

THE MAGAZINE FOR ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS AND ASSOCIATED TECHNOLOGIES

# ERP TODAY



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ERP  
TODAY  
AWARDS  
**2021**

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# Editor's Words



## What can we learn from the ERP project of the year?

At this year's ERP Today Awards, **Social Work England** was voted the best ERP project of the year by a panel of judges that included industry heavyweights, independent analysts and seasoned media commentators. It wasn't the biggest project the judges considered nor was it the most complex – so why did six experts agree it was the standout submission? In its simplest terms the project defied the history of ERP implementations by embedding a set of values at the core that put the wellbeing of the project team front and centre.

ERP has a poor reputation for many reasons; those who have invested in it rarely claim to have seen value. Those who have implemented it would rather not have to again. And, those who use it find work-arounds wherever possible.

If you work in the ERP industry as a project professional you will have been conditioned to accept the brutality of implementations over decades of on-premise delivery: weeks locked away in functional workshops, long draining hours of process documentation and endless technical configuration to fit with the client's requests.

If you are a customer that has implemented traditional ERP the relentless, soul-sapping nature of long projects is likely to have left you weak at the knees and promising never to go through it again.

Thankfully, the advent of cloud ERP has ameliorated many of the biggest headaches that come with ERP delivery. Most functionality comes as standard out of the box. Infrastructure is outsourced and often comes as a package from your vendor. Maintenance and upgrades are provided as-a-Service ending the need for upgrades. And, now that COVID-19 has forced their hand – miraculously, the SIs have discovered that you 'can' implement remotely and consultants' boots on the ground along with the associated expenses are no longer needed.

Despite these advances, there is still a huge problem with ERP projects and the impact they can have on wellbeing. All too often unrealistic expectations are set from the start which are compounded by the partner's reluctance to rock the boat. This sets off a train of consequences that continually ramps up the pressure on the client-side team until they reach breaking point.

I have worked inside some of the largest ERP projects and have personal experience of countless others. In far too many I have witnessed how the project bulldozes the team into submission which can lead to serious wellbeing concerns, and in some cases much worse. How many people do you know who have had to take a break from project work due to ill-health? If it's as many as I do then you will recognise the problem.

Social Work England, together with their partner **Embridge Consulting**, set about doing things differently by instilling values within the project that were not only aligned to the business objectives, but also to protect and support those who were at the coalface.

Ok, so it may not be possible to integrate all the wellbeing safeguards that were used in this project on a global rollout of S/4. And of course, the customer was uniquely aligned with the topic of wellbeing outside of the project. But that doesn't diminish the value or importance of the measures that ran through this project nor does it offer an excuse for others not to learn from and emulate their effort.

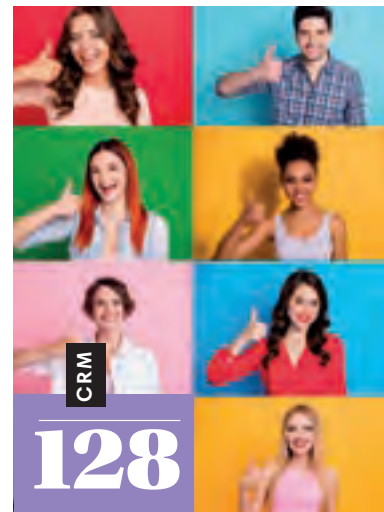
In addition to these measures, the project was a huge success. It was delivered on time despite an aggressive plan. It came in on budget even though the client resources were slender. Adoption has been excellent with the system already delivering the benefits that the project was predicated on. And above all else, those involved in the project enjoyed the experience, felt valued and will be great advocates for ERP projects in the future.

*Paul*

Kind ERP is good ERP.

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# NewsDeals&Wins



## ERP Today and partners support the NHS at unique awards event

**E**RP Today and its partners have raised over £100,000 to support frontline NHS staff at this year's Awards and Fundraising event, held at Ascot Racecourse on 23rd September. More than 1,000 ERP professionals and hundreds of NHS employees, joined by NHS leadership, descended on Ascot Racecourse for a day of awards, fun and fundraising.

In addition to raising money for the NHS, the event also recognised excellence across the ERP industry in eight award categories. **Social Work England** scooped the 'Project of the Year' accolade, **Unit4** won 'ERP Vendor of the Year', **Capgemini** triumphed in the 'Team of the Year' award, and **Yassy Shayesteh** won 'Young Professional of the Year'. You

can read about all the winners starting on page 33 and a full report on the event and next year's plans will be published on our digital platform in October.

Paul Esherwood, editor at ERP Today, said: "It's been a huge privilege to organise this event and we are immensely proud to have been able to support the NHS in this way. The ERP community stands as one with the NHS and we are very grateful for the support and commitment our sponsors and partners have shown. ERP Today has entered into a multi-year partnership with **NHS Charities Together** and we are already planning next year's event which we hope will raise even more money to support the wellbeing of NHS staff."

Ellie Orton, CEO at NHS Charities Together, addressed the attendees at the event, and said: "It's been an incredible journey for NHS Charities Together over the past 18 months and we are delighted and incredibly thankful to have the ERP Today Awards and Fundraiser dedicated to supporting NHS staff, volunteers and patients. We are facing a long period of recovery as a nation and within the health service. Our own **YouGov** research shows that over 55 percent of staff have experienced a mental health toll from the pandemic, with many reporting depression, anxiety or even post-traumatic stress. We are incredibly grateful for the support of ERP Today and the ERP community and look forward to working with you all again next year."

**G**oogle Cloud and Workday have announced a multi-year partnership to enable businesses to further their digital transformations.

As a Workday preferred cloud partner across industries such as healthcare, financial services, and retail, Google Cloud will help businesses run Workday enterprise applications for finance, HR, and planning in a public cloud environment.

Under the deal, Workday and Google Cloud will provide customers with greater choice to meet their specific business needs. Customers will be able to deploy Workday applications such as Workday financial management, Workday human capital management (HCM), and Workday adaptive planning on Google Cloud's infrastructure.

ERP Today spoke to Holger Mueller, principal



## Google Cloud and Workday announce global partnership

analyst at **Constellation Research Inc.** for his views on the announcement, and he said: "SaaS vendors need to go to the cloud and Workday is no exception. Given customers have automation and data gravity on certain clouds already, it is no surprise that Workday has added Google Cloud to its existing partnership

with **AWS**. Sooner or later, we will see the same with **Microsoft Azure**, effectively allowing a cloud neutral, 'Switzerland'-like approach to Workday when it comes to public cloud provider."

Chano Fernandez, Workday co-CEO, said: "The combination of Workday and Google Cloud provides customers with an

exceptional public cloud experience where they can take advantage of leading innovation services from both companies, helping to drive greater value from their enterprise investments. Together, we're uniquely positioned to deliver industry-leading cloud capabilities so organisations can enhance workforce productivity and accelerate their digital transformations."

Thomas Kurian, Google Cloud CEO, said: "More than ever, businesses are looking for increased flexibility, openness, and choice when it comes to where their data is stored, accessed, and managed. By running Workday on Google Cloud, organisations can adhere to commercial data requirements, while maintaining the enterprise-grade security, scalability, and performance they expect from a trusted cloud leader like Google."

## QAD is acquired by Thoma Bravo



ANTON  
CHILTON

**QAD** is set to be acquired by **Thoma Bravo** in a deal that values the business at approximately \$2bn. Once the transaction has been completed, QAD will become a private company with the flexibility to continue investing in the development and deployment of ERP and related enterprise software for manufacturing companies on an international scale. With the deal announced mere hours ago, more details will be made public in

the coming days. Anton Chilton will continue to lead QAD as CEO, and the company will maintain its headquarters in Santa Barbara, California. Chilton said: "Today's announcement, which is the culmination of a comprehensive process, represents a compelling opportunity to build on QAD's impressive legacy and strong momentum while maximising value for shareholders. Thoma Bravo has a deep appreciation for

the world-class team, reputation and portfolio we have built at QAD, and with their strong support we are excited to take our business to the next level. As a private company owned by Thoma Bravo, we will have enhanced flexibility, focus and resources to invest in – and capitalise on – our expanding growth opportunities, and help our customers thrive in an increasingly dynamic manufacturing environment."



When your assets...



## SAP TO INVEST €250M IN THE UK

**S**AP is set to make a €250m investment in the UK over the next five years as part of its growth strategy.

The investment will see the company launch SAP UK data cloud, establish new offices in London and Manchester, further develop the company's award-winning internship programme and increase spend with the nation's social enterprises.

The SAP UK data cloud will be a highly secure UK-based cloud offering, delivered using hyperscale infrastructure at UK data centres, making it suitable for the public and private sectors.

The initial launch will include the company's cloud ERP system SAP S/4HANA, its SAP SuccessFactors human experience management solutions and the SAP business technology platform.

SAP will also open two new offices in 2021 designed to accommodate new flexible working practices. A new customer experience centre in London will provide state-of-the-art facilities for customers and partners to identify and pursue co-innovation opportunities with SAP. Additionally, a new facility near Manchester, scheduled for completion later this year in Bruntwood, Alderley Park, will enable SAP to work and engage more closely with companies across the country.

Scott Russell, executive



it has an increasingly positive outlook for the years ahead. We are incredibly excited about this commitment, which will bring new services to market for our customers, greater

tal infrastructure minister said: "It's great to see SAP demonstrating its commitment to the UK and investing heavily to create new jobs and helping ensure long-term digital prosperity is evenly spread across the entire country. Tech is at the heart of our plans to power Britain's recovery full speed out of the pandemic and we are backing the sector with world-class infrastructure and skills training to make sure the UK is the best place to start and grow a digital business."

### A NEW CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE CENTRE IN LONDON WILL PROVIDE STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES

board member of customer success at SAP said: "The UK is a critically strategic market for SAP, and with its highly successful vaccine rollout

support for social enterprises, as well as an even better working environment for our colleagues and new talent." Matt Warman, UK digi-

## STRONG Q2 SEES RIMINI STREET ON TRACK FOR GROWTH

**R**imini Street has announced Q2 results, showing a 17 percent year on year increase in quarterly revenue to \$91.6m. Its active client count totalled 2,645 as of 30 June 2021, a year on year increase of 22.5 percent, with the com-



pany's quarterly billings at \$107.3m – a rise of 44.4 percent from the previous year. Seth A. Ravin, Rimini Street co-founder, CEO and chairman of the board, said: "For the second quarter, we executed well and remain on track to achieve our strategic

growth plan of \$1bn in annual revenue by 2026. We achieved record revenue of \$91.6m, which is above the high end of our guidance range, our revenue retention rate grew to 94 percent, and we achieved year on year billings growth in all three US regions."



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and your customers...**





MICHEL  
VERHOEVEN

## Inchcape chooses RISE with SAP to drive digital transformation

**Inchcape**, a global multi-brand automotive distributor, has selected **RISE with SAP on Google Cloud** to bring its business-critical sales, marketing and operations systems, and data to the cloud.

Inchcape partners with major automotive manufacturers in over 36 countries and currently runs SAP for many aspects of its business, from logistics to finance. By moving these

workloads onto Google Cloud through RISE with SAP, Inchcape will be able to join a diverse range of datasets into a centralised, secure and scalable platform.

Under the new alliance, Inchcape will become one of the first UK businesses to run SAP on Google Cloud as part of the RISE with SAP offering.

Mark Dearnley, chief digital officer at Inchcape, said: "The way people buy cars

has fundamentally changed over the last 18 months, so it's key that we're evolving in line with consumer expectations. Globally, car manufacturers rely on us to understand what cars people are buying and how they buy them, and at the heart of responding to that is data. Being able to harness RISE with SAP to capture these insights, build our cloud capability, improve employee experience, and deliver a service that is in line with what buyers want is absolutely crucial."

Michiel Verhoeven, managing director of SAP UK & Ireland, said: "Given the rapidly changing economic environment, businesses need to optimise business and operational models and innovate to be successful in the future. The automotive market is at an important crossroads as it is primed to take advantage of the digitalisation that is happening across industries. Inchcape is setting off on an exciting cloud journey, one where it can expect to significantly reduce tech infrastructure maintenance and operating costs, and improve financial

efficiency and employee experience, globally. SAP is the right partner to support Inchcape's mission to move to the cloud."

Dominik Wee, managing director of global automotive, manufacturing and energy at Google Cloud, added: "The global pandemic has accelerated the digital transformations of many businesses. To remain a leader in the automotive market, Inchcape

is accelerating the migration of SAP workloads to the cloud to gain greater agility, elasticity, uptime, and benefits from greater data insight and analytics capabilities. Technical

services from RISE, as well as migration services from Google Cloud and our partners, will help to eliminate technical barriers to cloud migration providing Inchcape with a foundation to digitally transform services. We're committed to providing a smooth path to the cloud for SAP and RISE customers, and we will continue to invest in infrastructure capabilities and services for them."

WE'RE  
COMMITTED TO  
PROVIDING A  
SMOOTH PATH TO  
THE CLOUD FOR  
SAP AND RISE  
CUSTOMERS

## ADVANCED HAS APPOINTED NEW CTO

**Advanced** has appointed technology veteran Narinder Sahota as its chief technology officer (CTO) following a successful 18 months for the company, during which time it has made seven acquisitions and launched 26 cloud products.

Advanced has invested £32m in R&D this year and Sahota will be responsible for managing the company's growing facility while also driving its technology strategy forward. He joins from **Salesforce**, where he held various CTO positions and, more

recently, was the European lead for its business transformation consulting practice. Sahota said: "It's been a privilege to work for two of the world's biggest IT corporates, directing some of the UK's most complex and large-scale technol-

ogy programmes and partnering with enterprises to drive transformative change. Now it's time for a new challenge, which is to work for a company that might be smaller in size but has large ambitions and who have had massive success to date."



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**A**gilyx Group, a global change-ready technology services organisation, announced that it has entered into a binding agreement to merge its UK operations with **Myriad Consulting**, an independent **Unit4** partner based in the UK. The collaboration brings together Agilyx Group's 20-year history in delivering and providing development solutions, with Myriad Consulting's 15 years of specialist experience in Unit4 ERP software.

The Group's merger with Myriad Consulting further strengthens Agilyx Group's core expertise and knowledge offering in Unit4 technologies in the UK. Agilyx Group CEO, John Catarinich, commented: "The creativity, passion, and experience of two deeply experienced Unit4 Elite Partners coming together creates a single, unified organisation

## Agilyx Group announces merger with Myriad Consulting



dedicated to the delivery of inspired solutions for our customers. The 'North Star' for both of our organisations is delivering inspired transformational change for our customers. Our people chemistry, skills and values align very well, so a collaboration represents a true force multiplier for both our teams and customers."

The new organisation will be known as Agilyx Group,

with Myriad Consulting's Harpal Mattu leading the company as the Group's UK managing director.

Commenting on the union, Harpal Mattu said: "We see blue sky opportunities ahead as Agilyx Group has a record of customer-centricity, delivery and inspired leadership and vision. Importantly, in coming together, this provides scale and opportunity to demon-

strate our deep expertise and solutions to customers in the UK and now globally. We've been working under a memorandum of understanding for several months prior to this announcement, and already our teams have been collaborating to deliver innovative services to Unit4 customers."

Beata Wright, executive vice president of global partner ecosystems at Unit4, sees this new partnership as an exceptional development for the Unit4 partner ecosystem in the UK and globally: "This is a powerful collaboration between two Elite partners who hold the highest tier of expertise and specialist ability in our Unit4 partner programme. I anticipate that our UK customers will gain a significant benefit from this union, with their deep knowledge, skills and records of success in customer delivery, by coming together as Agilyx and Myriad."

## SERVICENOW Q2 RESULTS SURPASS EXPECTATIONS

**S**erviceNow has exceeded expectations with its latest set of financial results, reporting Q2 revenue of \$1.41bn, up 27 percent from the same period last year. Wall Street had anticipated second quarter revenue of \$1.36bn.

The company reported subscription revenues of \$1.33bn in Q2 2021, representing 31 percent year on year growth, and current remaining performance obligations of \$4.7bn as of Q2 2021, representing 34 percent growth. It now has 1,201 total customers with more than \$1m in annual

contract value, up 25 percent year on year. Bill McDermott, ServiceNow president and CEO, said: "I'm so proud of our team's performance, significantly exceeding the high end of our guidance across all metrics, which is reflected in our strong full year guidance raise."

Gina Mastantuono, CFO at ServiceNow, added: "Q2 was a tremendous quarter, which showcased the power of our business model and our ability to drive a balance of growth and profitability. The team demonstrated exceptional execution and we saw strong demand across all regions and workflows."



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## XpertHR acquires Gapsquare



organisations by leveraging Cendex, its advanced, live reward-data solution. XpertHR will retain the trusted Gapsquare brand, and co-founders Dr Zara Nanu and Ion Suruceanu will continue to lead the business with the support of the XpertHR leadership team.

Scott Walker, managing director of XpertHR, said: "By combining Gapsquare's advanced technology with XpertHR's expertise in reward data, we can better equip employers to build a world where work is inclusive, where pay meets value and diverse talent thrives."

Dr Zara Nanu, CEO and co-founder of

**X**pertHR has acquired **Gapsquare**, a provider of advanced people analytics software which tracks pay disparity, pay equality and pay gap data.

Gapsquare provides HR professionals with actionable insights about their company's existing pay gaps through their flagship software FairPay Pro, which identifies variables for employee demographics, identifies the causes

of pay gaps, and proposes and tracks remedial actions.

Dr Zara Nanu founded Gapsquare after hearing the WEF's prediction that it would take 217 years before the gender pay gap could be closed. The company is now driving change for hundreds of thousands of employees around the globe.

With the addition of Gapsquare, XpertHR is well placed to address the pay equity challenges faced by

Gapsquare, said: "**Gartner** research indicates that over 80 percent of businesses globally are driven to take action around pay equity as the workforce is changing and younger generations entering the workforce are increasingly interested in transparency, sustainability and equality. By joining forces, XpertHR and Gapsquare are better equipped to support our customers' evolving needs and those of businesses

## ORACLE Q4 REVENUE BEATS ESTIMATES

**O**racle has reported its fiscal 2021 Q4 results, revealing total quarterly revenue growth of 8 percent year on year to \$11.2bn.

Cloud services and licence support revenues were also up 8 percent to \$7.4bn, whilst cloud licence and on-premise licence revenues were up 9 percent to \$2.1bn.

Fiscal year 2021 figures were also strong, with total revenues up 4 percent year on year to \$40.5bn. Cloud services and license support revenues were up 5 percent to \$28.7bn, and cloud license and on-premise licence revenues were up 5 percent to \$5.4bn.

Oracle CEO, Safra Catz said: "Our Q4 performance was absolutely outstanding

with total revenue beating guidance by nearly \$200m, and non-GAAP earnings per share beating guidance by \$0.24. The accelerating growth rates of both our applications and infrastructure cloud businesses this year drove earnings per share growth up to 21 percent in FY21. That is the fourth consecutive year of double-digit earnings per share growth at Oracle."







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**E**Y has announced the acquisition of Seaton Partners, a UK-based consulting firm specialising in **Microsoft** solutions. The move supports **EY**'s ambition to expand capacity, capabilities and market presence across Microsoft Dynamics 365 ERP.

Seaton Partners is a Microsoft Dynamics gold competency partner and has core offerings in transformation projects and managed services. From its base in the East Midlands, it employs 39 people and has more than 25 active clients.

As part of the wider EY growth strategy in the UK and Ireland to further enhance its tech services, the acquisition will bring a range of new capabilities and skills to support EY clients across retail, government, and automotive sectors. In the last 18 months, the acquisitions of **AgilityWorks**, **Frank Hirth** and **Pythagoras** have

## EY enhances Microsoft capabilities with Seaton acquisition

already helped EY teams meet the changing demands of clients.

Benoit Laclau, EY's managing partner for consulting in the UK&I, said: "The acquisition of Seaton Partners demonstrates the EY ambition, commitment, and dedication to supporting new and existing EY clients with their digital

transformations across the UK and the world. We look forward to welcoming the Seaton Partners team and clients to the EY organisation at what is an exciting

period of growth and development."

Adam Seaton, director and founder of Seaton Partners, said: "As we continue to build on our achievements over the last 10 years, coming into the EY organisation will enable us to offer clients further resources in enterprise resource planning and support them on their digital transformation journey to success."

"WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING THE SEATON PARTNERS TEAM"



## STRONG CLOUD DEMAND FOR SAP IN Q2



**S**AP has reported its financial results for Q2 ended 30 June 2020, showing cloud revenue growth of 11 percent year on year.

Despite this, SAP saw a 1 percent year on year decline in total revenue at €6.7bn IFRS (approx €5.7bn), and a 23 percent dip in operating profit to €984m (approx €841m), with software

licences and support revenue down by five percent.

SAP added more than 600 S/4HANA customers across the quarter, taking total adoption to more than 17,000 customers. The company's 'RISE with SAP' offering also gained more traction in Q2 following a successful Q1 launch, with SAP closing deals with more than 250 customers.

Christian Klein, SAP CEO, said: "We're seeing strong adoption of our cloud portfolio as customers select SAP for their business transformation. This is the third straight quarter of strong execution, and we continue to deliver unparalleled customer value through the strength of our platform and applications."





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## ServiceNow levels up capabilities with double acquisition

**S**erviceNow has made two new acquisitions strengthening its database credentials and adding new functionality to its Now Platform with indoor-mapping capabilities.

**Swarm64**, a leader in database performance, combines analytical and transactional database capabilities that support intelligent workflows, helping ServiceNow meet evolving customer demands. With Swarm64, ServiceNow will be able to help customers more efficiently manage data and execute complex, high-speed data analytics at a mass scale.

Expected to complete in Q3 2021, the acquisition is particularly important for ServiceNow's journey in becoming a \$15bn+ company, as Swarm64's technology will enable ServiceNow customers to query more data sources faster to drive better user experiences, business outcomes, and growth.

In the same week as the Swarm64 acquisition, ServiceNow entered into an agreement to purchase **Mapwize**, based in Lille, France. The intention is to build Mapwize's capabilities natively into the Now Platform and the Workplace Service Delivery Suite.



With Mapwize, ServiceNow will provide indoor mapping capabilities for employees as they reserve seats, conference rooms, workspaces and workplace resources from their desktop or mobile devices.

Mapwize capabilities will also help workplace teams manage and update floor maps based on usage trends and evolving real-estate needs.

Commenting on the Swarm64 deal, Joe Davis, SVP of platform engineering at ServiceNow, said: "Querying more data sources faster is a game changer in our efforts to make the future of business more productive and efficient. We're thrilled

to bring on board an outstanding team of database experts to help us meet the ever-evolving expectations and needs of customers, as we set our sights on becoming the defining enterprise company of the 21st century."

Commenting on the Mapwize acquisition, Blake McConnell, SVP of employee workflows at ServiceNow, said: "In the new world of hybrid work, the role of workplace services has never been more critical in creating great employee experiences. With Mapwize, ServiceNow will power the future of employee experiences by making it easier for people to navigate their work environment and access the workspace information and workplace services they need to remain productive."



