would be incredibly risky, and IT departments are understandably reluctant to invite unnecessary risk. The move to S/4HANA is viewed as a fundamental step on the road to digital transformation and the cloud.

The upside of S/4HANA for SAP legacy customers is in the flexibility the platform offers in the current macro-environment - including dynamics surrounding remote work and ongoing supply chain challenges. That flexibility comes into play in practice when an organization is introducing new systems - for instance as the result of a merger, or in entering a new market or introducing new products. Being cloud-based and engineered for today's environment often can mean both lower TCO and improved analytics post-deployment. In the end, organizations that run SAP view this migration as a major factor in realizing real benefits associated with digital transformation.

MAPPING YOUR JOURNEY TO SAP S/4HANA

The challenge in migrating to S/4HANA is in the concept of a “big bang” integration plan. Disparate systems that are intertwined within the SAP architecture ecosystem need to be upgraded to the cloud in concert with the SAP migration. Adding to the complexity is the fact that SAP’s proprietary offerings often don’t play well with third party systems and tools, and require very specialized skills focused on solving for the nuances of the various connections. This complexity adds to the overall migration timeline, requiring enterprise architects to engage in extremely detailed pre-planning, with uncertainty almost always making its way into the equation. As alluded to previously, when SAP is core to an organization’s enterprise operation, unplanned downtime is a risk no one can afford.

Digibee Field CTO Tam Ayers draws an analogy to home improvement, “Migrating off a legacy SAP system is like remodeling your kitchen, but first needing to remodel every other room, hallway and doorway in your house that touch the kitchen. Your project starts as a migration to the cloud, but all these other systems - WMS, CRM, etc. - that were connected to your on-prem legacy SAP instance, those things need to be connected to this new modern system on a modern protocol. They go through what amounts to a cluster of mini digital transformations around all those systems. It gets complicated extremely quickly.”

LeanIX, a German research organization, [conducted a survey in 2021](#) that illustrated how slowly this process is going. Of those surveyed about their SAP S/4HANA migration plans, only 12% said their transformation was finished. 64% were either still in the planning phase or were in the conceptual and preparation phase of the project.

Additionally, companies implementing S/4HANA are always looking for a comprehensive data migration solution. Most companies will need to perform data transformation as part of that process. Anyone who has ever done a system rollout knows just how much work that implies -- especially if the business processes and data models underlying those processes have changed significantly.

The requirements of every organization may differ. It is essential for an organization to execute an appropriate data migration strategy to speed up their drive towards SAP S/4HANA. It would be a challenging task to transfer the data into SAP S/4HANA, and therefore it is required to have a verified data migration technique.

Even with the promise of the benefits associated with S/4HANA and the risks associated with being slow in migrating off legacy SAP deployment, there are factors impacting the ability to move.

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- Digibee Field CTO Tam Ayers

INTEGRATION FAST-TRACKS MIGRATION

Data integration is a key part of the migration process. In order to successfully migrate to S/4HANA, you and your team should define a strategy to help migrate and integrate data from legacy to modern SAP technologies.

Setting an integration strategy can be overwhelming. To make this feel less intimidating, we've aggregated a tried-and-true approach to setting an integration strategy for a successful SAP migration. The recommendation is to focus on three areas: complexity, cost and risk mitigation.

When selecting an integration strategy and partner:

Reduce the complexity of the project.

Selecting a platform that is ready-to-use will help streamline the process. The platform should have the ability to support all applications and integrations, and be familiar with the technologies that are being implemented. Rather than selecting a complex system, the platform should be easy enough for a junior developer to use. Many integration platforms require years of experience to learn and master. Conversely, no-code integration platforms can wreak havoc on a business with too many citizen developers requiring access to valuable data and resources. If IT owns the integration strategy, selecting a platform that can solve complex integration challenges, but be easily taught is key.

Rationalize the cost of the project by optimizing labor use and system endpoints.

An integration platform and strategy shouldn't require the team to hire specialized resources. Select a platform that can be supported by the team already in place. Taking advantage of existing API endpoints is another way to make the migration cost effective. An integration platform that can reuse existing endpoints is key to driving down the cost of a migration. This also supports a reduction of redundancy in infrastructure costs, and has a positive impact on overall project time.

Mitigate risk by allowing new and old to coexist, peacefully.

Integration should be an ongoing process without a mandatory big-bang strategy. In defining an integration strategy, indicate which technologies should be migrated away from, and when. This can help reduce risk by sunseting technologies when the team is ready to completely migrate off of legacy systems.

Ensure integration security

Integration platforms should embed security controls and policies that must be governed by the platform's own connectors, which treat each integration process as an isolated container in an independent instance. Communications must be encrypted and subject to all sensitive data transfer rules and can comply with internal GDPR policies. A proprietary password vault that securely stores all credentials for the endpoints used in the integrations should keep this information inaccessible even to developers working on the platform.

Migrations take time, effort, and careful execution. With the right strategy and structure, your team can decrease complexity and drive faster outcomes. **Selecting the right technology and partner is key in a successful implementation.**

A PARTNER YOU CAN TRUST

Digibee has helped companies migrate to S/4HANA as [a trusted partner](#). Digibee has introduced a new and disruptive approach to SAP S/4HANA integration options,

an approach that has proven value with hundreds of IT organizations. We've got five-plus years of momentum, product refinement and customer successes.



250+
enterprise
customers



1.5 billion
integration
transactions
per month



5+ years
out of stealth



**An experienced and
impressive team of
product architects
and customer
support specialists**

Experience, firsthand, the power of Digibee, enabling complex integrations across critical systems quickly and securely. Sign up for a proof of concept using data you provide, or we can take you through [an interactive demo](#).