### CLOUD BOOKINGS UP FOR UNIT4

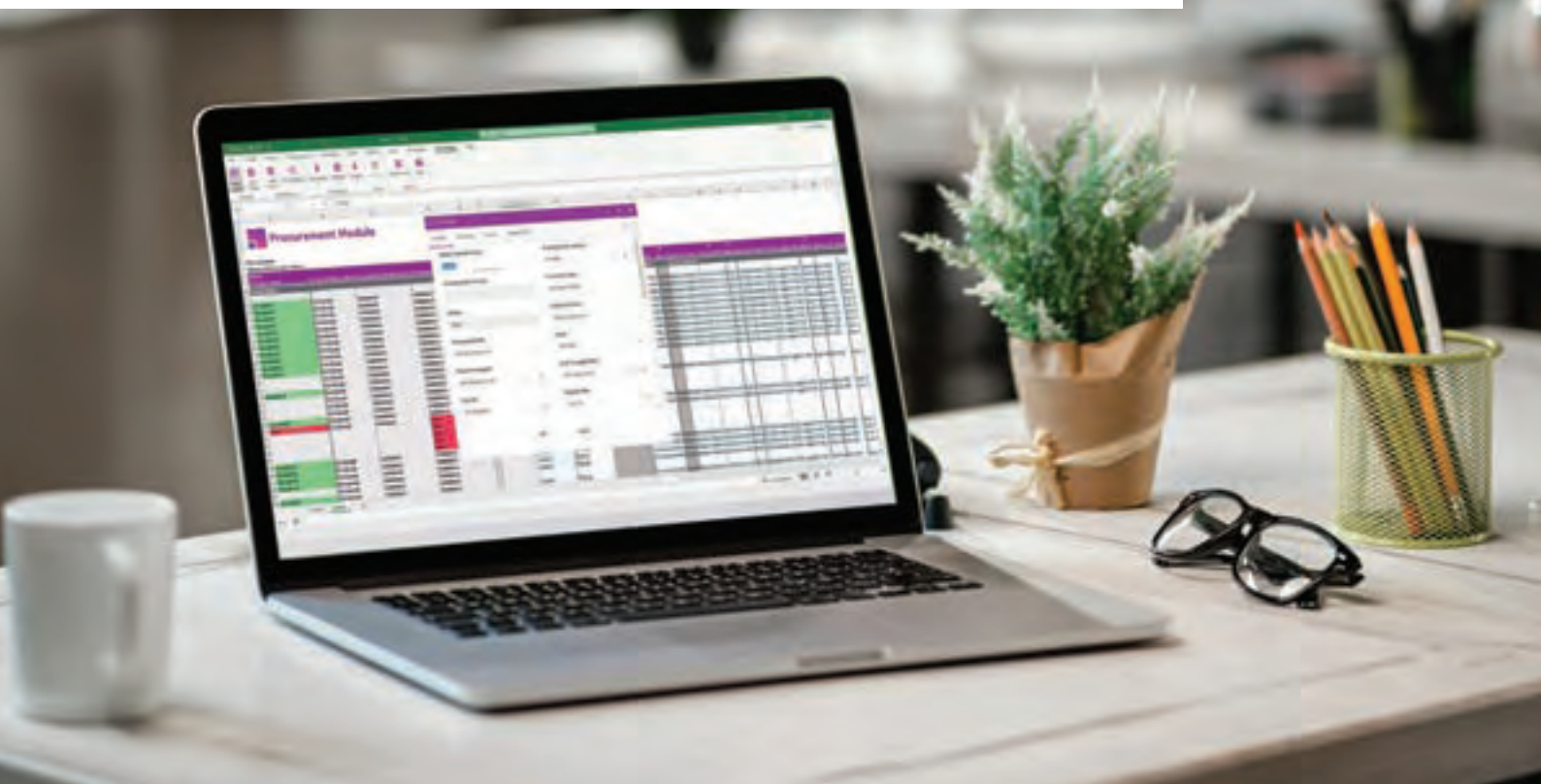
**Unit4** has reported results for Q2 and the first half of 2021, showing a 59 percent year on year increase in cloud bookings in Q2 and 40 percent across the half. Cloud subscription revenue grew 25 percent in Q2 compared to the previous year, but slowed from the 28 percent growth Unit4 saw in Q1. ERPx, which Unit4 launched into general availability earlier this year, now has 44 customers, including new names **Aurora Care**, **Birmingham Metropolitan College**, **Den Norske Krigsforsikring for Skib**, and **Lunar Bank A/S**. Gordon Stuart, Unit4 CFO, said: "Our H1 results demonstrate resilience and agility with a focus on driving growth through innovation and delivering customer value. As Unit4 continues to disrupt the market with ERPx, it remains committed to delivering an extraordinary people experience for its customers."





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## COGNIZANT ACQUIRES DATA SPECIALIST TQS INTEGRATION

**C**ognizant has announced the acquisition of **TQS Integration**, a privately owned global industrial data and intelligence company based in Ireland, to enhance its smart manufacturing offerings.

TQS delivers manufacturing data intelligence, global technology consulting and digital systems integration to help manufacturers accelerate their digital transformations, and serves clients across the life sciences, food and beverage and energy and renewables industries.

The deal will see TQS' data intelligence capabilities combine with Cognizant's core industry+ and digital competencies and use artificial intelligence and machine learning to collect, contextualise and analyse manufactur-



ing data. TQS will expand Cognizant's presence in Ireland, a hub for the world's leading life sciences manufacturing experts.

Srinivas Shankar, senior vice president and global markets lead of life sciences at Cognizant said: "With TQS, Cognizant not only becomes one of the industry's most comprehensive solutions for manufacturing 4.0 for life sciences – we also strengthen our data historian and analytics capabilities to help all our manufacturing clients harness the power of data intelligence to compete in new ways."

Máire Quilty, corporate managing



director at TQS added: "Our world-class team of data intelligence and technology consultants have built a tremendous track record in helping our life sciences manufacturing clients transform their businesses. Together with Cognizant, we look forward to broadening our impact to manufacturing clients in other industries who are looking to embrace industry 4.0."

TQS is Cognizant's fifth acquisition in 2021. Since 2019, Cognizant has accelerated growth in the areas of Internet of Things, data and analytics with acquisitions including Zenith Technologies, Bright Wolf and ESG Mobility.



## IFS' GROWTH TRAJECTORY CONTINUES

**I**FS has announced its financial results for the first half of 2021, showing an impressive 79 percent year on year increase in cloud revenue in its first half results. Software revenue was SEK 2.6bn (approx £218m), an increase of 20 percent year on year, whilst recurring revenue was up 27 percent year on year at SEK 2bn, representing more than 80 percent of

software revenue. Darren Roos, IFS CEO, said: "IFS is a technology led company with the single goal to make the latest technology advancements available to our customers in a way that creates value fast, has a low total cost of ownership, and is easy to consume and use. H1 is evidence that our strategy to focus on this and to build agility into our product operations is working."



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## AWS drives pandemic growth for Waitrose & Partners

**A**mazon Web Services' (AWS) ecommerce platform has enabled **Waitrose & Partners** to increase online shopping conversion rates by multiple points – a difference that the grocer says could, if sustained, drive millions of pounds more in sales per year, according to a new case study.

Since 2016, Waitrose has utilised AWS' technology to improve its customer experience and speed up website performance during the busiest periods of the year, such as Christmas.

When lockdowns hit across the UK in the spring of 2020, orders spiked as more shoppers than ever visited Waitrose.com to arrange for home delivery of groceries. Weekly orders doubled to 100,000 per week during the first month of lockdown, and at one point hit a record of 238,748. Over the year, ecommerce quadrupled from 5 percent to 20 percent of Waitrose's overall business.

AWS ensured Waitrose.com never went down, despite demand being 10 times higher than usual. The launch of its new infrastructure enabled Waitrose to grow during the pandemic, with

much of this growth attributed to improvements in the online checkout process and overall performance.

Andy Carroll, digital delivery and operations manager at Waitrose & Partners, said: "When the site was so busy that shoppers couldn't place orders, we could increase our AWS resources to enable customers to get to a landing page where it would give them some information. They weren't just stuck with a spinning cursor and a timeout message."

AWS  
HELPS  
WAITROSE  
TO ALWAYS  
PUT THE  
CUSTOMER  
FIRST

Using the AWS infrastructure, Waitrose was able to launch new features during the pandemic, such as capping the number of essentials like toilet paper or baby formula that shoppers could order, as well as build solutions to prioritise vulnerable customers – a government requirement for all supermarkets.

Gerry Ward, digital platform and operations manager at Waitrose, said: "Thanks to agile ways of working and quick turnaround on deployments, we could pivot quickly to respond to ever-changing customer behaviour during the pandemic. We were able

to extend the cut-off times for customers to amend orders, vary the length of slot horizons, and protect the site so customers could always continue their shopping journeys."

Andy Carroll adds: "Our teams can do amazing things now. AWS helps Waitrose to always put the customer first. Together we are continually improving the online experience, while also innovating and inspiring our customers in our digital offerings."



### QAD CLOUD REVENUE CONTINUES TO GROW

**QAD** has reported financial results for the fiscal 2022 second quarter, revealing that total revenue grew from \$74.1m in Q2 2021 to \$84.8m in Q2 2022, resulting primarily from increases in subscription and professional services revenue.

Subscription revenue grew to \$38.4m, up 24 percent from the same quarter last year, and accounted for 45 percent of total revenue – a three-percentage point increase over last year's second quarter. QAD recently announced that it signed an agreement to be acquired by Thoma Bravo for \$2bn. Under the terms of the agreement, QAD shareholders will receive \$87.50 per share of class A common stock or class B common stock. Given the pending acquisition, QAD is withdrawing guidance for the remainder of the year. Anton Chilton, chief executive officer at QAD, said: "During the second quarter, QAD continued to grow cloud revenue, while improving cloud and services margins. Excluding transaction costs related to our pending acquisition by Thoma Bravo, operating income exceeded our target."





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the world a better place are deep in our DNA.



## Precisely expands data management capability with Winshuttle acquisition

**P**recisely has announced a definitive agreement to acquire process automation and master data management software provider **Winshuttle** from **Symphony Technology Group (STG)**. The announcement follows the completion of Precisely's acquisition of data governance software provider, **Infogix**, earlier this year.

In Winshuttle, Precisely is acquiring comprehensive process automation and master data management software for managing, moving and validating large data volumes spanning multiple systems of record, including **SAP ERP**.

With Winshuttle having worked with SAP RPA since it was founded in 2003, Precisely will benefit from the company's deep expertise in SAP environments, as well as its extensive portfolio, which includes **Unilever, Philips, Kelloggs, Kohler, Lilly, Siemens, Maersk Oil, Eon** and **Centrica**.

Josh Rogers, CEO of Precisely, said: "Process automation is essential in delivering higher quality data so companies can be confident in their business decisions. Adding Winshuttle's process automation and master data management software, with its deep expertise in SAP environments, will enable Precisely to extend our portfolio of differentiated solutions and further our customers' journeys to achieving data integrity."

John Pierson, CEO of Winshuttle, added: "Precisely is a great fit for our mission to help drive better business through data and is an ideal home for our talented team. Precisely's leadership in data integrity and focus on trusted data perfectly complements Winshuttle's software portfolio and domain expertise. Our customers can operate from a

position of strength to get products to market faster, be more agile, and make more confident and timely business decisions."



**JOHN  
PIERSON**

Process automation is essential in delivering higher quality data



## SNP EXPANDS POSITION IN TRANSFORMATION MARKET WITH DATAVARD ACQUISITION

**SNP Schneider-Neureither & Partner SE** has signed an agreement to acquire 100 percent of the shares in **Datavard AG**. The software and consulting company, with around 170 employees, specialises in transformations and data management in **SAP** landscapes and generated total revenues of around €17.6m and EBIT of €1m in the 2020 fiscal year.

Datavard supports companies in migrating to SAP S/4HANA, modernising their analytics and data warehouse landscape, and carrying out mergers and acquisitions, carve-outs, and company splits. It also offers solutions for data lifecycle management, business intelligence and analytics, and cloud connectivity solutions that enable SAP customers to use SAP data in applications for artificial intelligence, machine learning and the Internet of Things.

The acquisition plays an important role in the implementation of SNP's platform strategy, which allows companies to generate maximum value from their data transformation using just one software solution. Michael Eberhardt, CEO of SNP SE, said: "Until now, SNP and Datavard have acted as competitors and partners in the market; in the future, we will use the newly gained strength from the merger of both companies to serve our customers and partners even more comprehensively."

Gregor Stöckler, co-founder and CEO of Datavard AG, will join the board of managing directors of SNP SE as the new chief operating officer. He will be responsible for the USA and UK&I sales regions, as well as globally for analytics, platform strategy, technology partners and partner marketing."





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**H**aving closed its acquisition of **Slack** earlier in the quarter, **Salesforce** has now revealed strong Q2 2022 results with total Q2 revenue up 23 percent year on year at \$6.34bn.

Subscription and support revenues for the quarter were \$5.91bn, an increase of 22 percent year on year, while professional services and other revenues for the quarter were \$0.43bn, an increase of 37 percent. Second quarter GAAP operating margin was 5.2 percent, while non-GAAP operating margin was 20.4 percent.

Marc Benioff, chair and CEO of Salesforce, said: "With companies

## Strong Q2 for Salesforce following Slack acquisition



and governments around the world continuing to accelerate their digital transformations, we delivered our fifth

phenomenal quarter in a row. Salesforce has never seen better execution or greater momentum. Sales, Service, Marketing

& Commerce, Platform, Tableau, MuleSoft and now Slack are all billion dollar-plus products delivering customer success like no other company."

Amy Weaver, president and CFO, added: "We had another remarkable quarter of top and bottom-line performance, making this an impressive first half of this fiscal year. We exceeded our financial expectations in the quarter, achieving record levels of new business, and saw strong demand across our portfolio. And we are excited to build on Slack's momentum with the power of our two companies now together."

## EQUIPMENT HIRE COMPANY CHOOSES INFOR

**I**nfor has announced that **GAP Group**, the leading independent equipment hire company in the UK, is deploying **Infor CloudSuite Equipment**, a multi-tenant cloud ERP system specifically designed for equipment manufacturers, dealers and rental companies.

Delivered via multi-tenant cloud on **Amazon Web Services (AWS)**, the solution will help increase operational efficiency across the group, streamlining the sales order process while providing access to the latest software updates.

With 146 depots throughout the UK operating across 10 divisions, GAP supplies more than

6,000 product lines to the utilities, construction and infrastructure sectors. The group is currently using Infor M3 on-premises to manage the service and rental of its entire product range and uphold compliance with vital health and safety regulations. Its upgrade to Infor CloudSuite Equipment will help deliver additional system security, scalability, functionality and reliability.

Chris Parr, GAP Group chief operating officer, said: "We are a dynamic and growing business, and Infor CloudSuite Equipment represents a proven, scalable, agile system that

can meet our requirements now and in the future. Infor CloudSuite Equipment will underpin our commitment to delivering exceptional, bespoke service to our customers, with over 1,200 of our 1,860 employees across the UK

THE SOLUTION WILL HELP INCREASE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

using the solution daily. We will be able to remain focussed on our core business safe in the knowledge that we're working with the most up-to-

date system features and functionality, which are tailored to suit the unique requirements of our industry, further enhancing and optimising our complex, multi-faceted operation."

Anwen Robinson, Infor GM and SVP for UK & Ireland, said: "More businesses are recognising the benefits of moving to the cloud for enhanced scalability and business agility. Infor CloudSuite Equipment provides the industry-specific functionality that equipment rental companies need alongside the flexibility to support ongoing business development. GAP Group's investment in Infor CloudSuite Equipment is a great example of this, helping the business maintain its focus on customer service excellence and strategic growth without having to worry that its systems are holding it back."

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# TRANSFORMATION PROJECT OF THE YEAR SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND

**S**ocial Work England (SWE) is a specialist regulator focussed on enabling positive change in social work. SWE is taking a new approach to regulating social workers in their vital roles. SWE believes in the power of collaboration and shares a common goal with those it regulates — to protect the public, enable positive change, and ultimately improve people's lives.

SWE is a relatively new organisation and the tools it had in place did not support its ability to meet strategic goals, provide audit compliance and, most importantly, support the growth and development of its staff. For this reason, SWE's project scope spanned across all of finance, HR, and commercial processes, giving the benefit of full end-to-end integration.

SWE chose Embridge Consulting to deliver a system which would meet their ambitions as a fast growing organisation and meet their operational needs as well as their strategic objectives. SWE wanted to deliver quickly, to start utilising these benefits as soon as possible and maximise the ROI. As SWE is a young organisation and felt its business processes were fairly standard, it decided that a very aggressive project timescale (six months for Finance, Payroll, HR) could be achieved by sticking as close to Embridge's standard Public Sector (PS) Industry Model as possible.

Delivering these benefits within this aggressive timescale (Oct 2020-April 2021) was a huge challenge and SWE was mindful of the impact on people's wellbeing. Working collaboratively with Embridge Consulting, the mental health impact on project team members was always considered. SWE utilised the 'three emotional regulation system' (Soothing, Achieving, and Threat emotions) which identifies emotions and the physiological impact due to release of hormones as

part of our natural response mechanisms. Through this, they managed the different trials and tribulations of the intrinsic project effects as well as the extrinsic impacts such as COVID on its staff members. SWE calls this the 'Survival of the Kindest' and had a weekly section during their project meetings to emphasise it and deliver tips and techniques. This was developed further to create the project values – "Remain in the present – Collaborate openly and honestly – Kindness to yourself then others".

This, combined with the technology, enabled SWE to collaborate remotely and gave them the success they needed to successfully deploy on time and within budget. SWE invested in a series of change management activities aimed to bring their audience along with them every step. These included weekly company presentations, communications via email, intranet, Yammer, demos, training courses, and drop-in sessions.

With the support of Embridge Consulting, SWE moved from an organisation that struggled to do basic activities with their finance system to completing activities in seconds. This has had a huge positive impact on people's working lives; every process is now simple. SWE has also cleared open audit actions and is well on its way to achieving its strategic goals. This was only possible by having a team that were empowered and were brave in their actions, by structured change control, collaborating openly, and treating each other with kindness.

SWE now plans to build on this success by exploiting the use of the reporting dashboards and workspaces available, and ensure the hard work developing the core system is realised in information available to make decisions, supporting strategy and people now and in the future.



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## HIGHLY COMMENDED

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL CARE

The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) is the department of state responsible for funding the UK National Health Service (NHS). The DHSC has been on the front line of the COVID-19 response, acting across a range of policy and procurement tasks, including the critically important supply of personal protective equipment, ventilators, and vaccines to the NHS front line.

In March 2020, the DHSC was preparing to implement a cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics (D365) ERP solution to deliver finance, purchase-to-pay, and HR systems, replacing a time-expired legacy solution.

As the pandemic took hold it became clear this D365 implementation was at risk, with the UK moving into lockdown a week before the scheduled go-live. The decision was taken to delay go-live, due to a belief that an ERP solution could not be deployed by remote working, especially given DHSC's lead role in the pandemic response.

The programme leadership took stock and decided to exploit the strong team ethic and partner relationship with Hitachi Solutions that had been built during the inception, elaboration, construction and transition phases. Responsibilities were clarified and new ways of working developed to enable a remote implementation by users working from home. Additional cycles of testing and data migrations were performed, operating under improved governance to compensate for remote working. This was achieved against the backdrop of DHSC leading the pandemic response with greatly increased procurement and finance activity, while HR appointed 4000 new starters over this period. A 'One-Team' reporting and governance ethos and structures enabled the group's belief in a common purpose to flourish. Meticulous preparations for go-live resulted in 99.23 percent successful UAT completion, whilst data accuracy of 99.997 percent was achieved.

Despite remote working, and the pressure on DHSC procurement, finance and HR teams to deliver DHSC leadership of the pandemic response, a successful go-live without major incidents was achieved, and due to close cooperation with the Cabinet Office procurement team, zero disruption to COVID-19 critical activity

## COMMENDED

WELSH  
WATER

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) supplies drinking water and wastewater services to most of Wales and parts of western England. It is responsible for providing support to around 1.4 million households and businesses and over three million people who depend on the company for continuous access to water. In total, it supplies nearly 830 million litres of drinking water per day.

Welsh Water's 1,000 strong field engineering teams play a vital role in ensuring great services for customers. Below ground they monitor and maintain a network of thousands of miles of both clean water and wastewater pipes, pumps and other engineering assets, keeping them fully operational. This highly skilled workforce is critically important to the way Welsh Water is viewed by its customers as they are on the ground and working within the local communities to make a difference.

Welsh Water's existing, legacy IT tools impacted its ability to provide high levels of service and achieve its ambitions or regulatory commitments as they were increasingly unfit for purpose and reaching end of life. Welsh Water asked its long-term strategic partner Capgemini to review its options and to define and deploy a transformational 'Digital Field IT' experience to achieve game-changing improvements in asset resilience, operational efficiencies and compliance with commitments made during Ofwat's AMP6 financial settlement. Welsh Water selected Capgemini for its mix of strong organisational change skills, intimate knowledge of Welsh Water's SAP estate, SAP Work Manager expertise and experience and strong agile delivery methodology credentials.

Welsh Water and Capgemini designed, built and deployed a cloud based version of SAP Work Manager across several go-lives during 2020, transforming the ability of 1,000+ engineers to access, capture and share data to boost the capabilities of its frontline field force teams, unlocking benefits for users, customers and the business. This new data for each asset has transformed DCWW's ability to plan and schedule its maintenance programmes much more efficiently and how best to deploy teams on the ground. DCWW now has a single, streamlined, easy-to-use solution at the heart of its field force's day-to-day operations.

## FINALISTS

ELECTRICITY  
SUPPLY BOARD (ESB)

**E**SB operates across the electricity market: from generation, through transmission and distribution to supply. In addition, ESB extracts further value at certain points along this chain: supplying gas, using its networks to carry fibre for telecommunications, developing electric vehicle public charging infrastructure and more. ESB's mission is to bring sustainable and competitive energy solutions to all customers.

A key component of ESB's Brighter Future strategy is a digitally enabled organisation. ESB implemented Project LEAP to upgrade its entire ERP platform and create a digital core that would be a cornerstone in the delivery of its strategy.

LEAP is the first of three intended upgrades to SAP's S/4HANA platform across the ESB Group. The upgrade future proofs ESB's ERP requirements for at least the next fifteen years. It was focussed on delivering transformation of business processes across finance (FMIS), payroll & HR (PHR) and networks' asset & work management (ARM & IWM). The project also implemented SAP SuccessFactors and SAP Concur, transforming how employees can engage in finance, HR, networks & supply chain processes with mobile enabled digital capabilities and enhanced and digitised self-service HR processes such as has learning and development and time and expenses management – processes that previously had been manual.

LEAP transformed the ESB employee experience across core business processes within ESB's finance, HR and networks, through automation, self-serve, and the delivery of training and user adoption across SAP's S/4HANA digital platform. Not only did the project deliver the strategic, digital and financial benefits it set out to achieve, it did so in a unique set of circumstances. The first implementation of SAP S/4HANA v1909 in EMEA was delivered through remote working as a result of COVID-19 mid-flight (March 2020 through to conclusion in May 2021). Its successful repeatable delivery model will be used as a base case for two further S/4HANA upgrades in ESB Group. An enhanced user and adoption experience is also already being embedded in new projects.

Project LEAP has modernised ESB's ERP platform which is now in sync with the modern digital environment in which it operates.

M GROUP  
SERVICES

**M**Group Services delivers a range of essential infrastructure services within the water, energy, transport and telecommunication sectors in the UK & Ireland.

'Fusion 2020', M Group Services' strategic business transformation programme, is designed to deliver '20/20 vision' to the business and enable future growth by replacing several ageing finance, HR and payroll systems with a single fully-integrated ERP solution. The Group engaged experts from Lumenia Consulting to facilitate a best-practice selection process, resulting in the decision to implement Oracle Cloud, covering ERP, SCM, HCM and payroll, with Evosys as system integrator.

The programme began in April 2019, with the first modules going live a year later in April 2020. A phased approach has since rolled out HR, payroll, finance, procurement and Evosys-developed CIS modules across the various Group businesses. The Group has transitioned HR and payroll processing for 90 percent of its people onto Oracle Cloud, while the Finance and Procurement modules have been deployed to approximately 75 percent of the Group. Following these successes, MGroup expanded its scope to include the Oracle inventory and projects modules and Oracle Planning and Budgeting Cloud Service (PBCS) for budgeting and forecasting. An integrated time and labour solution is also being planned.

The programme is already delivering significant benefits. Data which was fragmented across multiple systems and sources has been consolidated within the ERP, reducing risks associated with ageing legacy applications, data duplication and manual spreadsheets. Improved confidence in the data has already driven better-informed decision-making across the Group's businesses.

Fusion 2020 has enabled M Group Services to standardise and streamline key business processes. It now follows standard procurement and accounts payable processes, enabled by ERP automation replacing disparate processes and systems.

Modern, accessible and user-friendly interfaces such as Oracle's 'Employee Self-Service' toolkit has also empowered employees and managers to manage their own personal information. They can now submit and approve leave requests electronically, without unnecessary form-filling, paper-trails or process hand-offs.

The Oracle roll-out is scheduled to continue through to the end of 2021, and potentially beyond as further acquisitions and additional functionality are brought into scope.



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## TRANSFORMATION PROJECT OF THE YEAR

### FINALISTS

#### ABRDN



**S**tandard Life Aberdeen's (SLA) strategy is to deliver client led growth. In April 2021 it announced its intention to change its name to abrdn plc as part of a new, digitally-enabled brand for all of its client-facing businesses globally.

ABRDN's finance transformation scope consisted of a two year project to transform a fragmented, costly and aging finance function. It was replaced with a transformed global world class Onefinance capability.

The project commenced in February 2020, with a planned UK go live of October 2020. This was already a demanding timeline for a full transformation and systems implementation across a huge process scope. COVID restrictions were put in place the month after the project commenced. Not a single deadline was missed and the project go-live target of October was met.

By May 2021 this was implemented across the 180 entities within the UK business along with design and system integration testing completed across a further 90 entities throughout the other 26 countries that SLA operates in (APAC, EMEA and Americas regions). Those remaining elements of the project are on track to go-live in September 2021.

The fully integrated cloud base Oracle ERP and EPM system creates a significantly leaner organisation with high levels of automation and an intelligent data layer that will enable SLA to take the lead on insight generation. The system supports: procure to pay, order to cash, acquire to retire, record to report, financial planning and budgeting, allocations, master data management and a financial data warehouse. All of these provided a foundation for a new operating model designed across the finance function.

The benefits included new end to end automated controls, movement to a 'no PO no Pay' policy, providing detailed commitment and spend insight and up front approvals and new chart of accounts and a single source of truth across the ERP, EPM and finance data warehouse. There was also a reduction in the month end timetable - moving from 14 to 8 day close and new investment management vector revenue and cost reporting insight allowing ABRDN to report on their true business drivers.

#### STATE STREET



**S**tate Street Corporation is a US-based financial services and bank holding company headquartered in Boston with operations worldwide. It is the second-oldest continually operating US bank.

The State Street Phoenix Programme is a financial transformation programme centred around the implementation of Oracle Cloud ERP for the EMEA part of the State Street business. The vision for Phoenix has been to enable EMEA Finance to become a data-driven finance organisation through standardisation, resilient finance technology and improved controls. Accenture was selected by State Street as its implementation partner in early 2020 and Phase 1 of the Phoenix Programme went live in May 2021.

The Phoenix Programme has delivered business value in multiple ways. It has facilitated the implementation of new business processes, including procurement and expenses and supporting business restructuring. It has defined a roadmap for moving the rest of the business onto Oracle Cloud from legacy on-premise. Additional benefits include providing modern, leading practice business processes supported by a user-friendly interface, maintaining SOX and regulatory compliance via Oracle Risk Management and ensuring end to end financial controls meeting strict regulatory requirements for a custodian bank. It also provides enhanced financial insight and reporting, integrated, real-time financial reporting for the 11 countries that have migrated and daily reconciliations with core general ledger. An innovative 'interim' expenses solution allows State Street to make a controlled migration to its new (Oracle) expenses solution whilst continuing to pay employee expense claims. It has also allowed the decommissioning of legacy accounting platforms as part of a global finance transformation.

Programme Phoenix has unlocked a wealth of opportunity for State Street by using Oracle cloud SaaS technology as the basis to transform and enhance their business. State Street has already commenced the second phase of the programme, armed with the experience of their successful first phase. In addition to a new Oracle Cloud ERP platform for their EMEA business, phase 1 of the programme has set State Street up to realise even more business benefit in the future.

## FINALISTS

WARNER MUSIC  
GROUP

With a legacy extending back over 200 years, **Warner Music Group** today is home to an unparalleled family of creative artists, songwriters, and companies that are moving culture across the globe. Warner Chappell Music – which traces its origins back to the founding of Chappell & Company in 1811 – is one of the world's leading music publishers.

Employees have always been a huge focus at Warner, even more so during the pandemic. A key element was going live with Workday's digital learning platform to support its remote workforce and session offerings, and transform its employee experience.

Ongoing learning sessions delivered via Workday Learning provided support to employees and managers, including specially curated digital sessions on remote working, leading teams remotely and challenging biases during hiring and managing teams. Warner also offered 'Wellbeing Coaching' virtually for employees who require extra support, as well as a new caregiving leave to support those caring for children, elderly relatives, alongside flexible working options. Its employees took part in over 400 hours of piano, 100 hours of yoga and pilates, more than 50 hours of virtual collaboration for the Warner choir and 10 hours each week for its new guitar lessons.

Through Workday, Warner also conducted regular 'Pulse surveys' to check the sentiment of the organisation for virtual working, technology issues, transition back to office/hybrid working. 71 percent of employees are satisfied or very satisfied with the WFH experience. 89 percent of respondents felt they were either more (28 percent) or equally (61 percent) productive working from home. 72 percent of employees are satisfied or very satisfied with technology while WFH. Warner also instigated several initiatives to offer additional support, including Virtual Wellness Week, providing content on topics across physical activity, creativity, nutrition, family and financial and mental health guidance.

Warner focussed communications on Children's Mental Health Week by providing guides/illustrations and also gifted over 60 Happy Self Journals for parents to use with their children. It trained an additional 35 mental health first aiders since the pandemic started (with MHFA England) bringing its total number of trained MHFA to 55 employees.



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**WINNER**

# ERP VENDOR OF THE YEAR UNIT4

Unit4's next-generation enterprise solutions power many of the world's most people-centric mid-market organisations. Its state-of-the-art cloud platform, ERPx, brings together the capabilities of financials, procurement, project management, HR and FP&A onto a unified cloud platform that shares real-time information and is designed with a powerful, people-centric approach, so employees can benefit from better insight and become more effective and increasingly engaged. It supports rapid and continuous change while delivering individualised fit for customers at scale, delivering the right tools to unify the processes across their organisation, and connect their people.

Serving more than 6,000 customers globally, Unit4's vision is to build a world-class people-centric ERP business, with a purpose to deliver an extraordinary people experience for the 6,000 + services organisations it serves. The company's goal to accelerate cloud growth to >65 percent of revenue in three years, is supported by the announcement of a successful growth buyout by TA Associates for \$2.15bn.

Since Mike Ettling joined as CEO in 2019 the company has transformed across the board and opened new avenues for growth. 2020 saw Unit4 achieve significant milestones in its three year strategy to transform both the business and its technology proposition. Cloud bookings growth was 43 percent (YoY) for the full year and 82 percent (YoY) in Q4, with annual recurring revenue from cloud up 20 percent for the year. Cloud subscription revenue grew 15 percent to \$119.9m FY 2020. The company reported 18 percent growth in total bookings (YoY) for the full year and achieved its pre-COVID EBITDA commitment.

Last year Unit4 announced ERPx, the biggest product release in its 40 year history, and the result of significant investment to deliver a modern, modular multi-tenant cloud ERP. Its launch coincides with growing demand from organisations for more agile ERP solutions that

enable them to accelerate digital transformation.

Unit4's people-first approach means it takes every opportunity to build an inclusive and sustainable society. It says it strives to improve and enrich people's lives through all its business operations. Its social responsibility mission is guided by three pillars which are linked to the United Nations Sustainable development goals: education and employability; health and wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

It has defined its first set of commitments around people, planet and communities. Over the course of a year, these new commitments have enabled Unit4 to reach Bronze level on EcoVadis, the world's most trusted business sustainability ratings.

Its culture of freedom and ownership includes unlimited leave policy since 2019, and 1 percent time enables employees to have three days a year to volunteer in local communities. It also provides training on diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias and offers opportunities for everyone to develop skills and capabilities through training and e-learning. Its virtual learning festival focusses the mind on learning which could help its people to build resilience, new skills, and mental agility. Its Fit4U initiatives help employees stay fit mentally and physically, providing mental health support and dedicated app Planet.

Cloud software is already carbon neutral and will be 100 percent powered by renewable energy by 2025. By the end of 2021, Unit4's office consumables will be sustainably sourced and recycled, and it will introduce a recycling scheme for its hardware and electronic appliances. Starting in 2021, it is planting thousands of native trees in South America, Africa and Asia. Each tree contributes towards protecting local biodiversity. Finally, by 2021, the company will embed sustainability in the sourcing and procurement processes, enabling its suppliers to be socially, legally, and ethically responsible.

## ERP VENDOR OF THE YEAR

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

SAP



**S**AP is a market leader in enterprise application software, helping companies of all sizes and across all industries run at their best: 77 percent of the world's transaction revenue touches an SAP system. Its machine learning, Internet of Things, and advanced analytics technologies help turn customers' businesses into intelligent enterprises. Its suite of applications and services enables best-practice, end-to-end business processes across 25 industries helping business and public customers to be resilient, operate profitably, adapt continuously, and make a difference.

SAP's core strength lies in the business processes that are at the heart of successful transformation. Further, it has made massive investments in innovation and integration with the SAP Intelligent Enterprise Framework, which supports end-to-end processes, across all lines-of-business and industries. It is modular and composable in nature but pre-integrated so companies can start where they need, knowing that they can quickly adopt proven business processes infused with intelligent robotic process automation, machine learning and embedded analytics. At its heart lies a completely reinvented digital core – SAP S/4HANA.

The platform ensures companies can integrate their SAP applications with the rest of their estate, extend or build entirely new applications and analytics. This approach is enhanced by the new RISE with SAP offering which simplifies contracting and provides concierge services for business transformation and transitions to cloud computing. SAP says the Intelligent Enterprise Framework is the only offering on the market providing an integrated approach to recording, automating and analysing material, financial and environmental flows across the enterprise and its business partners.

All of this is built upon SAP's purpose to help the world run better and improve people's lives with sustainability at the core. It says its objective is to create a positive economic, environmental, and social impact worldwide. In November 2020, SAP was named the software industry leader in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI) for the 14th consecutive year. SAP is driving holistic steering and reporting as a key focus area. Through its Climate 21 and other programmes focussed on the circular economy, SAP provides offerings that help customers advance their own sustainability performance.



### COMMENDED

IFS



**I**FS technology is engineered to accelerate innovation, drive efficiency and control, and reduce costs while empowering businesses to tackle the burden of technical debt and embrace new technologies to better serve their customers.

Its customers manufacture and distribute goods, build and maintain assets, and manage service-focused operations. Organisations such as Carlsberg, Rolls-Royce and the US Navy turn to IFS for its expertise across the five industries it serves.

IFS has been through a period of transformation since CEO Darren Roos took the helm in 2017. But in 2021 it re-branded and re-positioned, launched a new product it says is unique to the market, and continued to put its customers first in everything it does.

The launch of IFS Cloud, which was the most significant in the company's history, brings IFS' depth and breadth of functionality into a single platform. Deployable in a modular way, on-premise or in the cloud, it not only supports a composable enterprise but, with digital innovation natively part of the product, it also accelerates digital transformation.

IFS is also committed to its people, and diversity and inclusion is a huge part of that. It appointed two women to its Board of Directors in the last three months, Jacqueline de Rojas, and Hanna Jacobsson. Additionally, last year IFS launched a mentoring scheme called 'Challenger Women' to maintain the momentum of women in leadership roles within IFS. At IFS, 35 percent of staff are female, 10 percent above the tech industry average. It is also the second largest employer in the Sri Lankan IT sector where 40 percent of employees are female. It has also introduced programmes such as nursery provision, transport to/from remote locations and split hours that support the female talent pool.

Elsewhere IFS launched its multi-year sustainability initiative in April 2021. This outlines its commitment to diversity and inclusion reducing its carbon footprint, encouraging its employees to give back to their communities with a free CSR volunteer day and fundraising for the IFS Foundation. It also appointed Lewis Pugh, the UN Patron of the Oceans as Sustainability Ambassador. It has also launched the IFS Change for Good Sustainability Awards to recognise sustainability excellence within its customer community, at both a business and individual level.



## FINALISTS

## FINANCIALFORCE



**F**inancialForce accelerates business growth with customer-centric ERP, Professional Services Automation (PSA), and Customer Success Operations solutions. FinancialForce enables organisations to see their customers in full colour, enabling them to unlock insights, deliver innovative experiences, run a digital business, and achieve agility and resilience.

Since its founding in 2009 as one of the first ISVs on the Salesforce platform, FinancialForce has a strong history of innovation, bringing to market ERP Cloud and Professional Services Cloud offerings that are now used by 1,400 organisations worldwide. During COVID-19, FinancialForce helped customers experiencing economic strains or requirements to scale for remote environments. The company also introduced Risk Tracker, a new free technology for the Salesforce Community through AppExchange, to help organisations identify and manage risks from disparate data sources that otherwise might be missed.

Here's what some customers say about FinancialForce: "With real-time tracking of projects and clear visibility into monthly P&L, FinancialForce has given us a new level of insight into our performance." - Daniel Isserow, Head of Finance, Willow.

"By better capturing customer data, we've boosted organisational efficiencies and saved approximately 38 hours per week. Plus, it's brilliant having a single-entry point for various currencies." - Beulah D'Souza, Senior Finance Manager, George Clinical.

FinancialForce's core values centre on inclusion, diversity, and giving back to the community. Through FinancialForce4Good and FinancialForce4Inclusion programmes, employees have led workshops on issues affecting Black, Asian, LBGTQ, and other communities, activities addressing unconscious biases and how to be allies, and support for charities.

A recent 'Boycott Your Bed' campaign in the UK raised awareness for impoverished children, youth, and families who don't always have a bed to sleep in.

EMEA General Manager Stewart Monk serves on Salesforce's Ecosystem Equality Partner Advisory Board, advising other ISV Salesforce partners based on his experience mentoring members of the LGBTQ community in tech, and supporting diversity in hiring. Employees are given paid days off for individual FF4Good and FF4Inclusion activities, actively sharing their ideas and experiences with other employees.

## INFOR



**I**nfor is a global enterprise that provides software products for every aspect of a business. Infor builds complete industry suites in the cloud and deploys technology that puts the user experience first, leverages data science and integrates easily into existing systems. Over 67,000 organisations worldwide rely on Infor to help overcome market disruptions and achieve business-wide digital transformation. The latest Infor strategic partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS) provides customers with a sustainable operational advantage across multiple industries.

Not one-size-fits-all, Infor's portfolio of enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions support specific industries, from process and discrete manufacturing to public sector, retail, and healthcare. Infor CloudSuite software has ERP at its core—ready for the last mile, and ready to help SMBs and enterprise organisations take advantage of the business benefits of cloud. Infor CloudSuite solutions can be implemented without need of any customization. Plus, all the resources and equipment needed to get up and running are handled by AWS. This enables much faster implementation time than with typical on-premises solutions.

Because Infor supports compliance at the application level and AWS maintains high compliance standards for the underlying infrastructure, Infor CloudSuite customers gain an advantage in complying with detailed industry standards, such as ITAR and HIPAA.

Infor CloudSuite also helps ensure business continuity in the face of the most challenging disaster recovery scenarios. Its solutions can be distributed globally across AWS data centres, plus AWS offers sophisticated global failover capabilities.

Elsewhere Infor says it aims to help companies implement sustainability programmes and encourage traceability. For example, its Go Green initiative educates customers on how its software can help them achieve their sustainability goals. This includes reducing energy consumption through Enterprise Asset Management (EAM), decreasing carbon footprint through Supply Chain Management (SCM) and using Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) to minimise landfill waste and the environmental impact of product manufacturing.



SPONSORED BY





**WINNER**

# TRANSFORMATION TEAM OF THE YEAR CAPGEMINI

**C**apgemini is a global leader in consulting, digital transformation, technology and engineering services. With more than 270,000 employees in nearly 50 countries with 2020 revenues of €16 bn, it addresses the breadth of clients' opportunities across cloud, digital and platforms.

It works with all ERP solutions and associated technologies such as sales, digital marketing, analytics and PLM. It has delivered and presented roadmaps and business cases in a variety of sectors including engineering, retail, consumer products, government, and utilities. Capgemini also sees the value that clients have gained from its proposals through its 'Golden Thread' woven into delivery and benefits realisation.

Capgemini's ERP Advisory Services advises clients how to transform their ERP landscape to maximise business benefits and to realise their corporate ambition. Its five-step approach provides the framework and tools for innovation, collaboration, benefits and transformation. It calls upon process, analytics and strategy experts from across the Capgemini group and from the wider network.

Capgemini believes "consulting is less about the individual than about the coalitions and connections among them". It connects technology and business and creates coalitions of innovators, experts and leaders to unlock value for clients.

Unlocking value is essential because the concept of ERP is at a turning point for all stakeholders – customer IT, customer businesses and the ERP vendors. Many IT functions spent a small fortune on their ERP systems in the past 25 years and are now turning their attention to services such as digital platforms, web-services, analytics, machine learning and automation. But they have realised that such requirements demand changes to their ERP solution but require help to identify the scale of change.

Secondly, ERP responds to businesses' drive for agility. However, most solutions are too bespoke and take too long to respond to new requirements – COVID proved that more than ever. So now, rather than demand more and more specific requirements, business users are understanding (finally) the benefit from driving to standard and to simplicity. This involves a rethink.

Thirdly the ERP vendors are busy promoting the next generation of their solutions and more importantly their licence model to compete with the hyperscalers and the SaaS providers and to offer a wider suite of solutions. We are at a turning point.

It helped one highly recognisable UK brand re-platform their web ordering system to make it more intuitive and more joined up with operations. This will make it easier for them to satisfy customers, to forecast demand and to manage supply.

Clients also request help to explain to the business the benefits from driving to a standard core ERP with specific hyperscaler applications around it, to enable the flexibility and responsiveness they now crave.

Capgemini is using its digital change platform at many international organisations to unlock the value of the new digital solutions, rather than reverting to old ways of working. Additionally, clients ask it to help consider whether they should start again with a new ERP solution. Capgemini analyses the future to arrive at the most appropriate answer for that organisation and what its leaders are setting out to achieve. In one organisation it proved, through an examination of their international operations, that only through a single ERP could they achieve the operating model they sought. Elsewhere, it delivered significant savings to a globally recognised UK brand by simply reforming their existing ERP.

## TRANSFORMATION TEAM OF THE YEAR

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

## EMBRIDGE CONSULTING



**E**mbridge Consulting was founded in 2009 as an independent digital transformation consultancy, born from a need to help businesses leverage their technology and business systems. Unit4's Global Number One Elite Partner and respected for its expertise in ERP, it also provides strategic advice on a range of solutions that transform business. It works with clients across multiple sectors to understand, design and deliver pragmatic technology and learning solutions along with robust business change programmes, using proven business, project, and technical skills.

The entire Embridge team is made up of implementation consultants, project managers, customer success managers, build consultants, solution architects, training consultants, HR and payroll consultants, and finance consultants, all of whom are Unit4 ERP specialists. Alongside a support services team that provides the much-needed infrastructure, the team repeatedly delivers projects on time, on budget, and above expectation.

Digital and technological transformation has always presented its own challenges, but this has never been tested more so than in 2020 and 2021. The team came into its own, to mentor and coach clients on how to use the technology available to work entirely remotely. Focussing on the individual needs for each client, they adapted the approach to deliver each project. In April 2021, Embridge saw five projects successfully Go Live in one month. Three projects started pre-COVID and needed to adapt its approach, two projects commenced during the peak of the COVID crisis. It provided successful outcomes for all those projects, combining the challenges of having projects which had to transfer from onsite to digital mid-project, and the challenges of projects that had to be delivered entirely digitally from mobilisation to deployment.

Early in 2020, Embridge adopted the idiom "Whilst we are isolated, we are never alone." It saw that come to life throughout the pandemic; with its team delivering not only client transformation but undertaking to transform daily interactions by reaching out and banding together as never before. While many organisations have seen a negative impact from COVID in terms of cohesion and motivation, Embridge says it is coming out of COVID with a team that has never been happier in its working relationships and support of each other.

### COMMENDED

## NAMOS SOLUTIONS



**A** leader in Oracle business solutions, **Namos** serves clients worldwide across multiple industry verticals. With deep domain expertise, spanning multiple industries and skillsets, clients look to Namos to provide expert advice on identifying opportunities for digital transformation or improvement through customisation, allowing clients to gain operational efficiency in new and exciting ways.

Namos takes a business-led technology enabled approach to transformation. Its services span the full project lifecycle, from strategy to architecture, implementation and managed services. It leverages proven frameworks and methodologies for faster deployment and strong return on investment.

During COVID, the team has gone above and beyond, designing new applications and deploying new platforms and finding new ways of working. It has continued to grow its client base (24 percent rise in new customers) and staff number (net employee growth of 81 percent) while also investing in the development of its staff skills and competencies. It achieved many Oracle specialisations across all three groups (build, sell, service) – one of only a few partners to do so.

In the midst of the pandemic, Namos immediately went to remote working. All projects are still on track to finish on time and on budget. In the last year, it has embarked on 11 new projects with a further eight being completed. It has continued to deliver complex transformations built on the Oracle cloud platform.

One success worth highlighting is the solution it developed for Paddy Power Betfair which has significantly transformed its business, delivering outstanding value and results. Says Paddy Power: "Namos has worked magic. They have overcome Oracle technology limitations. They made it do things for us that we didn't think was even possible. A relentless will to win, working through the night."

Namos has also developed a suite of accelerators allowing shorter testing cycles and faster migration for customers. Its solution accelerators and frameworks have allowed its customers such as Gov Facility Services Limited, Ninety One, London Borough of Bromley, and University of Greenwich to experience faster and more seamless data migrations, as well as faster implementations.



## TRANSFORMATION TEAM OF THE YEAR

### FINALISTS

#### SYMATRIX



**F**ounded in 2000 with the focus of providing services and expertise to organisations looking to implement and leverage Oracle HCM, **Symatrix** provides end to end managed services for HCM and ERP on-premise or in the Cloud. It delivers operational services, consultancy, training and ongoing support for Oracle HCM Cloud and Oracle's E-Business Suite and for the Salesforce HR and payroll solution, XCD.

Symatrix is an Oracle ISO27001 and BACS-accredited managed services provider of a fully managed payroll on the Oracle Cloud solution and also on Salesforce.

The Symatrix team has re-worked a number of HR and payroll processes and configurations, including new starters; multiple assignments; payslip configuration; absences; and payroll support. It works with clients to create a long term strategic systems roadmap that will enable them to realise ongoing value from the Oracle Cloud solution. This has included designing and building a Higher Education Statistic Agency (HESA) solution to sit on top of the Oracle application and help streamline submissions, as well as collaborating on wider implementation projects for additional cloud modules.

It worked with one university to restabilise its Oracle payroll application from an HR payroll perspective and take advantage of the expanding capabilities and functionalities within Oracle ERP and HCM Cloud. This includes the ability to manage solution optimisation, to help adopt more functionality and automation. In turn this will drive down cost, while improving the overall employee experience and engagement levels.

It has also taken strong steps to align the internal HR and payroll processes at the university more closely. The Symatrix team has revisited a number of processes and been careful to ensure it had people from both HR and payroll involved. It has also run multiple weekly CSR reviews, which both payroll and HR attend.

Symatrix focusses on ensuring it delivers value. There is a great understanding of what its clients are looking to achieve and an emphasis on practical delivery. Symatrix is a true extension of its clients' organisations.

#### ACCENTURE



**H**R has never been more relevant with COVID impacting working practices including flexible/remote working, and turbocharging investments in reskilling and upskilling to support the changing nature of business.

**Accenture** has one of the largest HR transformation teams in Europe specialising in SuccessFactors with over 70+ professionals. The team has worked across a range of clients spanning BT, Glanbia, Ardagh, BBC, Post Office, Standard Chartered Bank, HSBC and more. It has helped these clients unlock value by bringing colleagues into the heart of HR digital services, standardising to unwind legacy debt, and freeing HR up to focus on people. Accenture says this human aspect has led to its success as a transformation partner of choice.

Its goal is to support and collaborate with clients' HR teams to be the best they can be for their colleagues while learning, growing and having fun. This is underpinned by a focus on people, innovation, community and acting as a responsible team.

Recently Accenture has delivered programmes and had systems go live with tens of thousands of employees across the globe, such as running design workshops for large global complex organisations operating in 100+ countries. It is developing a range of capabilities to support improving social impacts (e.g. community-based learning, localised minimum wage analysis, diversity reporting, and gender pay analysis in the process of decision making, not post in corporate reporting). As a team Accenture says it doesn't focus only on SuccessFactors or the SAP ecosystem, but on clients' outcomes, and this is often a heterogeneous technology environment.

Accenture has developed engagement sentiment analysis which has never been as important as it is with COVID. As workforces were furloughed or abruptly moved to home working, being able to listen to employee voices at scale, identifying what they value to help maintain a sense of attachment to their organisations for those feeling disenfranchised has been crucial for clients. Further, as colleagues return to the office it's important to re-onboard them and adjust to what is a new way of working, and that can only be achieved well by listening.





WINNER

# YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



**YASAMAN  
SHAYESTEH**

*Workday Manager, Accenture*

**Y**asaman is a manager within the Technology practice at **Accenture**. She is 27 years old and has contributed to over 30 Workday projects at Accenture in the last seven years. She has been a Workday Product Lead in Human Capital Management (HCM) for the last three and a half years and was invited to the US to contribute to a product design initiative. She was also a Product Lead for a year and a half.

She has written whitepapers in Walkme, Works Council and Mergers and Acquisitions. Yasaman is also certified in HCM, Project Management, Pre-Sales, People Experience, Absence, Time Tracking, Learning and Medium Enterprise. She has presented at Workday seminars and conferences including Altitude on Mergers and Acquisitions, one of the highest attended sessions of that year with over 200 participants. Yasaman has also presented in several Knowledge Sharing Sessions with Workday and the wider community including other partners. Yasaman has led the creation and continuous updates and improvements for Thinktank workbooks, a cloud tool to streamline and automate the requirements gathering and design process for customers. ThinkTank is now being sold as the go to tool for workbooks on new implementations with the aim of it becoming Accenture's primary workbook solution. She is helping to improve ThinkTank to automate the requirements gathering and build process as much as possible to bring in efficiencies both in time spent gathering information but also building the system. This will reduce not only effort but also risk and human error.

She is actively involved in the Community of Practice (COP) and is a regular contributor of assets, helps with

the prioritisation of initiatives and leads regional calls to improve engagement. She also designed the BP modeller asset creation tool and the talent specialisation board creation for succession and cross functional offerings. It is estimated that the BP modeller asset creation tool will reduce time spent on building process maps by over 50 percent depending on scope outside of Workday, allowing the team to spend more time consulting rather than building process maps.

Finally, Yasaman is the COP lead for EALA helping to shape priorities globally and increase engagement in Europe and takes an active role presenting on key topics and initiatives.

Yasaman's talent, commitment and passion for learning stand out at Accenture. For example, having originally studied International Relations and Economics, during lockdown she further developed her skills by attending the Josh Bersin Academy to study HR and Human Potential. The course included People as a Competitive Advantage, Strategic HR, The Employee Experience, The Digital Imperative, The Agile Organisation and HR Transformation. This learning commitment was on top of being involved in the sales cycle and then delivering in a very demanding role as the Functional Lead on a complex HR transformation project in the Comms, Media and Technology space. Her track record when it comes to leadership and collaboration is exemplary, as evidenced by the many achievements described above, and she is a role model for junior team members within Accenture. Overall, her skills, ambition and dedication ensure she has a bright future ahead of her in the technology industry.



## YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

### HIGHLY COMMENDED



#### AVALON RIDLER

SAP Sales & Presales  
HANA Data & Technology

From the moment **Avalon** first joined **SAP** as an intern she demonstrated a real talent and passion for the world of data and analytics. SAP says Avalon plays an instrumental role in creating stories that are engaging and compelling, while promoting the key capabilities and benefits of its products to the customer.

After graduating from the University of Bath with a bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Physics in 2018, Avalon joined the SAP Presales Academy as part of the Platform & Technology team, focussing on data and analytics. Since graduating the Presales Academy top of her class, Avalon has been working on SAP's ERP offering, primarily on SAP S/4HANA Finance, and has recently completed her Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) certification.

Avalon is now part of SAP's S/4HANA / Digital Core solutions team, working with customers on their finance and ERP transformation journey as well as providing ERP experience to our early talent and university alliances.

Avalon leads SAP's technical academies, helping to educate and enable colleagues, SAP partners and customers on the power of technology and finance. She runs the ERPsim for customers as well as early talent and universities, to help bring the world of ERP to life. Avalon recently reviewed the introductory presentation of SAP's flagship finance solution, creating a new approach to engage the customer and explain the benefits that S/4HANA Finance can bring to their business. This has now been widely adopted across her peers within presales. Avalon is using her experience in analytics to reverse mentor her peers within finance on how to bring planning and core financial processes together, to better support customer's finance transformation. She's a coach, mentor and buddy to other early talent, especially new hires into the Presales Academy.

In the words of her manager, "Avalon is the best role model for early talent in SAP. She inspires everyone on a daily basis and demonstrates all the characteristics of a future leader within the business."

### COMMENDED



#### YEMI WEDDERBURN

Training Consultant,  
Advanced

**Yemi** is passionate about helping people get the maximum benefit from their technology. As one of **Advanced's** Training Consultants, he aims to become the best trainer he can be – a role he has discovered combines his enthusiasm for technology and the teaching skills he has inherited from his mum!

"The best thing is that it's all about problem-solving," he said. Showing customers a solution to their challenges is something he finds very satisfying. And he spends his free time taking part in extra-curricular courses, such as coding, to continually expand his knowledge.

When Advanced encouraged employees to set up Inclusion Networks he joined the first Black Lives Matter Network session. He soon became one of two co-chairs taking the initiative to Chuka Umunna – former MP and a non-executive director at Advanced at the time. This resulted in Chuka giving guidance on the importance of data and sponsorship at the top. Yemi also contributed to Advanced's first Diversity Pay Gap Report and having seen limited representation of Black individuals higher up in the organisation, he worked with the Talent Team, tackling promotions, unconscious bias and what job boards the company use. As a result, it is looking at recruiters that promote underrepresented minorities.

Yemi and his co-chair were invited to present to Advanced's Senior Leadership Team where they discussed the BLM Network, their initiatives and long-term aims. Yemi also regularly works with the Chief People Officer and Advanced's CBI representative to investigate the Change the Race Ratio initiative. He was also part of the group that successfully removed the words master/slave, common programmer's terms, from one of Advanced's products.

After this year, Yemi and his co-chair are going to support others in driving initiatives, instead of spearheading these themselves. "We want to give others a similar opportunity. We're two Black voices, but there are a lot of other Black voices that need to be raised up," he said.



## YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

### FINALISTS



#### JAMES WILCOX

Senior Advisory Consultant  
Capgemini

**J**ames is front and centre of ERP transformation, taking pride in driving this change.

James has been the joint product owner & creator of the **Capgemini** Advisory Services Online (CASO Platform). This is a web-enabled application that enables an intelligent and digital approach to change adoption and setting delivery to succeed (what is called the golden thread). This platform is being used with many of Capgemini clients, adding value and increasing the likelihood of success of many ERP business transformations.

James has been leading multi-million, global and complex engagements for the last few years in providing strategic advice to clients. This spans from building business cases, feasible roadmaps and identifying the case for change to enable their business transformation. James takes clients through the initial phase and forms the golden thread into delivery to increase the likelihood of realising the benefits of business transformation. James recently has led a highly recognised UK brand, operating in over 50 countries across the globe through a complex discovery phase and into the design of a global S/4 transformation, underpinned by cloud, leading technology and business value.

Capgemini says James was key to refining its digital methods during COVID, to ensure efficiency of delivery and that it can continue to engage with our clients. This included delivering global workshops to over 200 people, three weeks after the lockdown kicked in. James has also been instrumental in keeping team morale and spirits high during COVID through various means, not just his peers, but importantly client teams as well.

Not only does James manage to wear four hats; Enterprise Architect; Change Lead; Project Manager and Business Consultant, but also the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. James can work out the best way forward to illustrate how the benefits from technology can be explained in business terms, how the change is managed, what the to-be architecture will be. Business and IT leaders from many organisations listen to his counsel and then execute their role in the plan.



#### CARLA DE KLERK

DSC Technology Lead - SAP IBP - SCM Consultant  
Olivehorse Consulting

**F**ocus on what you can control – this is **Carla's** WhatsApp status and describes her attitude in life.

Carla studied Industrial Engineering at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. During her studies, she distinguished herself as a leader with compassion for her peers.

Starting with **Olivehorse Consulting** in 2019 as a Supply Chain Analyst, Carla is a dynamic and determined supply chain professional who is passionate about solving problems and adding value. Carla performed exceptionally well in her first year and was promoted to Consultant level after 15 months. She mainly focusses on working in SAP Integrated Business Planning (IBP), contributing to the design workshops and technical configuration of customised client solutions. She has been assisting the sales team with multiple custom demos and developed multiple internal IP solutions that can be sold to clients. Carla is now stepping into the DSC Technology Lead role for IBP where she will have many more responsibilities in terms of IP development and driving value for the Olivehorse IBP team.

Additionally, for the last year Carla has been mentoring two other employees in the company, helping them with their assignments and driving them to achieve in their careers.

Carla's innovative approach helped one customer, a large kitchen retailer, improve the management of Safety Stock and Re-order point setting for 750 customer-facing locations as well as the centralised warehouses. Carla also played a key role in research into SAC to convince the Olivehorse team to invest in the technology. She was part of the team that designed and developed the internal system.

Carla attracts respect from her senior team members due to her incredible work ethic and an ability to translate complex business problems into simple system solutions. Her ability to work across several different areas, including, Demand, S&OP and Inventory at such a young age culminated in her becoming the first IBP Technology lead at Consultant level, a role that was always occupied by a Principal consultant.

## YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

### FINALISTS



#### KATE MORAN

Oracle Fusion HCM Consultant  
Namos Solutions

**K**ate joined **Namos'** graduate programme in January 2020, quickly making an impression with her knowledge and personality, which immediately drew clients in. Within six months, she was promoted to Functional Consultant, recognising her achievements and contributions to company and clients' success.

Kate has deputised for and led a number of Namos projects and is particularly proud of an implementation at the University of Greenwich, which was Kate's first successful go-live. Kate had only been with Namos for a few months when one of the senior consultants left on maternity leave, leaving Kate to step up and take control of system testing, debugging, and fast formula development, which she achieved flawlessly. The project went live on time and on budget and went onto win the company new work with the university. Kate is also particularly proud of Namos' multi-pillar implementation with Outwood Grange where she is leading on the payroll stream. The project has a unique complex hierarchy made up of 39 business units with a very tight timescale and is set for another successful go-live in September.

Kate continues to push herself, to break down personal barriers and exceed her development goals. She has earned her Payroll Implementation Specialist Certification, and has plans to earn certification in Absence in December. Kate has set her eyes firmly on becoming a Senior Consultant, with the goal of becoming an HCM Solution Architect within five years.

Since joining Namos, Kate has been challenged with some difficult project work and situations, which she has handled with a clear and open approach, building positive relationships with a variety of stakeholders. At 25, Kate has not only demonstrated a brilliant aptitude for Oracle HCM, but she has also made a valuable contribution to the company by delivering outstanding services and support to both clients and teammates alike. Her intelligent, diligent, and personable persona, coupled with her desire to go above and beyond will quickly see her become a future leader at Namos.



#### MATTHEW JENKINS

Business Development Representative,  
Infor

**M**att is an exemplary inbounder with a strong understanding of the inbound process, who maintains high levels of lead management and speed to lead.

Matt has worked hard and strived to become an integral member of the UKI team and the wider BD org. For many moons, **Infor** says it has seen his name appear in the monthly kick-off awards for his high performance and various mentions across collaborative teams like the outreach super-user team and the blitz team. Matt has shown his determination to build a career at Infor. He has proven that he deserves a spot as a senior in the team based on his performance, collaboration, and determination to develop himself continuously. Matt is the highest performing member of the UKI Team and has demonstrated consistent QoQ for the past 12 months. He achieved 195 percent target in Q1 FY21 and continues to ensure he is overachieving his numbers in Q2.

Matt is part of the outreach/gong super user team and has been assisting in driving engagement of Gong more recently, leading by example and supporting me in communicating to the team. Matt was previously part of the Blitz Team for a few rolling quarters but has recently given this up to focus more on the previously mentioned role due to its high priority status. Matt also organised the inbound BQO of the month session, an ongoing initiative across the international teams that is a great way to share successes across teams. Although Matt has a strong focus on his number, he is always looking for ways to take on additional responsibility and support the team.

Matt's skills do not end with his role. He is also a very supportive team player. He is good at resolving issues and shows remarkable patience. He is very passionate about simplifying ERP and sustainability processes, always looking at how to get better and improve not only his work, but the environment around him.





**Can your  
company  
support young  
professionals  
and help develop  
a platform for  
their voice?**



**The ERP Today Young Professional Network (YPN)** is a new resource for young professionals in the ERP ecosystem which will provide opportunities for our emerging talent. The seven finalists in this year's award category have been invited to inaugurate the first YPN council and will be announcing their agenda to the community shortly.

ERP Today is a staunch advocate for young talent and is committed to recognising and rewarding the efforts of young professionals across the sector. The YPN provides under 30s in enterprise technology with peer-to-peer support, fireside chats with industry experts and a platform to write for ERP Today.

We want to amplify the voices of young professionals in the sector and give them opportunities to ask tech-leaders candid questions, advocate for their employers and platform their latest ventures.

In addition to giving young professionals a voice in the sector, this will generate a two-way flow of information from young professionals back to their employers, providing employers with insights into the needs and ambitions of the youngest people in the sector.

**ERP Today is looking for patron sponsors to support the YPN in a variety of ways. If your company can help provide support to the YPN or you would like to find out more about opportunities to participate in YPN activities, please contact us by sending an email to [YPN@ERP.Today](mailto:YPN@ERP.Today)**

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**WINNER**

# **SUSTAINABILITY EXCELLENCE AWARD**

## **CAPGEMINI**

**C**apgemini says it has the ambition to be a leading contributor to building a just society; fighting exclusion, acting to promote diversity, ensuring equal opportunities and the preservation of natural resources. It was the first company in its sector to set science-based sustainability targets, meaning its ambitions to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) have been independently validated by the Science based Target initiative (SBTi) as being in line with climate change science.

In 2019, the company outperformed its own expectations, achieving its 2030 carbon reduction target more than 11 years ahead of schedule. This achievement was a result of efforts across the business to reduce its absolute GHG emissions (down 70 percent from 2014), with significant decarbonisation in its datacentre's energy use (down 78 percent from 2014), office energy use (down 70 percent from 2014) and business travel emissions (down 18 percent from 2014).

In October 2020, Capgemini set a new vision for sustainable transformation: to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2025 and become a net zero business by 2030. A transition to 100% renewable electricity by 2025 was also a key commitment when it announced its new targets last year. Since then it has signed up to RE100 to reinforce this commitment to renewable electricity.

A crucial step in embedding the changes through the business has been to integrate the 'carbon cost' into existing internal performance processes – creating a Carbon Travel dashboard that enables a project delivery team to track the actual travel emissions. This involves producing data for each business sector on carbon emissions for their accounts. It allows business leaders to see how they're delivering for their clients in a low-carbon way. It has also developed a carbon calculator that allows it to calculate the carbon impacts of client services across

a range of sectors and projects, quantifying the carbon savings for clients.

Investment in 2018 on virtual collaboration tools and rolling out new ways of working enabled Capgemini to be more flexible, remote, and emphasised sustainable collaboration with clients and within teams. Across the UK, nine dedicated virtual collaboration hubs have been installed with over 1,700 people receiving training, attending workshops or being part of the 30 active pilot groups trialling new approaches. It says this extensive technological and behaviour change programme was instrumental in facilitating its response to the pandemic, allowing teams to stay connected and deliver for clients.

Capgemini says that while much can be achieved internally, to reach the scale and scope of transformation required for a net zero world, it recognises the criticality for collaboration with clients, partners, NGOs and suppliers. Since joining the Race to Zero campaign as a founder member last summer, it has also joined the World Economic Forum (WEF) 1 trillion trees campaign to conserve, restore and grow 1 trillion trees around the world, and its CEO joined the World Economic Forum's Alliance of CEO climate leaders.

It also says its 270,000 people are critical to its net zero transition. It has accelerated its sustainability learning pathways and launched a new tool for calculating carbon impacts of client engagements. It has made supporting clients with their sustainability challenges a priority, developing a range of tailored offers to operationalise sustainability, leveraging its technical expertise, customised approach, and partner ecosystem. It recently launched a sustainable IT proposition as the first building block of its global sustainability offering framework, empowering clients to accelerate their digital transformation at no cost to the planet.



## SUSTAINABILITY EXCELLENCE AWARD

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

#### SAP



**S**AP's purpose is to help the world run better and improve people's lives with sustainability at the core. It says it does this by providing products and services that meet the sustainability challenges and opportunities of customers and leading by example in its own sustainable business operations.

In March 2021, SAP announced its intention to become carbon-neutral in its own operations by the end of 2023 – two years earlier than previously stated.

SAP partnered with The Carbon Community to plant the SAP Forest UK in the Brecon Beacons, Wales, with the aim of capturing just under 2,000 tonnes of carbon over the next 35 years. This research will advance knowledge on the most efficient ways to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere using trees and soil. To set new global standards on social procurement, SAP launched 5&5 by '25, SAP's public initiative to direct 5 percent of its addressable spend to social enterprises and 5 percent to diverse businesses by 2025.

SAP believes that the path to a low-carbon future is circular and in June 2021 it launched a portfolio of new sustainability-specific products. This includes the SAP Responsible Design and Production solution to ensure product designers can make sustainable choices from initial product concepts to production; the SAP Product Footprint Management solution to track sustainability through a product lifecycle; and the SAP Sustainability Control Tower solution to provide end-to-end visibility. In September 2020, SAP and Topolytics launched the Waste Insights Project, to unify and analyse data from consumer goods, retailers, waste managers, investors, NGOs and local government. The data gathered from co-innovation partners, including BrewDog, Coca-Cola European Partners, and DS Smith feeds into Scotland's Waste and Resources Map – a live view of materials flows from, through and out of Scotland. This enables government, investors, waste managers, consumer industries and start-ups to define strategic priorities and build national recycling infrastructure where it's needed the most. In April 2021, SAP and Accenture expanded their partnership to help companies embed sustainability across the spectrum of their business operations to unlock new value throughout their enterprises and in their value and supply chains.



### COMMENDED

#### SAPPHIRE SYSTEMS



**S**apphire began its journey into responsible business 15 years ago, focussing on how staff wanted to do good in the world. It has raised tens of thousands for chosen charities, run Raising Aspirations workshops for school children, kept computer rooms open for the homeless, cleared out pigsties, painted flood locks and cleaned up beaches. It has a green team, it recycles, it insists its offices use renewable energy, but when it came to trying to be carbon neutral Sapphire says it didn't know where to start.

In 2019, CEO Ian Caswell was inspired to become carbon neutral after watching Quentin Wilson talk about why he drove an electric car. He said tens of thousands of people in the UK die early each year because of pollution and cars in London were a major contributing factor. Ian promised himself that when he bought a replacement car, he'd buy an electric. He saw that Sapphire could really make a difference by becoming greener and setting an example to employees, suppliers and customers.

Ian tasked the Responsible Business team with looking into becoming carbon neutral – no small feat as it's not something the team had ever done before.

Even though the responsible business team is very small it took less than 12 weeks to capture Sapphire's carbon footprint for the whole year. Sapphire opted to achieve carbon neutral status by planting trees in the Kenyan Rift Valley with Carbon Footprint Ltd because this would: Offset CO2 emissions Reduce poverty Provide wildlife habitats Create a brighter future for project team members including orphans and people living with HIV / AIDS. It has now planted 950 trees/offset 950 CO2 (which includes a minimum of 10 percent over the baseline to allow for any mistakes), done a case study for HOTC and is happy to help other companies to take the same steps.

Sapphire says it is a great example of how businesses can become carbon neutral in a relatively short space of time without having an in-house expert or paying money for an external company. It hopes its journey will help other SMEs to make the same decision. Since becoming carbon neutral, it has become part of Heart of the City's Climate Action Working Group and shared its experience to help shape their new programme.



## FINALISTS

## ACUMATICA



**A**cumatica says the success of its Acumatica Cloud ERP solution is based on customer satisfaction and support. Acumatica's post-sales commitment includes helping customers reach their sustainability goals through digitisation and cloud-based services.

When an Acumatica ERP customer moves their business from a legacy solution to Acumatica's cloud services solution, the customer reduces the carbon output of their growth business on average by 72 percent.

Additionally, Acumatica has spent the last several months working with Climate Neutral to measure its 2020 carbon footprint. Acumatica says it has saved six times the emissions produced by its own carbon footprint. The company has calculated the emissions that it takes to produce, market, sell, and implement its products for customers. Current Acumatica emissions reductions initiatives include conducting a greenhouse gas inventory and determining opportunities for embracing a remote workforce and de-emphasising business travel.

In 2020, the company transitioned to a remote workforce, resulting in 50 percent + reductions in operational emissions, 88 percent reduction in business travel flight emissions, and 44 percent reduction in office energy. Acumatica intends to maintain a partial remote workforce post-COVID, which will virtually eliminate the impact of employee commuting, which made up more than 30 percent of its corporate emissions in 2019.

Acumatica has also instituted a sustainability initiative for Acumatica Summit. The company utilises a digital mobile app to provide attendees with conference information, makes recycling bins available throughout the meeting space, provides locally grown and sourced food, sources giveaways from renewable products and reuses branding materials.

Acumatica has also supported local communities by planting 790 trees through social syndication tools. Acumatica's commitment to sustainability will extend into the UK, when it launches its new London office. Sustainability is embedded into Acumatica's mission of helping clients migrate to the cloud, where they will find a more modern, mobile, and energy efficient solution to their business management needs. At the same time, Acumatica strives to reduce its own operational footprint wherever possible and is committed to offset all the emissions it cannot immediately eliminate.

## SYNITI



**T**rees are essential to the creation of a healthy environment – one tree supports the Oxygen of four people. Forests support 80% of the world's biodiversity. Every year, forests absorb 1/3 of the Co2 released from burning fossil fuels.

In 2000 **Syniti** created in 2020 the Syniti Forest project, an initiative that will see the planting of new trees to honour every customer go-live. Further to the promise for future planting, Syniti at launch backdated the previous four years' worth of go-lives and planted over 4,000 trees around the world: 1,406 in EMEA (at a reforestation site in Barcelona), 1,350 in Ohio, USA and 1,383 in the Cauvery River Basin, India. As it adds to its existing three global forests with every successful migration/governance/DQ go-live, it will look to expand the project to other territories.

After every successful go-live, Syniti hosts a celebration zoom call with all the delivery parties to celebrate the achievement and to recognise that more trees will be added to the region's forest because of this client success. It says it looking for this initiative to be an instigator for all clients and partners it works with, to find new ways to give back to the environment and community.

Corporations planting trees isn't a new thing, but Syniti says its spin on it, to use as a client gift, a celebration is something a little new. It's not just about the 4,000 new trees that have been planted, which is of course great for the environment, it's doing it in a way that brings a community along with you.

"We realise the size we are, we can't fix an ecosystem by ourselves, but by setting an example and linking it to a significant jubilant milestone such as a go-live, we can bring our partners and clients along with us, encouraging them to donate themselves to our Forest, or to start their own movement. We're not the final answer to the ecological crisis, but through the Syniti Forest initiative we can help provoke a powerful and affluent technology community to be a part of the answer," says the firm.

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**WINNER**

# THE COVID-19 HERO EMPLOYEE AWARD

## SUSE

**S**USE is a global leader in innovative, reliable and enterprise-grade open source solutions, relied upon by more than 60 percent of the Fortune 500 to power their mission-critical workloads. It specialises in Enterprise Linux, Kubernetes Management, and Edge solutions, and collaborates with partners and communities to empower customers to innovate everywhere. Headquartered in Nuremberg, Germany, SUSE employs nearly 2000 people globally.

In March 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to spread around the world, under CEO Melissa Di Donato's leadership, SUSE quickly pivoted its focus to employee wellbeing by giving them ultimate flexibility and unprecedented support. Key actions to support SUSE's employees included the establishment of a Business Continuity Committee that met every day to analyse the pandemic and its impact on employees, the creation of SUSE Assist, a corporate wellness initiative, and a robust internal communications programme designed to empower and support employees throughout the pandemic.

The Business Continuity Committee is a cross-functional team of leaders, to oversee the health and wellbeing of employees. Their duties included contingency planning and stress testing SUSE's systems to accommodate a 100 percent remote employee base. This was quickly followed by the decision to move people to fulltime remote work and close its offices to safeguard the wellbeing of the global team. The Committee actively monitored the global situation, local and regional guidelines and restrictions, and created policies and procedures to safeguard employee health and safety. These policies and procedures included a round-the-clock monitoring of an email inbox where employees could ask questions, the establishment of flexible work hours so employees

could care for additional responsibilities like taking care of children or family members, and the creation of an internal website with the latest COVID updates and employee resources.

Recognising that employees needed additional support to address their overall wellbeing throughout the pandemic, the Business Continuity team, in partnership with SUSE's HR team, launched employee wellbeing solution SUSE Assist. Via a web portal, SUSE employees and their family members gained access to free and confidential professional counselling services, work and life services (like finding recommended local service providers), mindfulness programmes, life and career coaching, in addition to a range of current news articles and resources that help maximise wellbeing.

Under Di Donato's leadership, a robust internal communications programme was rolled out in an effort to support employees and to foster a sense of connectedness and team atmosphere while working remotely. Every week during the height of the pandemic, Di Donato would record a video message to teams highlighting what was top-of-mind, key business updates, and recognise employees' work in combatting the pandemic. These updates shared good news in addition to challenges that the pandemic was creating for the SUSE business. SUSE leaders also led fun workshops showcasing how to make homemade hand sanitiser, how to work from home effectively, as well as a colouring and drawing competition for employees' children.

SUSE recognises that every role and individual is different. As long as an employee can do their job, they have the freedom to decide where they are going to work. Last and certainly not least, SUSE has supported its employees through the fully remote acquisition and integration of Rancher Labs.

## THE COVID-19 HERO EMPLOYEE AWARD

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

#### DELOITTE



**D**eloitte has an extensive employee wellbeing programme but its Oracle team went the extra mile to make sure their people were looked after during this most challenging of years. Initiatives include weekly calls for c.100 employees to catch up informally, share news e.g. business performance, personal stories about ways of working during lockdown and introduce new joiners. Each session ends with a short quiz and prize for the winner! This has now become a permanent weekly fixture.

Each month the Wellbeing team created challenges that encouraged people to take a break from their laptop and get outdoors. Run 21 had a team of 6 completing 21 miles over 4 weeks. There was a 5,000km challenge where over 50 people participated to collectively complete 5,000km over one month. And introduced during the winter months, 'daylight hour' encouraged people to take a one hour break during the day and see some daylight.

Testimonials from employees included: "The 5,000 challenge for me transpired into many positive outcomes. The challenge made sure that I got outdoors for exercise, fresh air and breaks from work that is important for mental well-being. I also got to know and interact with colleagues."

There were also wellbeing virtual catch ups. Coffee Roulette saw randomly paired colleagues set up a 30 minute catch up, encouraging people to connect on a personal level. With Peer Groups all junior to mid management groups were split into teams of 6-8 colleagues within the same grade; they then took part in virtual catch ups once a month. Virtual team socials converted the company's quarterly in person team huddles into quarterly virtual team huddles. Other examples included virtual cocktail making, a night at the races and escape rooms.

Mental Health First Aider training is available to everyone at Deloitte – in recent months 20 people from the Oracle team have been trained in becoming Mental Health First Aiders. By training 20 percent of the team Deloitte hopes to be able to identify and support any colleagues with mental health issues if the need arises.

### COMMENDED

#### SAGE



**A**t the start of the pandemic, **Sage** immediately began adjusting and providing reassurance within the organisation. It held Sage Town Hall sessions explaining that there were no employment redundancies happening due to COVID, and that any redundancies would need executive level approval. The executive leadership team sent companywide emails in mid-March sharing resources for mental health and wellness, official policies on working from home for the foreseeable future, communications around a flexible work/life balance during the uncertainty, and verbalising Sage's compassionate stance on employees taking the time they need to care for themselves and their loved ones.

Caring for Sage's employees is still top of mind. At the start of COVID, every Sage employee was given a free subscription to the mental health app, HeadSpace, and provided free, remote exercise classes during the workday to ensure they had access to as many health and wellness tools possible.

According to Glassdoor, employees appreciated the level of communication and employee engagement that CEO Steve Hare and the upper management team have maintained during the crisis. Glassdoor conducted a survey about working for large companies that included assessments of executive leadership. For the UK list, Hare took the top spot with a Leadership Score of 95% during COVID-19. Sage employees shared feedback on the excellent communication and engagement from upper management.

Colleagues themselves banded together and organised virtual, morning coffee breaks, watercooler style Teams meetings, cocktails hours, and even remote yoga and music discos! Sage created an official policy for allowing employees to take paid leave in order to receive their COVID vaccines and added a number of Wellbeing Days so that employees could have paid time off to recharge. Sage also created a streamlined system for employees to order and receive any tools and equipment they needed to work from home full time effectively and comfortably. It also sent out communications around time off if employees and/or their families were directly affected by the virus. Additionally, in June 2021 Sage facilitated the payment of COVID vaccines for colleagues and their families in India.

## THE COVID-19 HERO EMPLOYEE AWARD

### FINALISTS

#### UNIT4



**U**nit4 wanted to support its employees as everyone adjusted to a new way of life in the pandemic – whether acclimatising to working from home, taking on extra responsibilities for childcare, home-schooling or eldercare, or dealing with isolation.

Unit4 has launched a series of initiatives under the umbrella of Fit4U, a health, mind, and wellbeing programme, to help employees stay positively connected as well as mentally and physically fit.

With its employee assistance programme, it built in a team of mental health first aiders, Fit4U community, and partnered with Thrive Mental Wellbeing to provide additional tools to support wellbeing to employees, their family and friends. Thrive is a wellbeing app that offers relaxation techniques such as meditation, to thought training, sleep improvement, and goal progress tracking to help you look after your mental wellbeing.

It also offered a schedule of physical activities to which employees are invited to contribute to and host sessions. This includes mixing lighter workouts like qigong/Yoga with more intense workouts like HIIT/CrossFit. It introduced Movespring challenges, where employees go on walks and reach a collective number of steps to donate to IamtheCode, and a competition against other teams where the winning team gets to donate money to an organisation of choice.

With colleagues largely working remotely, Unit4 came up with a virtual People Stories session, to learn from each other whilst spending some valuable time together. Every month, someone hosts a new topic. It also has monthly coffee to socialise and get to know people across the regions and hosts Inspiration4U, a podcast series from its people about its people.

Everyone in the organisation has been sent a yucca plant (known for its resilience), to add colour to their home offices and work areas. In December 2020, it hosted a company wide virtual party to celebrate the hard work of its people during COVID. In February 2021, it hosted its first virtual Learning Festival, focussing the mind on learning which could help our people build resilience, new skills, and mental agility.

Unit4 says it will continue with its Fit4U programme due to positive employee feedback.

#### WORKDAY



**W**orkday says its core values of employees, integrity, customer service, integrity, profitability and – most importantly – fun, give it a framework for leadership and daily decisions and help everyone enjoy their time at work.

Workday has supported its employees (known as Workmates) in multiple ways, ranging from granting greater flexibility to financial support, resulting in 100% of employees in EMEA feeling at least 'well supported' by Workday (87 percent feeling 'very well supported').

In March 2020, it granted two weeks' additional full pay to all permanent employees to support unforeseen events. It understood that employees would need a comfortable and functional set-up while working remotely so it offered the local equivalent of \$500 for all permanent employees to purchase office supplies, including furniture and noise-cancelling headphones. This was well-received as over 6000 employees submitted a related expense claim. It is also reimbursing employee Wi-Fi, while they work from home. It also created the Workday Employee Relief Fund, still in existence today, to offer financial support to Workmates struggling to pay for necessities during emergencies, such as housing, food and childcare.

Its flexible working policy means people can opt for part-time work, compressed hours etc. It offered 20 days' backup care reimbursement for caregivers (including backup child care and elder care reimbursement). It also created a new COVID-19 Caregiver Leave Policy, offering employees 12 weeks' leave, paid at 50 percent of their pay, should they need to take up caregiving duties. It also gave all employees an additional ten days' paid sick leave if they or a family member were diagnosed with COVID-19. It is also offering employees time off to receive the vaccine.

All employees can now access virtual doctors, and Workday has created an Intranet 'one-stop-shop' hub, with all mental health-related resources, ranging from its free Employee Resource Programme to Health Care provisions, to virtual wellbeing events. After a year working throughout the pandemic, it has offered employees 'Thank You Fridays' – fortnightly companywide holidays from July 2021 to September 2021, where employees get an additional day off as a 'thank you' from Workday to disconnect, relax and have fun.



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# WINNER

## THE COVID-19 HERO CUSTOMER AWARD

# IFS

**I**FS noticed an urgency among customers to create and implement a remote solution for customers. Launched peak pandemic, IFS Remote Assistance gives employees the ability to be anywhere, instantly. Two users can collaborate and interact in real-time while telestrating, freezing images, using hand gestures, and even adding real objects into the merged reality environment, whether that's technician to third-line support/customer, or expert to manufacturing facility. IFS says the solution was a saviour to many customers, providing them with a lifeline to service customers during a pandemic, in a time of extreme uncertainty.

With the onset of COVID-19, IFS foresaw issues in field service management and brought forward the release of IFS Remote Assistance from Q4 to Q1 to cater to the needs of customers. The state-of-the-art merged reality (MR) solution blends two real-time video streams into an interactive environment. It enables field technicians, engineers or customers to share real-life situational context with remote product experts so that hands-on service and repair instructions can be visually demonstrated and acted upon – a lifesaver in the pandemic. With agile implementations of these new, sophisticated solutions, companies enable their globally dispersed field workforce to collaborate seamlessly with one another and fix service problems with a close to 100 percent rate.

Customer Munters' plans to enforce a pragmatic approach to servitisation were impacted as the coronavirus pandemic began. "By the beginning of March, it became urgent for us to get this technology in place to continue to be able to serve our customers and support our manufacturing operations," said Roel Rentmeesters, Munters Director of Global Customer Service.

With an initial deployment in just six days, Munters then expanded the use of IFS Remote Assistance to more than 200 users globally. "The solution is very intuitive, so training required is minimal and there's actually some instruction built into the app, too. In less than two hours, each of our users was fully trained and equipped to begin using the technology. The speed at which we've been able to get the solution operational is really impressive."

Panasonic Heating & Cooling Solutions has been running IFS Remote Assistance in both the UK and Germany. "The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive," said Karl Lowe, head of European Service at Panasonic. "So much so that interest in the technology has spread throughout Panasonic."

"Another valuable aspect of using IFS Remote Assistance is how it enables us to capture and transfer knowledge to protect ourselves from losing technical insights and to educate and upskill across our workforce."

By standardising its service operations on IFS Remote Assistance, Panasonic improved response times, increased remote diagnostics and resolution, reduced on-site visits, improved speed of repair, and achieved higher customer satisfaction by reducing customer friction, all whilst making massive cost savings.

IFS Remote Assistance has now been implemented in over 100 companies globally since its launch in March 2020. H1 2020 financial results show for the first time over 50 percent of total revenue came from Field Service solutions, of which a substantial amount was generated during the pandemic. IFS has over 130 new Remote Assistance prospects in the pipeline and expects the number of implementations to increase throughout 2021 as remote operations look to be an important part in the future.

## THE COVID-19 HERO CUSTOMER AWARD

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

#### UKISUG



**F**ounded in 1988, **The UK & Ireland SAP User Group (UKISUG)** is an independent 'not for profit' organisation. It comprises over 600 organisations and 7,500 professionals. It aims to facilitate networking, knowledge exchange and best practice amongst SAP users.

As a 'not-for-profit' user organisation the wellbeing of its members has always been important, but even more so over the last 12-18 months as COVID-19 has presented huge professional and personal challenges. To support its members, UKISUG has introduced a programme of mental health initiatives. Last year, UKISUG hosted seven mental health sessions with Thrive, a mental health and wellbeing company. These sessions covered topics such as stress and resilience, the importance of mental health, anxiety reduction, mental health whilst working from home, and mindfulness. Given the popularity of these sessions, UKISUG and Thrive have now put in place a bi-weekly programme of wellbeing and mindful practice webinars – all of which are free of charge to UKISUG members.

UKISUG has also offered a discount on Mental Health First Aid courses to its members and 3 of its own staff are now qualified. It has also featured dedicated mental health episodes in each series of its SUGTalks podcast. It has introduced 'Coffee Sessions' into its virtual events calendar for members to catch up in a non-formal, non-structured way and 'UKISUG Elevenses', a similar concept but for UKISUG staff and volunteers to catch up for half an hour each week.

Outside of its mental health initiative, UKISUG has also looked to support the local community during the pandemic. UKISUG is based in Teesside, which has been one of the hardest areas hit with many families falling into poverty and relying on foodbanks. UKISUG donated £5,000 and became a patron of the Middlesbrough and Teesside Philanthropic Foundation, which run numerous activities to help people throughout Teesside. UKISUG ensured that the donation it made was distributed across foodbanks in the areas where its team members live. Engaging with such a charity has enabled UKISUG to support the local areas during COVID-19 and provide opportunities for the further development of its team through volunteering initiatives.



### COMMENDED

#### INFOR



**T**he COVID-19 pandemic took many organisations by surprise, and they hurried to see what software they could use for tracking employees and other individuals. Many Infor HR Talent customers found they were already licensed for the Occupational Health and Employee Safety modules, so it was more about leveraging these modules and features to support their needs.

**Infor** added two new features that solidified its support for employer response to the pandemic. Employee Safety provided the capability to track COVID-19 exposures in the workplace to identify whether it was work-related. Occupational Health added new Employee Widgets that gave employees better visibility into their Health Components, making it easier to view their tests, upcoming vaccine appointments and due dates, and health components in the process.

During the pandemic working with major household names representing all sorts of products remained a challenge but ensuring the smooth transition in the critical supply chains to the NHS became more than important. Over 300 colleagues who were previously travelling across the world to complete their projects suddenly had to transition to working from their own homes. Despite the global locations, time-zones and general difficulty being faced by all involved, the serious and important nature of the work and the professionalism of the team actually led to them becoming more efficient and effective. Their working time availability increased, and they were able to deliver work faster than before. Infor saved travel costs, stopped emissions from travelling by plane, and became more environmentally friendly and cost effective. Clients welcomed the change, and in the future, Infor intends to follow the lessons learned from the pandemic in order to improve itself and its environment.

In fact, Infor says lessons learned are that people respond positively when they know that others are depending on them, you can avoid a great deal of travel when people share a common focus and are willing to work with the new technologies, and time zones and local differences do not present a problem when people need a solution. Teams that know they matter perform better.





## THE COVID-19 HERO CUSTOMER AWARD

### FINALISTS

#### SAGE



**S**age says customer care was in its DNA well prior to COVID-19, and is an aspect in which the organisation strives for excellence. Once the pandemic hit though, Sage quickly realised that the needs of its customers were rapidly shifting. They needed guidance on everything from future recovery, financial forecasting, to general support from their account managers in a more hands-on way.

It was important to be a trusted and valued source of information and resources for customers so that they could continue to manage their businesses in a time of uncertainty. Sage created a dedicated coronavirus InfoHub on its website containing information and resources to help customers during the current situation. The hub includes information on everything from: creating a safe environment for employees and customers, navigating COVID-19 legislations, PPP loan forgiveness tools, to coronavirus webinars, podcasts, and trainings to help customers support and run their businesses in a time of need. It also sent emails to customers and partners from Sage executives on how it was supporting them, and provided business advice to help them navigate the rapidly-changing market environment.

Additionally, Sage's cloud-based platform and 24/7 customer support teams helped ensure customer business continuity so that they could access their data and keep working from any location without interruption.

Sage has taken a collaborative approach by reaching out to customers and discussing their cash flow, expenses, understanding what capital expenditures can be postponed, ensuring they have access to the resources they need, and providing some flexibility with billing if the need arises.

Sage also realises that each industry is affected differently by COVID-19. For example, non-profit organisations were particularly hard-hit during this time. To motivate finance teams at these organisations, Sage launched a nine-part 'Inspiring Leaders in Non-profit Finance' video series. Sage met with non-profit customers to check in, see how their organisations were handling COVID-19, and how Sage was enabling them to continue pushing forward. It also put together an exhaustive list of tools and helpful tips to keep customers' businesses on track when they needed to work somewhere other than their offices.

#### SUSE



**T**hroughout the pandemic, **SUSE** teams continued to power their customers' mission-critical business applications and swiftly progress their service requests. In addition, several initiatives were launched to help customers accelerate their digital transformation efforts to become more responsive to changing market needs. It also offered free training programmes, extended upgrade windows, free operating system and container technologies to medical device manufacturers fighting COVID-19 and flexible payment terms for struggling industries.

**Fast Track Digital Transformation:** SUSE provided customers with a complete technology stack enabling them to build the application environment they need for private, public, and multi-cloud implementations. The free product offer included direct access to SUSE's customer support teams, and free online training and consulting services for implementation at highly reduced cost.

**SUSE Home Office Workplace:** moving from the office to working from home overnight was a massive challenge for customers. SUSE compiled a cost-effective business continuity solution that could quickly and easily be implemented. Secure set-up was made easy by a quick-start-guide and webinar.

**Free access to SUSE online trainings:** as many customers had adopted work-from-home mandates, this presented a challenge for IT professionals who needed to keep their technology skills up to date. Tailored course content from existing videos on the SUSE Technical Training YouTube channel were made available for free.

**Extended upgrade window:** as the planned end of general support date for SUSE Linux Enterprise Server (SLES) 12 Service Pack 4 would have happened in the middle of this crisis (June 30, 2020), all customers with a current subscription of SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 12 SP4 were eligible to receive continued access to patches and updates free of charge until September 30, 2020, providing IT teams with more time to complete upgrade plans and evaluations.

**Flexible payment terms** for government, airline, travel, transportation, leisure and tourism industries and a range of commercial incentives were designed for these industries to ease the effects of the pandemic.

SPONSORED BY

UNIT4





**WINNER**

# THE COVID-19 HERO COMMUNITY AWARD WORKDAY

**A**t the onset of the pandemic, **Workday** said it knew it had to act quickly to ensure it was doing its part to help its larger communities, especially those most vulnerable and those who would be disproportionately impacted.

In March 2020 it made donations to support causes on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis and to the communities that needed help. It joined forces with 25 companies to collectively raise \$22m. As part of this collaboration, Workday has donated a combined total of \$1.5m to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the United Nations Foundation. With European headquarters in Dublin, Ireland, it also supported The Community Foundation of Ireland with a grant to its COVID-19 relief fund, helping to support those most vulnerable with critical services, including the elderly and people experiencing homelessness.

It also committed to the #StopTheSpread pledge and supported the production and distribution of high-quality ventilators and other supplies at scale.

Workday knew its non-profit partners needed extra financial support sooner than its typical grant cycle through the Workday Foundation allows. So, it expedited grants to those who are doing critical work in the workforce development field to ensure they could serve more unemployed people seeking work. In the last two years, Workday and the Workday Foundation have donated more than \$14m to aid in the fight for economic mobility.

Workday employees wanted to give, too. As part of its charitable donation matching programme, it set up special giving campaigns for employees without any impact to their annual giving cap. Workday matched their donations to the following organizations: CDC

Foundation, COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for WHO, Direct Relief, and Doctors Without Borders.

Perhaps most significantly, the company also engaged employees to participate in an all-employee volunteer programme called Workforce Week – and this past year with the pandemic, it mattered more than ever.

The goal of Workforce Week is to help close the opportunity gap to prepare job seekers of all ages for well-paid careers, break the cycle of poverty, and build onramps to opportunity. It aligns with the mission of the Workday Foundation, which aims to create economic opportunity for all. It worked together with non-profit workforce development organisations to help serve a wide range of job seekers, like students, immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and those marginalised by society who are facing barriers to employment.

Also in 2020 Workforce teamed up with others in the tech sector – Salesforce, LinkedIn, Okta, and DocuSign – to host career workshops for job seekers across the globe. Hundreds of Workday employees volunteered their time at Workforce Week events, dedicating their expertise and resources to help job seekers prepare for a potentially life-changing career. Together with its tech industry partners, Workday supported 46 workforce development non-profit partners globally.

Job seekers walk away from Workforce Week with positive feedback, a boost in confidence, new professional connections, and their fears about the job search and interview processes are being conquered.

As far as business impact, Workday employees also benefit from meeting and networking with diverse talent. Ninety-four percent of employees rated Workforce Week favourably, with employees participating in everything from mock interviews to career panels.



## THE COVID-19 HERO COMMUNITY AWARD

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

## COGNIZANT



**C**ognizant created Cognizant Assist, a platform that enabled charities who were looking for volunteering support to distribute essentials and reach out to 2,80,000 communities during the pandemic. It was part of a pro-bono project developed in response to a request from a self-organised task force of 400+ volunteers in Nairn, Scotland. The platform brings together three integral parts – beneficiaries, volunteers/donors and charities – to collaborate, communicate and deliver support to others without the need for intervention in distributing essentials and volunteering support.

Cognizant wanted to create a solution, which could be accessed on all platforms (desktop, laptop and hand held devices) as Web App works as PWA (Progressive Web App) in Smart mobile and hand held devices, that will help the vulnerable and isolated families during the COVID-19 outbreak and ensuing lockdown. Its associates volunteered more than 2,000 hours of their time to create the cloud-based, open-source platform to help volunteering organisations collaborate and communicate with volunteers/donors and beneficiaries to manage relief efforts at scale. So far, the platform has been implemented by nine charities across the globe including, the Nairn Task Force, Scotland and Havering Council in England. The Nairn Task Force, has secured over 450 volunteers who have completed over 300 support requests to a community of 11,000 residents and helped reinstate resilience in the community, attributed to the platform. At Havering Council, the app originally limited to 18 wards, has over 2,500 volunteers registered to support a community of 260,000 residents with a wider roll out planned.

The Cognizant Assist platform was developed by six very passionate individuals in a record time of four weeks to help charities connect to volunteers willing to support, reach and offer relief to others in the community deeply impacted by the pandemic. Cognizant Assist connects charities with volunteers and communities for causes like food distribution, taking care of senior citizens, pets, and so on. Driven by the sheer need to help marshal forces and support at pace and scale, this platform was developed as a team, spearheaded by Cognizant Digital Business.

### COMMENDED

## ADVANCED



**A**dvanced software has been vital in supporting the NHS' response to the pandemic.

At the start of COVID-19 the company extended its clinical patient management system, Adastra, to help NHS patients by providing a sophisticated overspill / queuing system for people calling NHS 111. It was vital, with the number of COVID-19 cases rising fast, to ensure the integrity of those channels. The Adastra software was already handling 80 percent of the NHS 111 calls in England, and the extension to the service was configured to cope with many tens of thousands of enquiries the NHS anticipated it would receive in a day during the pandemic. The extension was commissioned, configured and tested – alongside the provision of specific online training material – in just 10 days. The extension enabled the NHS network to be accessed by clinicians working from home, as well as retired clinicians who were asked to return to the health service to boost frontline support. The queuing system ensured that patients who assessed themselves on the NHS App, NHS 111 website, or by ringing NHS 111 and were displaying COVID-19 symptoms were electronically managed and directed to clinicians.

Its solutions were also pivotal in the management of urgent care across Greater Manchester and Scotland. During the second wave of the pandemic there was concern that emergency departments in hospitals would be overwhelmed with admissions and patients waiting many hours for a bed. It worked with The Greater Manchester Urgent Primary Care Alliance (GMUPCA) to roll out its Odyssey clinical decision support solution to meet this need as part of the national NHS 111 First campaign. The goal was to reduce pressure on emergency departments across 10 NHS Trusts and ensure patients calling 111 or visiting emergency departments were triaged in the same way.

Advanced also extended the Adastra software for NHS Scotland, who had used it for the last 17 years to manage out-of-hours and unscheduled care, to support urgent care services and COVID-19 hubs across the country. It ensured the seamless exchange of clinical information between NHS 24 111, emergency departments and other urgent care services.

## THE COVID-19 HERO COMMUNITY AWARD

### FINALISTS

EY



In 2019, **EY** acquired AgilityWorks, a leading technology consultancy business, particularly in the deployment of SAP HANA and SAP Cloud based technology. EY Proximity Monitor is part of the company's broader technology-enabled COVID-19 response.

Phase 1 started in March 2020 with the purpose of assisting countries facing a number of challenges in managing COVID-19 via pro bono offerings assisted by SAP & Qualtrics. Phase 2, where EY Proximity Monitor came to life, moved in May 2020 onto helping clients create safer business and social environments, assisted again by SAP and Qualtrics. It picked up its work on indoor positioning in the retail sector, using Bluetooth to monitor distance – now synonymous with many contact tracing apps. The key difference was it enrolled SAP and a third-party Bluetooth specialist firm to support many of the technological shortcomings many of the public apps felt at the time. The data collected was to be retained by the host organisation and so could be used proactively to monitor low-, medium- and high-risk contact events within the venue. Beyond the sensor data collection, it is then transported into a full SAP Cloud back-end hosted within SAP Integration Suite, enabled by SAP HANA databases and presented on SAP Analytics Cloud & SAP Digital Boardroom to give insight of what is happening, and how policies and procedures can be updated to be their most effective.

EY Proximity Monitor gives insight to the social distancing capabilities and dwell spots where and when transmission rates could be suboptimal, giving a tangible ability for proactive monitoring of your venue or 'bubble'. This has significant impacts on productive ability, mental health of staff with additional potential positive benefits to insurance costs alongside preventing infection rates affecting the workforce. Customer examples include a Premier League football club, the Eurovision Song Contest and the PGA European Tour.

The company is now exploring emerging use cases, such as wayfinding to reduce risk as people navigate unfamiliar surroundings (e.g. complex conference venues and large events), and as customers consider the sustainability angle with the return to offices and manufacturing sites.

INFOR



Among many projects happening across the world, Infor would like to focus on three activities.

Women at **Infor** (WIN) is a global Infor initiative. WIN UK supports charities and less fortunate women with charitable projects such as donations and providing clothes, etc.

St John's Ambulance: Infor encouraged all UK employees to volunteer in NHS projects. Some employees volunteered as vaccinators, carers and advocates across the country.

The Prince's Trust: In its biggest initiative, Infor is joining the effort to support disadvantaged young people in the UK through a new strategic partnership with The Prince's Trust. Infor is committing £100,000 over four years, along with C-level committee involvement and employee volunteers.

"We have long admired the Trust's effectiveness in combatting youth unemployment by addressing each person's needs individually. We are eager to actively support," said Anwen Robinson, Infor general manager & SVP of UK & Ireland, in announcing the partnership. "Youth may need us, but we also need them. There is a STEM and digital skills shortage in the UK. We need to inspire and equip the next generation – from all diverse backgrounds and circumstances – so they can join us in the technology industry, or wherever their passion may be."

Employees will have plenty of opportunities to come together for volunteering that may include employability and money management sessions, CV reviews, technology skills workshops and fundraising events: including walks, marathons, Palace to Palace bike rides, and even skydiving.

Infor constantly encourages its employees to be involved with communities and positively impact social and challenging events. It says it is genuinely committed to helping those less fortunate with its technology and sharing know-how so that many lives can improve and can create sustainable opportunities.

Last year, of the young people engaging with a Prince's Trust programme: 40 percent identified as female; 20 percent were from a Black, Asian, or minority ethnic (BAME) background; 36.54 percent had a disability; 36.67 percent faced issues with their mental health and 17 percent identified as LGBTQ+. Infor says it is here for them.





## **Seismic or small, change is all around us**

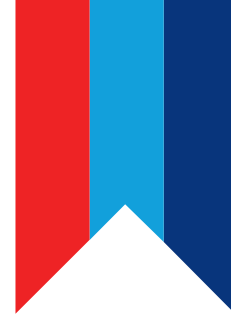
With technology and human ingenuity,  
we can make change work for you and your business.

**Let there be change**

**accenture**



# WE'RE ALREADY PLANNING FOR 2022...



The inaugural **ERP Today Awards & Fundraiser** was held at Ascot Racecourse on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2021. More than 1,000 tech executives and 150 NHS staff and leadership shared the day to recognise excellence across our industry and raise money to support the NHS.

We had to write this copy 'before' the event so assuming there hasn't been any disasters, we hope everyone who attended enjoyed a fun-packed and entertaining day. The event has already raised £100,000 for the NHS and hopefully by the time the final total is tallied up we will have raised even more.

Our Awards event in 2022 will follow the same format as this year with a few tweaks and improvements:

Following on from our work with NHS Charities Together for this year's event, ERP Today is delighted to announce the start of a multiyear partnership to retain NHSCT as the patron charity for the ERP Today Awards & Fundraiser.

We are already planning how to make the event bigger and better in 2022. Here are a few things that you can expect.

- ✓ Double the space and capacity for up to 2,500 attendees
- ✓ Healthcare tech exhibition zone for sponsors to showcase their latest healthcare innovations
- ✓ More NHS Trusts in attendance with 20 being invited to attend the day
- ✓ NHS procurement tepee where buyers from across the NHS will welcome your advances
- ✓ Additional award categories that will create a more level playing field for all
- ✓ More hospitality options with increased number of tepees

To help us improve next year's event we want to hear from as many attendees as possible to share your views on what you liked and what you think we can improve.

You can leave anonymous feedback on the event website at [www.erptodayawards.com/feedback](https://www.erptodayawards.com/feedback) or if you'd prefer to speak to us directly please send an email to [awards@erp.today](mailto:awards@erp.today)



## ERP TODAY AWARDS & FUNDRAISER 2022

**ASCOT RACECOURSE, THURSDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER.**

Tickets, hospitality, exhibition space and sponsorship details will be released in early 2022.

Award nominations will open in April 2022.

# Social Work England creates new ben



KINDNESS, WELLBEING AND MINDFULNESS EMBEDDED  
AS A KEY TENET OF THE PROJECT - IMPLEMENTED ON  
TIME, TO BUDGET AND ALREADY DELIVERING BENEFITS

BY PAUL ESHERWOOD



# chmark

## for ERP projects



It's day one of a new ERP project, the kick-off meeting is about to start and you're expecting the worst. You already know the client has limited resources, a small budget, a very aggressive timeline and you've heard on the grapevine that they couldn't make the deal work with the first partner they engaged with. They want a full suite of finance, HR and payroll up and running within six months – they've never done an ERP project before and the spon-

sor has already asked, "why can't we get this all done in four weeks?"

It sounds like the nightmare scenario: a naive customer with unrealistic expectations and no contingency to cover all the stuff they will inevitably want and need to make it work. You're trying to look positive but as the project lead stands up to begin THE meeting, you're braced for a list of unrealistic expectations and the start of a long slog.

To your surprise, before he talks about require-



## SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND

ments, functionality, user experience, project management, deadlines, change control or documentation – the session starts with mindfulness and wellbeing analysis. Rather than setting milestones for when each module will go-live, the first priority is to measure and protect the health and happiness of all those working on the project, including the implementation partner team.

Hard-nosed ERP professionals will struggle to recognise this scenario and many will wonder if it's even possible to deliver an ERP project without the usual stresses, strains and threats that have been synonymous with the industry for decades.

Guy Oliver led the programme from **Social Work England (SWE)** and has many years of experience delivering large scale ERP projects at places like **Rolls-Royce**. He told me it took a little getting used to at the start and his previous experiences with ERP had been very different to those at Social Work England.

"I've delivered lots of big ERP projects and they are always very stressful and challenging. I've come from a background where people were put under a lot of pressure and got the sack if they didn't deliver or fell short of the sponsor's expectation. Social Work England created a completely different environment for the project team – a culture that was set by our CEO from the very start – most of the team hadn't done ERP before so they weren't damaged by previous bad experiences and that allowed us to build the project values on a blank canvas."

Before I get too deeply into the wellbeing narrative, it's important to fix something to the top of page one in this story. SWE's project wasn't a soft exercise where all commercial considerations were ignored for the sake of some kindness; they didn't forgo getting the job done in favour of everybody's feelings – this was a tough project with an aggressive timeline. From a relatively low base in terms of knowledge and experience, SWE implemented a coherent ERP solution which covered finance, procurement, contracts, HR, payroll and recruitment in un-

der six months. By any measure this project has been a huge success and is already delivering the benefits on which it was predicated.

### Selection process

SWE used a government procurement framework to evaluate the potential ERP solutions and ultimately selected **Unit4** – but it wasn't their first pick. SWE originally selected **TechnologyOne** as their preferred choice but were unable to reach a commercial agreement with the vendor for a variety of reasons.

Oliver said: "We chose TechnologyOne because we thought it was a good fit, but it became clear quite early on that we were going to struggle to find a way to make it work. Our organisation is young and relatively immature and once we started getting into negotiations we felt that it wasn't a good cultural fit for us. Our discussions started with Unit4 and **Embridge** and it was like night and day. We immediately felt like they understood us and we just clicked. I have to say though, I was still a little sceptical and I warned my team not to be seduced by the Unit4 website – it looked amazing, it seemed to fit with all our values but I know the software industry is very aggressive so I told everyone to take it with a pinch of salt. My concerns were squashed

Our discussions started with Unit4 and Embridge and it was like night and day. We immediately felt like they understood us and we just clicked. **GUY OLIVER**





pretty early on and in Unit4 and Embridge we found two partners that mirrored our values and the way we like to work.”

Contractual negotiation within ERP is a minefield – why do you think there are so many third-party agencies that exclusively specialise in helping customers mediate their terms? Make a mistake within the reams of legal jargon which set out what you will pay for, when you will pay for it and how you can use it, and you may have a long and expensive road ahead of you. Some ERP vendors have streamlined and simplified their contracts in recent years and introduced measures that are designed to give the customer flexibility (take a look at **Acumatica** as a great example of this) but, in most cases the paperwork for ERP licences is complex, confusing and open to interpretation.

It’s not just the vendors that make contracting difficult – consultancies are equally guilty of loading their agreements with clauses and conditions which can stifle a project. Change control is the most obvious example where contracts are so rigid that any deviation from the initial scope can result in additional costs to resolve unforeseen issues. Of course, contracts are always at the centre of business dealings and play a vital role in creating a framework for a project. But, as Andy Bird from **Inoapps** notes elsewhere in this issue of ERP Today: “Where there is trust, you can have contract documents that are only a couple of

We were relieved that we were able to agree a deal with Unit4 and Embridge that, of course, had all the right measures in place, but also gave us peace of mind that we wouldn’t have a piece of paper waved in our faces every time something changed or went off plan a little.



pages long. There will be things that come up during the contract term that are unanticipated, either because they were not included definitively in discovery or because the business situation changes, but a systems integrator that values the relationship enough can make things work without going hat in hand looking for more budget.”

Finding an ERP partner that you can trust has to be top priority for all would-be customers and, as I comment elsewhere in my interview with **de Novo Solutions**, “Fee structure has been a bugbear of mine since I started writing about ERP and the industry is long overdue a shake-up of how consultancies earn their crust.”

Commenting on the contractual relationship that SWE negotiated, Oliver said: “We knew we would have ups and downs on the project, that’s to be expected. Software contracts, particularly

## SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND

with public sector organisations, usually tie everything down so there is no flexibility and it creates horrible relationships between the parties. We were relieved that we were able to agree a deal with Unit4 and Embridge that, of course, had all the right measures in place, but also gave us peace of mind that we wouldn't have a piece of paper waved in our faces every time something changed or went off plan a little."

### Kind ERP

I have often pondered why ERP projects are so stressful and regularly fail to deliver a positive outcome. The fundamental nature of legacy ERP didn't help – it was horribly complicated from a technical point of view, it always required significant customisation, it was hugely expensive and extremely time-consuming. Even on a project with a three-year timeline, everything seemed to be done in a rush – the project plan was discarded after a matter of weeks, different teams started working against each other rather than with a common goal and by the end of the project, the customer was just happy it was over irrespective of how well the solution worked.

Cloud technologies have gone a long way to remedying some of these unwanted characteristics of ERP projects. But, I do fear that many consultancies – those which have been delivering ERP for several decades – haven't transformed their own mindset to meet the evolving needs of customers and deliver projects in a new way. The coronavirus pandemic has forced many SIs to re-evaluate their physical delivery model and that will have a long term benefit for customers and project professionals. But there is a more fundamental, underlying mindset that needs to be altered in order to bring ERP practices in line with the expectations of modern customers.

This isn't an argument for small versus big; global powerhouse pitched against smaller nimble consultancy – I don't think that size should

have anything to do with it. In fact, given the way that the big consultancies have shifted their corporate narrative over recent years to be much more in tune with environmental and social issues, it is surprising that they are not the ones taking the lead on this.

The brutality of ERP projects must be consigned to history and customers, partners and vendors need to build relationships around trust and a new set of values. I asked Emma O'Brien, CEO at Embridge, for her thoughts on how the project had been managed, and she said: "Successful digital transformation is not just about the technology and this was recognised very early on by SWE. Ensuring equal focus on business process transformation, enabling the people change and the welfare of the teams is what made this project so successful. The combined SWE and Embridge team acted as one from the outset. We were one team, with one shared outcome. SWE have been an absolute joy to work with and supporting their transformation as an organisation in such a short timeframe has been a true honour and great example for others to follow."

"Ensuring equal focus on business process transformation, enabling the people change and the welfare of the teams is what made this project so successful" **EMMA O'BRIEN**





“Our staff are happy, obviously our suppliers are happy and the best thing is that people really like using the software. It looks and feels like something that you want to use. It’s intuitive, well designed and has made a massive difference to the way SWE operates in a very short space of time.”



### The project

SWE started with a three-phase project plan to deliver recruitment at the start, followed by finance in phase two, and HR and payroll at the end. The recruitment phase gained traction quickly but the teams realised they wanted to extend the scope of the original plan as they learned more about the capabilities and features within Unit4’s product. A quick decision was made to go back into discovery and rescope the recruitment requirement which would then free up the teams to tackle finance immediately. Usually this type of change is the root cause of contractual and financial issues between the customer and partner but the Embridge team agreed to meet the client’s requests within the scope of the original agreement.

Dan Chilton, director of professional services at Embridge told me that his team had to do a lot of flexing on the project but the strength of the relationship between the client-side and partner-side project managers provided a platform of trust and respect which meant they navigated bumps relatively easily. He said: “We knew the SWE team hadn’t done an ERP project before so we went into this with our eyes open. We worked very hard at the start to structure the programme to fit with the values that SWE had and we made a success of the project by being true to those values. We work with lots of public sector organisations so we are used to a fairly soft approach, but with SWE it wasn’t all just about being kind and taking things gently. There were lots of tough decisions to be made before the project started and significant challenges during the project. The characteristics of the project did make us think more deeply about how we worked with our consultants and the SWE team and ultimately we found common ground, chose collaboration over conflict and delivered an outstanding project for a very worthy customer.”

So far, SWE has implemented all of the modules from the original scope and are now working to bring learning and development into the

solution. The recruitment module which was rescope is up and running and, according to Oliver, the solution is already yielding many of the benefits they had hoped for. He said: “Payroll has worked like a dream, internal approvals have been revolutionised and we are now paying our suppliers in less than 10 days compared to an average of over 30 days before we implemented Unit4. Our staff are happy, obviously our suppliers are happy and the best thing is that people really like using the software. It looks and feels like something that you want to use. It’s intuitive, well designed and has made a massive difference to the way SWE operates in a very short space of time.”

### My Takeaways

The collaboration between SWE, Unit4 and Embridge demonstrates what is possible when the values of all parties are aligned. I do recognise that with these three organisations we have the perfect storm of complementary ideals; the customer is involved with social care, the vendor places people at the centre of their solution, and the partner is young, hungry and not weighed-down with some of the constraints of larger organisations. I mention in my opening words of this issue that it may be unrealistic to expect a global ERP programme to be able to embrace the same level of thought and consideration for those involved – but maybe I am making that excuse too easily. Why shouldn’t it be possible? I don’t expect that all customers will be able to adopt the same standards in their projects but I would urge prospective ERP buyers to give serious consideration to far more than just the technology, cost and time involved. A lot can be learned from this project and I hope to see many others taking note of those lessons and embracing a less combative, more collaborative and ultimately, much healthier way of delivering technology projects in the future. ■

JOSH BERSIN



# Workday Vs. ServiceNow: The Big Shift

BY JOSH BERSIN

**E**very decade there's a major shift in enterprise software. In the 1970s companies bought integrated financial systems; in the 1980s and 1990s it was ERP; now it's a wild west of tools for digital customer

experiences, digital employee experiences, and AI-enabled automation.

And thanks to the pandemic, every company is going through a digital transformation. Just this week we talked with three banks, four insurance companies, three retailers, and a number of universities pushing this agenda.

And as you dig into everything going on you realise that companies now want to digitalise everything. Of course there's the digitalisation of products and services (insurance claims handled by mobile photos, customers adopting digital wallets and advanced credit services, intelligent shopping experiences, online entertainment and service delivery). They want to digitalise employee experiences (recruiting, onboarding, career management, and remote work). And they also want to digitalise their back office (financials, service delivery, compliance, mobility, and tax).

Well, this week I was reviewing the financial results of **Workday**, **ServiceNow**, **UiPath**, and some other enterprise players and there's a big story to unfold. While Workday had a great quarter, growing at 18.6 percent year over year and now generating over \$1.1bn each quarter, ServiceNow is growing at almost twice that rate, and now boasts as many HR users as Workday. (And UiPath is now valued at almost 60 times revenue.) How can this be?

It's all about The Big Shift. The shift from ERP and transactional systems toward systems of experience, systems of intelligence, and systems of automation.

Workday has been a pioneering company. This team invented the cloud HR systems market, pioneered an object-oriented database for HR and talent, and they continue to dazzle and delight investors, CHROs, and CIOs. But despite their best efforts to position Workday as a "digital transformation platform," for most companies, it's a modern, well-designed, ERP.

I know Workday hates positioning itself as an ERP provider, but this is what the company does. In a highly integrated and elegant way, Workday lets companies put their financials, HR, payroll, and planning applications into one place, and this is what ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) is all about. It's a massive and critical market for business, but it's no longer

the centre of “digital transformation” around the world.

A digital transformation is more than “digitalising transactions” and putting an integrated business system in place. It’s also a problem of redesigning how work gets done, creating new models for work and workers, and implementing a myriad of intelligent self-service and productivity tools for employees. And this adjacent space, which we now call the “Employee Experience Platform” market, is growing at light speed.

**W**itness the financial performance of ServiceNow. ServiceNow generated \$1.3bn of revenue during the same quarter, grew at 31 percent year over year, and

Workday and ServiceNow, are kind of like cousins. They compete in a few small areas, but they’re growing on parallel paths. But as the financial results now show, the market is shifting quickly, and it would not surprise me to see ServiceNow become a “system of record” over time. (ServiceNow just acquired a database company.)

Workday has the huge advantage that employee data belongs in one place, so they would argue you want feedback and employee sentiment information (which is vital to pandemic response) tightly coupled with everything else about people. (The Workday execs highlighted the growth of **Peakon**, the company’s newly acquired employee feedback tool, in its investor presentation.)

And Workday is absolutely commit-

to operate, but they want to delight employees and customers too. So ServiceNow, which is more of a “Creator Platform” than Workday (today), is seeing faster growth in the market. (PS: Workday Extend is an application development platform designed to build apps that leverage Workday’s data, security, and process models.)

And let me just add one more point. Corporate Creator Platforms are a \$36bn market alone (according to ServiceNow) and I would argue it’s even bigger. Every HR team, every manager, and every IT department wants to “build a new workflow” or “design a new process” for something special in their team, department, or functional area. Can they do that in Workday? Not very easily. So, they’re going to ServiceNow (or Microsoft

**While Workday had a great quarter, growing at 18.6 percent year over year and now generating over \$1.1bn each quarter, ServiceNow is growing at almost twice that rate, and now boasts as many HR users as Workday.**

claims to have 50 percent of the Fortune 500 and 35 percent of the Fortune 500 on their platform. These are similar numbers to Workday, which has around 55 million users and covers 50 percent of the Fortune 500. (There are more than a billion employees in the world, so the market is still pretty big yet.)

And it’s funny how every client we talk with now looks at Workday (and **Oracle**, **SAP**, and others) for core systems and a second decision for ServiceNow, **Salesforce**, **Eightfold**, and others for Employee Experiences, Employee Workflows, and customer and IT service automation.

Just this week a client asked me a pretty profound question. “Now that we have ServiceNow up and running, can we possibly replace our ERP?” Of course, the answer is no, but you can see why they brought it up.

In reality, these two companies,

ted to experience management. Workday People Experience is specifically designed to handle workflow management, and Workday’s integrations with **Google Cloud** and **Microsoft Teams** are expanding. But it takes time to build that out, and ServiceNow is designed to access multiple back-end systems.

And ServiceNow may argue differently. Why wouldn’t you want employee feedback data coupled with the “employee journeys” and “employee workflows” implemented in ServiceNow? Suppose your badge reader doesn’t work or your onboarding is kind of weak – wouldn’t you want that feedback going into the service delivery system rather than the HRMS? You decide, but you can see where I’m going.

There’s no question that the centre of gravity is shifting. Companies need a core HR and financial system

Viva and other tools) to do so. (Workday Extend is focussed on this area.)

**I**t’s funny how the software industry keeps changing. We used to talk about technology as a way of integrating talent applications (talent management); then we called these platforms “systems of engagement” so they could make employees happy. Well now we’ve shifting again, and the new centre of action is toward “systems of intelligence” and “systems of design.”

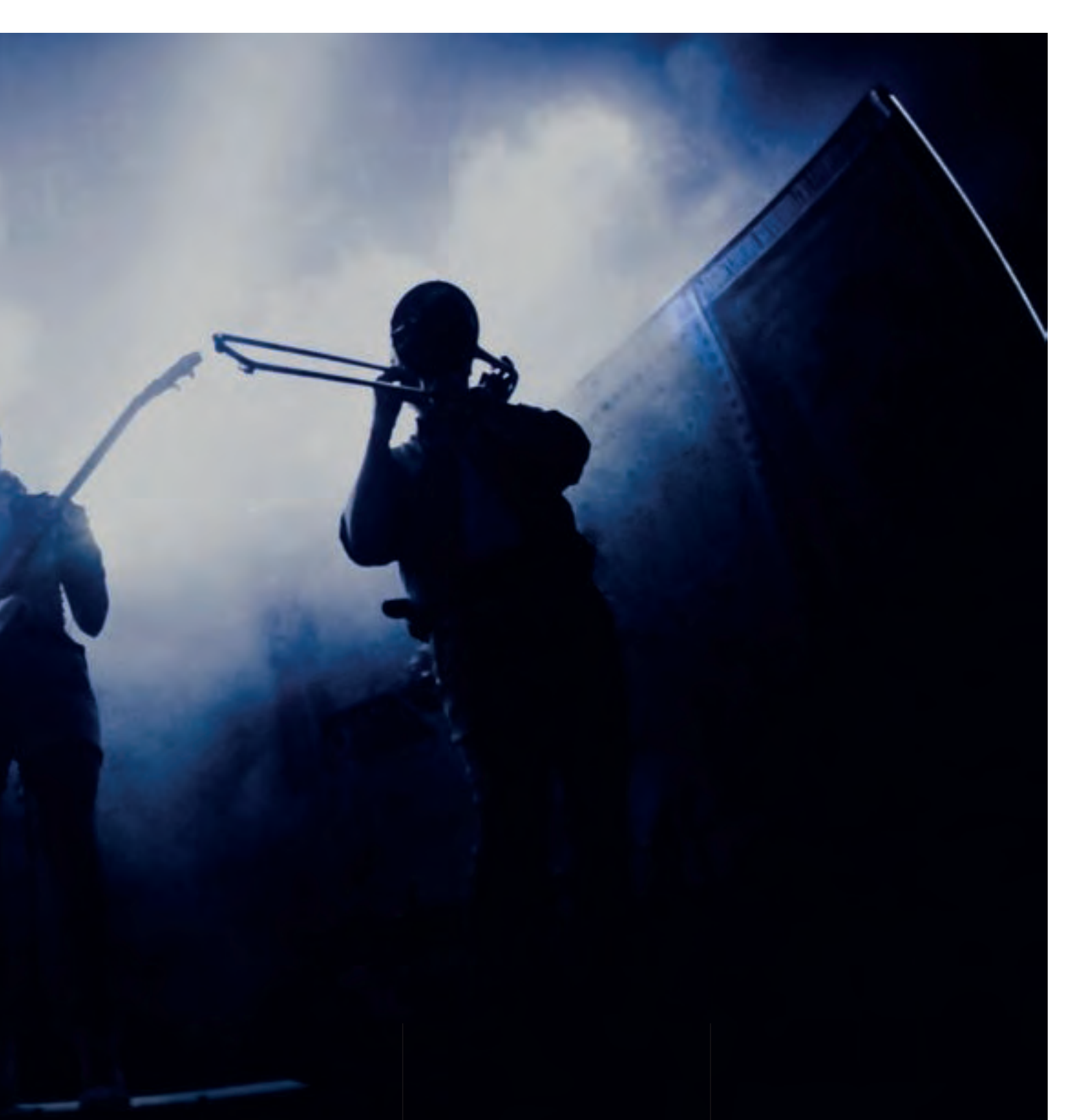
Read more about all this in our newest research “Employee Experience: The Definitive Guide” and my annual study “HR Technology 2021.” This Fall I’ll be speaking at the HR Technology Conference, so stay tuned for more. ■

Josh Bersin, global industry analyst and CEO of The Josh Bersin Company





CAN A  
NEW ENTRANT  
CHANGE THE GAME  
IN THE EXPERIENCE  
ECONOMY?



**Getting the band back together** is not always a prudent idea. How many times have we seen legends reform in their twilight years only to undo their previous good work and rewrite their legacy with a failed attempt at making it again? Pink Floyd (Momentary Lapse of Reason), The Pixies (Indy Cindy), Guns 'N Roses (Chinese Democracy) and Queen (The Cosmos Rocks), to name just a few, have all tarnished their position in history with comebacks that were a pale comparison to their heyday.

BY PAUL ESHERWOOD

## DE NOVO SOLUTIONS

here are exceptions of course. Bowie aged like a fine wine after his evolution from Ziggy Stardust. The Detours reformed into the legendary, The Who. Even Take That, post Robbie, became credible following their unlikely comeback. There are plenty of other things that are better the second time round too – but that’s a conversation for another day.

So how does this music analogy translate into the tech world? Well, one of the industry’s most recognisable characters is starting over in an attempt to recreate some of the magic he enjoyed with his previous business, **Certus Solutions**.

Mark Sweeny describes himself as a serial entrepreneur and founded Certus along with business partner Tim Warner in 2007. They were right at the start of **Oracle**’s Fusion journey and can rightly be described as trailblazers in early cloud history. Certus was small but thought big and it won some incredible deals: most notably in the public sector with the **ONS**, **HM Treasury** and the **Home Office**.

Certus was acquired by **Accenture** in 2018 and after a short lived union Sweeny departed to enjoy the spoils of his success.

As regular readers of ERP Today will know, Sweeny writes a column for us so I did ponder whether that would be the end of his involvement in the sector and if we would need to find a new contributing editor. To my surprise, Sweeny and Warner were already hatching a plan for a comeback with a new proposition, so I decided we should find out if their sequel will be more Godfather or Karate Kid in a no-privileges interview.

Sweeny and Warner are a good double act. Sweeny has all the traits of a typical entrepreneur – he can smell a deal, instinctively knows which way is up, has plenty to say and has learned over years of hard work that effort equals reward. Warner is more measured and thoughtful and brings nearly 40 years of IT, systems and Oracle experience to the table. They created a winning team back in 2007 and there is no reason to suspect that they can’t repeat the success of their previous venture with their latest offering, **de Novo Solutions**.

Sweeny was at pains to point out during our interview that de Novo is not a rebirth of Certus and the proposition is built on different foundations, and said: *“Let us be really clear, de Novo is not about recreating Certus.”*

Of course, the motivation for doing the same again would be tough to muster and the enterprise tech landscape has matured over the last 14 years making it harder to get in at ground level. But there are some similarities between the opportunity that Certus capitalised on and those which are presented by the experience economy. Certus was literally the first cab off the rank with Oracle Fusion (in fact when Sweeny first started selling the solution it was barely built). That gave Certus some great first-mover advantage and it followed that once they had one successful customer under their belt the next Oracle customer wanted to work with an outfit that had some experience with the technology.

The same logic can be applied to the way that **ServiceNow** (de Novo is a ServiceNow partner – more on this later) has started to disrupt the enterprise tech space with their workflow



platform which improves user experience for both customers and employees. Although parts of the ServiceNow proposition are still, in my opinion, immature and in need of refinement, there is no doubt that their meteoric revenue growth is set to continue and there will be an aggressive bun fight between the SIs to grab as much of the action as they can. ServiceNow recently reported quarterly cloud revenues of \$1.5bn – that’s more than **Workday** and not far behind Oracle – with a growth rate of 35 percent annually. The smart money is on ServiceNow to become increasingly dominant and wrestle even more transformation dollars away from the traditional tech vendors. (You can read more on this over the page in Josh Bersin’s ServiceNow analysis).





Commenting on ServiceNow's trajectory, Sweeny said: *"What I like about ServiceNow is not where it is today, but very much its direction of travel and the possibilities it opens up. ServiceNow is still in its infancy and its growth plans are phenomenal. Equally, you only have to look at the strategic acquisitions the company is making, the product is on the same journey as we saw with Oracle way back in 2010. Remember, ServiceNow is not trying to be an ERP system and equally Oracle is evolving also and that's really exciting to see – Digital Assistant and Oracle Journeys – they just kill Workday and SAP in my opinion. So, what could you do if you combine these vendor solutions? The possibilities are endless."*

The momentum created by ServiceNow has piqued the interest of the big

SIs with Accenture, **Deloitte**, **PwC** and **KPMG** already making strong plays in this space. There is also a healthy pipeline of smaller niche players trying to capitalise on the opportunity and de Novo is betting it can be one of the winners. Unlike the Oracle or SAP ecosystems, which are saturated with partners all looking for their piece, the ServiceNow community is still relatively small. That means getting a break with ServiceNow (provided you have some credentials) is not as challenging as it would be to start up and try to take on the established players in more mature markets.

Coming back to Sweeny's comment about not redoing Certus, I understand that the new team will be keen to make a fresh mark, but my take is

that both he and Warner would be delighted to replicate the success of Certus albeit through different means.

#### **What is the de Novo proposition?**

De Novo has already achieved Oracle and ServiceNow partner status and it will be no surprise to anyone that their plan is rooted in their experience with Oracle cloud technologies. When I asked Sweeny how he would describe their USP, he said: *"Our proposition is three-fold: firstly, pioneer into the new era of the experience economy and create digital end-to-end vertical solutions using both ServiceNow and Oracle cloud technologies. Secondly, making sure existing customers that use these technologies maximise their return on investment by using the innovation that is being constantly delivered and they are paying*

## DE NOVO SOLUTIONS

*for. And finally, bringing real commercial innovation to the table, where an element of our fee is at risk but also the reward is linked to the value we generate for the organisation over time."*

Fee structure has been a bugbear of mine since I started writing about ERP and the industry is long overdue a shake-up of how consultancies earn their crust. As Andy Bird writes elsewhere in this issue (referencing an article I wrote on the subject two years ago) what customers are willing to pay for is changing and the role of the SI or consultancy has evolved.

ERP consultancy fees used to be calculated by the number of days estimated to capture requirements and configure the system, multiplied by the number of consultants required to complete those tasks, plus a huge whack of expenses. Customers simply won't tolerate that today and all con-

sultancies, whether it's a new start-up like de Novo or one of the global powerhouses, have to structure their fees so they are directly linked to value creation.

There is, however, a fly in the value-led ointment in the form of lift and shift outfits that undercut the majority of would-be partners and deliver sub-optimal solutions to naïve customers. Imagine you are about to invest £10m in a new Oracle solution and one partner offers to implement the solution for £6m while another says they can do the job for £3m. The pricier consultancy may offer a whole heap of value-add activity that the client would love to have - and will ultimately deliver far higher benefit over time - but money talks and £3m talks loudly when you are already ploughing millions into the technology.

To my mind any technology partner that offers to support a customer through an implementation of Oracle, ServiceNow or any other tech product for that matter, should structure their fees in such a way that they are paid over time, as value is created and the customer realises a return on its investment. If Sweeny and Co can find a way to make this work, where they have real skin in the game, it could be a gamechanger but there are significant hurdles to navigate. The likes of **Evosys**, who will likely compete on many similar-sized deals, price their projects very competitively and purchasing decisions by all but

the savviest of customers are often led by cost rather than value - especially in the lower and middle market.

Commenting on this, Sweeny said: *"All I see now are partners, at best, catching up to where Certus was in 2018 whilst the technology, propositions and what the customers are looking for has moved on. If you don't constantly evolve, your service propositions lose relevance with customers and this market is one that can turn against you very quickly. As for commercial innovation, there isn't any beyond fixed price."*

I asked Warner how de Novo would differentiate itself in a crowded market where customer relationships are often owned by an incumbent partner. He said, *"Our proposition is different. Most players in the implementation market are siloed by product and follow the long-established methods of implementation. The Oracle SaaS products are now very mature and most SIs follow a standard path to implementation. Indeed, it might be difficult to differentiate between them. We are different and are focussing on the experience from the outset the users have in using systems in their day-to-day work whilst also bringing innovative commercial models to the table where we get rewarded from the value our solutions derive."*

### ServiceNow as a differentiator

Despite their history with Oracle technology, de Novo is positioning itself as a dual-vendor consultancy. Their challenge will be two-fold; identifying existing Oracle cloud customers that are dissatisfied with the incumbent partner and are persuaded by the ServiceNow offering. And, finding the remaining



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THE ORACLE SaaS PRODUCTS ARE NOW VERY MATURE AND MOST SIs FOLLOW A STANDARD PATH TO IMPLEMENTATION. INDEED, IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THEM.

on-premise customers that still want to move to SaaS and winning that business competitively. While some would tell you that the addressable market for new SaaS customers is infinite, I'd argue that the growth in on-prem customers deciding to upgrade E-Business Suite and move their infrastructure to the cloud is stronger than ever.

When I put the challenges to Warner and asked where their sweet spot would be, he said: *"The market we are targeting is much larger than just the addressable market for Oracle Cloud implementations and we think our proposition is significantly different from others. The world is full of multi-faceted solutions: we want to make sure we offer our customers the very best solutions and if that means using multiple system solutions then so be it. The success of business applications don't just lie in the functionality of a system, it is also about user adoption. We plan to build solutions using ServiceNow and Oracle that give the user the 'experience' that makes them want to use their applications because they can tangibly see the benefits."*

My take is that most customers buying ServiceNow already have a relatively mature ERP solution and use ServiceNow to augment and improve their core applications - it follows that they would also have an incumbent Oracle partner supporting them. It is also unlikely that a customer with legacy ERP will find the same value in ServiceNow as a customer that already has a solid digital platform. That said, there are certainly enough Oracle customers that have invested in SaaS over the last 10 years which aren't maximising that investment and de Novo should have no problem picking off those that have been sold short.

### Credentials and success

So how is de Novo going to beat the likes of Evosys, Inoapps and Namos in the middle ground? And can they seriously compete with Deloitte, Accenture and Hitachi at enterprise scale?

Warner said: *"Our management team is highly experienced. We have experienced the cycle of start-up, growth, expansion and sale. We have also experienced the bad times. It wasn't all plain sailing in the early days of Certus! So, we believe we are entering this market with our eyes wide open to all the potential ups and downs and how to deal with them. Our starting point with de Novo is much more advanced than when we started Certus, and naturally we have greater access to financial capital than we did the first time around."*

I asked Sweeny to put a little more meat on the bone, and he said: *"We have brought the 'A' team back together and we make no bones about this: the individuals that make up the de Novo executive team are some of the most experienced consultants there are."*

### My takeaways

Mark Sweeny and Tim Warner have proved they know what it takes to build a successful business in this space: Certus wasn't just a commercial success for the shareholders, it genuinely delivered ground-breaking projects for some of the most important organisations in the UK. I am a big advocate for SMEs and, in my



opinion, companies that have something to prove and mouths to feed are usually the source of the greatest innovation. There's no reason to think that de Novo can't replicate the success of Certus and it will be interesting to watch how their proposition fleshes out over the coming months.

That said, there are going to be several challenges to navigate: Sweeny doesn't sell on price and regularly comments on those who 'race to the bottom of the rate card'. Whilst I fully support the notion, the simple fact is that cash-strapped customers want a deal and de Novo could find itself caught in no-man's land between those that will deliver cheap implementation and the global SIs that come with all the kudos. The good news is they won't need to sell to everyone to be a success. If they can find a niche of customers that recognise the value of a long term partner that will invest alongside them, they could have the perfect blend of the leading application and infrastructure platform coupled with a workflow solution, that I am betting, we will all be using one day soon. ■





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ANDY BIRD

# RIP SYSTEMS INTEGRATORS LONG LIVE VALUE CREATORS!

IN A PIECE FROM 2019 ENTITLED RIP SYSTEM INTEGRATORS, PAUL ESHERWOOD ASKED THE RHETORICAL QUESTION — CAN SYSTEMS INTEGRATORS RE-INVENT THEMSELVES AS QUICKLY AS THE TECHNOLOGY CHANGES THAT THEY PUT IN PLACE FOR CUSTOMERS OF MAJOR IT VENDORS? BY ANDY BIRD



Esherwood is not far from the mark when he writes that “the advent of cloud applications and infrastructure has changed the game; not just for the vendors and users, but also for the hundreds (if not thousands) of consultancies, integrators and partners that make a life’s work out of enterprise resource planning (ERP) projects. The fundamental nature of cloud-native applications means that source-code customisation is a thing of the past, putting an end to the role of the technical developer. Endless functional workshops used to capture processes are being scrapped in favour of standardised design. Digital infrastructure has all but ended the value of the IT manager and killed off DBAs at a stroke.”

There is probably some hyperbole in a few of those statements; IT manager jobs are growing at 10 percent per year according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics - faster than the average growth for other job categories.

Where Esherwood really gets it right though is the increasing importance of change management and trust, writing that systems integrators “now have to work with a business to make it fit with the system, usually as part of a much broader transformation programme. That change in





puts a completely different emphasis on the SI's role – and at the core of the new role – is trust.”

Let's delve into both of those topics briefly, as these are the areas we see customers placing increasing importance.

## CHANGE MATTERS MORE

In the early days B.C. (before cloud), enterprise software implementation generally required a system integrator team to spend several months in a room with the customer's project team, defining how they do business and then on paper design a solution. The systems integrator would then need to build out that solution around the defined business needs, using standard functionality where possible and filling in the gaps

with multiple pricey source code modifications.

But now we help the customer adopt new best practices in standard software instead of building the software around their processes, therefore really focusing on the 5-10 percent of their business which differentiates them. However, with cloud the change journey does not stop at go live, no longer do you have years before you get the next innovation which could have been written five years before you adopt it. The real reason you want to embark on a programme like this is for the continual innovation you receive. With **Oracle** you have new features if you choose to take them every three months. Now your software can evolve alongside your business rather than holding you back.

**CIO** contributor Beth Stackpole documents how the role of the CIO has changed to encom-

## ANDY BIRD

pass change management, with responsibility moving to IT from line of business and senior leadership. She cites CIO research that reveals 89 percent of CIOs are spending more time on transformation efforts and 34 percent are spending more time on change management.

“Now that the CIO role is all in, CIOs are building out a toolkit of sorts, which includes embracing agile business practices and launching training initiatives and communications campaigns, all while burnishing their own ability to take on new challenges related to leading organisational and cultural transformation.”

**C**hange management for Inoapps is an applied psychology discipline that aligns the people in an organisation around the new processes and systems contained in an application like Oracle ERP Cloud or Oracle HCM Cloud. The move to cloud, by necessity, makes software projects more about people than technology, increasing demand for this service. Oracle cloud applications include more standard processes than legacy software products, so there is less work to align the software to the business and more work involved in helping users adopt new best practice processes facilitated by the software. The winners in systems integration will be the ones who lead the market in applying behavioural economics and psychology to this process to help customers ensure successful outcomes.

**THE WINNERS IN SYSTEMS INTEGRATION WILL BE THE ONES WHO LEAD THE MARKET IN APPLYING BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS AND PSYCHOLOGY TO THIS PROCESS TO HELP CUSTOMERS ENSURE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES.**

This is a high-touch, people-focussed endeavour, which gave us pause as the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020. Change management normally involves working closely and in person with the entirety of a customer's user base to ensure uptake of a new system. But if we look at an organisational change initiative as being similar to an advertising programme, where you need to change attitudes and behaviours through communication, we realise this is done through mediated approaches all the time.

Having won, for instance, the change management contract for two London boroughs, Havering and Newham and their shared service

organisation oneSource, our team found itself having to engage and involve people in a project in new ways. The boroughs were implementing Oracle HCM Cloud, which really requires broad employee participation as just about everyone in the company will use the self-service features of the system.

Our team improvised and came through creating everything from cartoons to communicate key messages, to gameshow formats for educational sessions. The gameshow format imparted information while also helping us figure out how well borough employees had absorbed essential concepts on how to navigate and use their new HCM environment. The team created cartoons to illustrate processes in an accessible fashion, encouraging employees to ‘Be like Bob’ and complete simple processes in the HCM software.

It is this trust that drives user adoption!

## IN SYSTEMS INTEGRATORS WE TRUST

Changes internal to the customer, changes external to the customer - all mean longer-term relationships with systems integrators need to flex and bend.

This is a challenge for systems integrators who perhaps underbid for work and then issue multiple change orders and contract expansions to cover elements of a project that should have been apparent during discovery. An approach like that may maximise revenue in the immediate term, but if you expect repeat business and want the customer to freely share thoughts, concerns and emerging needs with you, it is counterproductive.

Where there is trust, you can have contract documents that are only a couple of pages long. There will be things that come up during the contract term that are unanticipated, either because they were not included definitively in discovery or because the business situation changes, but a systems integrator that values the relationship enough can make things work without going hat in hand looking for more budget. This may be hard to achieve for a very large systems integrator with multiple layers of management, and a quarterly revenue target to exceed. Trust in a systems integrator relationship will need increasingly to go two ways—the customer trusts the systems integrator to be

honest, forthright and have their best interest at heart. And the systems integrator will need to trust the customer enough to sacrifice some margin on a project or two in order to grow a relationship.

I see the future of implementation changing: customers will expect more value than paying to manually configure the system for them. It's my opinion these tasks will be completed by hyperautomation including AI, with our consultants adding real value to the customer in helping redesign the way they do business tomorrow. Wrapping this in with continuous system improvements, the future will be long term application managed service agreements allowing for whatever happens tomorrow under a simplified contract.

Customers will also need to trust a systems integrator to advise them, rather than just take orders. Malicious compliance can be a problem in this space, and very intelligent systems integrator teams may simply act on edicts from a customer they know may result in a poor outcome, in part because challenging clients hard, even when it is what they say they want, is difficult.

The right systems integrator earns trust by being willing to stand up and point out what Dr. Steve Andriole refers to as 'the elephant in the room.' "The simplest explanations for why so many enterprise technology projects fail – in addition to all of the conventional explanations – are traceable to people," Andriole writes in **Forbes**. "Before you rip out and replace all of your methods, tools, techniques, frameworks, data, platforms and technologies, look closely at the people in the room. Study the belief systems, the personalities and relationships exhibited (noting that many are hidden), and think about how all these influence planning, decision-making, promotions, investments — and yes, technology project failures."

This is spot on as it's not the technology that causes a project to fail. One of the things Inoapps has developed is a psychographic assessment tool for project teams to make sure they have the right types of personalities in the right roles during software implementation and roll-out. This personality typing tool is one project from Inoapps head of enterprise change Victoria Collier and her team of psychologists who blend behavioural economics with persuasion to get our customers' employees to fully embrace a new system.

Andriole focusses most of his remarks on people within the customer environment, but if the

systems integrator has earned sufficient trust, they can help identify and work around these internal landmines, just as they can consult on technology matters and act as the customer's advocate to the software vendor.

Sometimes good fences do make good neighbours. There will always be a place, in managed services and other contracts, for financially backed service level agreements (SLAs). But a managed service contract, in these uncertain times, can include budget for work yet to be defined, with the systems integrator and customer determining on a periodic basis where those resources are best directed. Can a chatbot minimise

**I SEE THE FUTURE OF IMPLEMENTATION CHANGING: CUSTOMERS WILL EXPECT MORE VALUE THAN PAYING TO MANUALLY CONFIGURE THE SYSTEM FOR THEM**

the human need in this business process? Maybe it makes sense to investigate that. Is there an emerging need to transform part of the business with new digital technology? That can become a priority once parties trust each other enough to work together on a more adhoc basis.

## **FROM ARM'S LENGTH TO TRUSTED FRIEND**

The progression of ERP to cloud has changed quite a bit, and may have eliminated some vendor tricks as solutions are more standard and project scope ostensibly more predictable. Business conditions and needs, however, are less predictable as market dynamics and technologies change faster.

Modification of code happens less. In a pure-play environment like the Oracle Cloud, applications and the rest of the technology stack are guaranteed to work together, eliminating the need to troubleshoot compatibility issues. Database administration and even the regression testing of new updates from Oracle can be automated. So, while technical skills are always crucial, it is time for systems integrators to worry less about being the best technologists and managers, but rather focus on being the best people and partners. ■

*Andy Bird is CEO at Inoapps*



# ALL ABOARD THE **Green** regulation REVOLUTION?

BY MATTHEW BELL

**T**he words regulation and opportunity don't typically appear in the same sentence, but the scale and depth of new sustainability rules can offer forward-thinking businesses the chance to gain advantage. Put simply, the new rules mean that companies will need to build new measurement, reporting and governance capabilities. But, for those willing to look beyond a box-ticking approach and put sustainability at the heart of their operating model, there will also be significant opportunities.

If those opportunities don't seem obvious yet, let me first explain the challenges that new green regulation presents for businesses, then describe how companies can reframe them, using the compliance process as a way of exploring new and profitable options.

## **A year of change**

You have probably already heard 2021 being described as a pivotal year for climate change, especially in the UK, with the COP26 taking place in Glasgow in November and Boris Johnson eager to turn his ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution into reality. It's also the year when the wider public got the message that, far from being a distant event, climate change is happening right now. Figures from the **Royal Meteorological Society**, published in July and widely reported in the media, showed that the impacts are already being felt across the UK. Globally, temperatures are already 1.1 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels. That's nearly three-quarters of the way towards the 1.5 degree-centigrade average temperature rise that scientists have long been warning risks catastrophic impacts.

Yet, despite the higher public profile being afforded to



the environment and climate change, a slew of oncoming sustainability regulation risks slipping under the radar. Such is its volume that there is not enough space here to list it all, so instead let's take one notable example, the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. For those thinking that Brexit means it won't apply, then think again. Not only will it impact anyone trading with or operating within the EU, but it will almost certainly set the tone for domestic legislation, which currently shows little sign of divergence from EU environmental policy.

## **What the new regulation means**

The new directive marks a major step change in corporate reporting, yet im-

plementation is expected to take place over a timescale of less than two years. It also extends the reach of current regulation, bringing nearly all listed companies into its orbit. Yet it is probably the sheer scope of the regulation that presents the biggest challenge for businesses, which are largely unprepared. They will be required to disclose more sustainability-related information than ever before, potentially including information about their business models, strategy and supply chains that some executives may believe is sensitive or provides commercial advantage. In addition, this information will be far more rigorously assured than is common practice, akin to the level of the companies' external financial auditor, over time. Clear and universal standards will be put in place, allowing like-for-like comparison between peers.

As a result, the days of companies disclosing the sustainability information that they wish to against the metrics they choose will soon be over. So too will be the ability to largely ignore and/or fail to report sustainability risks,

from those, for example, around climate change impacts on current operations, to human rights within supply chains. To put it crudely, there will be no place to hide.

### Seeing the opportunity

It's easy and, completely understandable, to look at the new regulations and break them into a number of compliance challenges: build a way to measure a new non-financial KPI here, apply a new reporting standard or layer of governance there. Yet, while that approach will slowly, possibly painfully and undoubtedly expensively put you on the road towards compliance, what will you have got back in return? Another layer of complexity and an ERP system possibly buckling under the weight of add-ons and customisation?

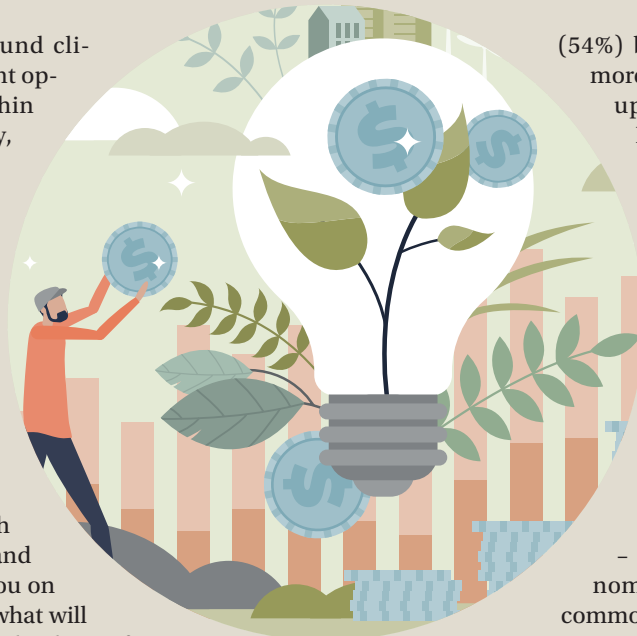
As in many aspects of business, taking the big picture view may be a better play, in terms of both driving the compliance process and realising broader business benefits. Taking that approach, businesses should examine what, fundamentally, the regulation is asking them to do. In essence, it is posing questions about the resilience of a company's business model and its strategy in the face of sustainability-related risks.

Start seeing regulation like that and it becomes clear that the lens required is a long-term view of your business, built around the needs, not only of regulators but customers, staff, suppliers and indeed society. We've seen this shift happen with everything from big oil companies to retail giants. The environment-related risks for a company that is, for example, extracting fossil fuels or supplying low-cost fast fashion are unlikely to be addressed by better compliance process - rethink of the business model is required.

### Investors and consumers get onboard

If that was the stick, then here's the carrot. For those willing to make the leap before they get pushed, the opportunities and rewards can really stack up as investors and consumers are actively looking to invest in, or buy from, sustainability-driven companies.

Our 2020 survey of institutional investors found that 98% assess ESG factors and that 75% said that climate change risks would cause them to re-evaluate or change their investment decisions. In terms of consumers, the EY Future Consumer Index reveals that while over half



(54%) bought sustainable products, more than a third (34%) plan to step up their spending in this area. Both globally and in the UK, climate change (45% and 46% respectively) is of most concern overall for consumers.

If sustainability has in the past suffered from what Gillian Tett of the FT described as an "alphabet soup of standards" the tide is turning. At EY, we are so determined to help our clients address this problem that we have been working with our rivals in the Big Four – and alongside the World Economic Forum – to develop a set of common ESG reporting standards.



**“As in many aspects of business, taking the big picture view may be a better play, in terms of both driving the compliance process and realising broader business benefits.”**

### The link between ESG and ERP

But you may well be thinking, what does this have to do with my ERP system? The simple and possibly glib answer is ‘everything’, although that probably merits expansion. Clearly, the better and more real-time the non-financial data you have flowing through your system, the better and more sustainable your decision making will be. And with your business model retuned to run on long-term value, you will be ready to take advantage of what's ahead, not eke out what's left from legacy models or systems. But there's another angle that perhaps speaks more directly to the decisions that businesses must make around ERP investment.

The reality is that many companies are already placing huge ‘bets’ on the future, spending millions if not billions on digital transformation and its accompanying ERP system upgrades or new builds. Yet, given high levels of market uncertainty and disruption, that future is far from clear.

In contrast, few have so far been willing to spend anything like as much on ‘green transformation’ even though – thanks to national and international climate agreements, plus the increasingly precise ESG demands of investors and regulators – that future is far more transparent.

So, with the stick of new regulations and the carrot of a better and more sustainable business, it's clear to me where the big ERP bets should be placed: on green. ■

*Matthew is a partner at EY, leading its climate change and sustainability practice across the UK&I. All views are his own.*

A top-down view of a group of people in business attire (suits and blouses) gathered around a dark wooden table. They are holding up a large, light blue, cloud-shaped sign. The sign is the central focus, with the word 'Why' in white and 'multi-cloud' in blue outline text. Other smaller, light grey cloud-shaped signs are visible on the table, held by other participants. The scene suggests a collaborative meeting or presentation about multi-cloud strategies.

**Why**

**multi  
-cloud**





is the

**new  
normal**

BY HOLGER MUELLER

## HOLGER MUELLER

Not long ago the IT landscape of an enterprise was a simple affair: one or a few data centres, usually determined by location requirements, would create a system landscape that every IT person with 10 or more year's work experience grew up with. Fast forward to the 2010s and the landscape was characterised by duality – meaning that the data centres were still there – and a few workloads in the cloud, most likely a single cloud. Take another jump to present times and the landscape has fundamentally changed: some (typically the smaller) data centres are gone, the existing ones usually have a smaller footprint and between one and two thirds of enterprise workloads run in the cloud. Not one cloud – but many clouds.



BY HOLGER MUELLER

**T**he consequence is an order of magnitude of more complex operating infrastructure for enterprises – and all that happened in the run of the last 15 years. So how did we get here?

### IT took a wild ride – or was it ridden wildly?

15 years ago, life in IT was as good as a life in IT could get. There was of course cost pressure that had led to virtualisation, but it was almost all on **VMware**, so IT enjoyed a single tool that literally ran all enterprise workloads. The fabled single pane of glass of managing all enterprise workloads was reality.

#### PHASE 1 – Till 2012 – IT in charge

Then the first cloud projects happened. Typically, this was with the enterprise choosing an early cloud-based vendor (e.g. **Salesforce** or **Workday**, two early cloud vendors that are still running strong today). These early SaaS vendors

had to run their offerings in their own clouds, so apart from having integration needs that went outside of an enterprise's data centre, they did not add much complexity for IT. After all, CRM and HCM products had to be integrated in the on-premise world as well. That changed when enterprises had to go into the cloud for the first time themselves, usually with demands to build custom software (e.g. for a digital transformation project, a BigData initiative, an IoT project etc.). At this point, IT would choose its 'preferred' cloud partner in the realistic hope that the enterprise would move forward with this one cloud vendor in the future. After all, IT had managed to establish a single vendor strategy in many of the IT categories.

#### PHASE 2 – Till 2018 – IT is ridden by the business

And then – all hell broke loose for IT. Analysts propagated that CxOs would spend more on IT than the CIO (the CMO being the most prominent). The idea was flawed from the beginning, as CIOs were always spending other

CxOs budgets – to implement solutions for them. But at the core was an all IT changing truth: CxOs could choose their application vendors and did not have to work with IT on that – at all. A stark departure from the past, and well, CxOs did take advantage of that. Suddenly it only mattered that a solution ran in 'the cloud' not in THE cloud that the CIOs wanted the enterprise to standardize on.

Things were not better on the custom project side which ran the digital transformation initiatives of the enterprise. Several trusted IT partners' cloud offerings failed (**Cisco**, **Dell**, **HP**, **VMware** – just to name a few) and any enterprise that had picked them for their workloads had to move off them. In other cases, some clouds turned out to be less strong in an important category – and enterprises found themselves running their digital transformation projects in multiple clouds. Consultants from SIs would often recommend different clouds. As it was characteristic for the early stages of digital transformation – speed was of the essence – the clean up would come later.

The resulting IT reality was a complete mess: integration had to happen across on-premise data centres and various clouds. The same data was often uploaded to the same cloud multiple times, so frantic was the pace and demand on integration needs.

### SEVERAL TRUSTED IT PARTNERS' CLOUD OFFERINGS FAILED – CISCO, DELL, HP AND VMWARE JUST TO NAME A FEW

IT lost its single pane of glass and in many cases, divisions would opt out to their SaaS vendors for support and monitoring of their workloads.

### PHASE 3 – From 2018

When things could not get any worse, they changed for the better, mainly due to two major trends:

1. Firstly, Kubernetes established itself as the new container platform that was adopted across the vendor landscape. This allowed IT to get its hope back for the single pane of glass to run enterprise workloads – no matter where they run.

2. Secondly, the cloud stacks have come to the local data centre. **AWS**, **Google Cloud** and **Microsoft Azure** (in alphabetical order) all allow for the operation of parts or all their application technology stack – on-premise. The benefit for IT is enormous, as the consolidation of technology stacks reduces IT complexity substantially.

### New IT Strategies for the new normal: Multi-Cloud

The new reality requires new IT strategies and they are characterised as follows:

- **Consolidation is a must.** Complexity reduction is of paramount importance. Bring data centres together. Bring databases together. Standardise on integration tools. Centralise security. Implement a single MDM tool. Standardise end point controls. Use suites as much as possible and bring – in the ideal case – the number of strategic infrastructure vendors down to five (ideally) or seven (if you must).

- **Standardise on Kubernetes.** To achieve the single control pane again, IT needs to standardise on Kubernetes which is the only technology that by now has a good shot at returning this to IT. It is critical that new SaaS and PaaS workloads are available on Kubernetes to avoid further fragmentation again. The good news

## PRETTY MUCH EVERYBODY IN SOFTWARE IS MOVING TO KUBERNETES AS IT HAS (FOR NOW) WON THE CONTAINER WARS

– pretty much everybody in software is moving to Kubernetes as it has (for now) won the container wars.

- **Embrace multi-cloud.** There are upsides to operating in the multi-cloud. Not only from a negotiation standpoint but also from an uptime perspective. Though cloud outages are rare, they can happen, and if high availability is critical for some workloads, only the multi-cloud offers enterprises a reasonable shot at achieving that state of uptime.

- **Fight for the single pane of glass.** With acceleration being paramount for enterprises, IT cannot operate with multiple dashboards. To reduce complexity, IT leaders must do all in their power to get back to the single pane of glass. Beyond that, they need to push for automation solutions which are not just human operated. The current

hype around ‘visibility’ is good only to a point, that routine IT operations in 2021 and beyond – need to be operated by software – not humans.

So, there you have it. Did IT take the wild ride – or was IT taken for a wild ride? You decide on your own. The key takeaway is: good IT strategies were always crucial to enterprise success – and that has not changed in the 2020s. With the dominance and industry consolidation around Kubernetes, there is a good shot for enterprises and IT to get back in control of their workloads, remarkably in a much more complex system landscape, which is the multi-cloud. Multi-cloud is the new reality and the new normal – probably for at least a decade to come, likely longer. ■

FIGURE 1 – FOUR IT STRATEGIES IN THE MULTI-CLOUD



SOURCE: HMCC & CONSTELLATION RESEARCH, INC.



**ASSET PERFORMANCE  
MANAGEMENT** (APM) IS THE  
EVOLUTION OF ENTERPRISE ASSET  
MANAGEMENT (EAM), SO HOW  
WILL THIS TECHNOLOGY  
NOW BE APPLIED INSIDE  
THE **INDUSTRY 4.0**  
UNIVERSE TO GIVE US  
THE **MAINTENANCE 4.0**  
INTELLIGENCE WE  
WILL NEED TO  
KEEP RUNNING?



# **LIVING THE EAM DREAM**

**HOW ASSET MANAGEMENT  
HAS CHANGED**

BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER



**C**ompanies used to just operate with equipment, plant machinery and a variety of work cubicles and desks for those people who needed to perform a sedentary job. But, as we know, business went digital and then ultimately became software-defined. This in turn has meant that contemporary firms now operate on a stream of datasets that all pertain to specific workflows inside their organisation.

In this framework, it is no longer acceptable to refer to desks as workstations, pipeline boring systems as plant machinery or offices as mere

headquarters. Today, all these things are now digitally-defined assets.

Categorising the business' working physical and virtual commodities as assets enables them to become entities not only in newer generation balance sheets, it also enables them to become working variables inside EAM systems.

#### **A (very) brief history of EAM**

Born somewhere through the evolution of databases over the last half-century, EAM systems started off life as extensions to Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS)







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## APM

solutions. But CMMS software was mostly dedicated to, well, maintenance (the clue is in the name) and a bit of regulatory compliance, so times needed to move on.

EAM practices have traditionally gravitated around managing the life-cycle of physical assets. Tasks have included inventory control, predictive maintenance, budgetary control and gateways to also include procurement of new assets where needed. Generally

the era of digital business, many of our manufacturing and industrial production processes have undergone huge advances in automation. With Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) now surfacing through the Internet of Things (IoT) in many previous analogue jobs, we have now reached the point where Maintenance 4.0 is digitalising previously manual processes.

This topic is something of a personal passion for Kevin Price. In his position

as technical product evangelist and product strategist at industry-specific ERP solutions specialist **Infor**, Price is working with companies which are striving to deliver the ability to harness the power of data to predict asset failure. If performed successfully, this can enable organisations to automatically direct a remedial process.

thing in optimising asset-orientated performance, marking an end to reactive maintenance management once and for all.

### Making do needs no takers

“Some businesses have been just ‘making do’ and getting by with asset management strategies that sell them short, driving up the cost of maintenance labour and materials and increasing the risk that critical assets will be offline when they’re most urgently needed. The scene has been shifting over the past several years, with EAM offering greater visibility and sophistication for maintenance operations. But in reality, making do should have no takers,” said Price.

As the notion of Industry 4.0 with all its predictive intelligence and insight delivered through new and emerging AI and ML tools is brought to bear, the key factor in this sub-space is the development of Maintenance 4.0 inside the wider realm of digital operations. For want of a definition, Maintenance



KEVIN  
PRICE  
INFOR

**“APM is the tool that allows manufacturers to make sense of the data, develop a more profound understanding of assets, predict and prevent failures, improve budgeting and cost control.”**

delivered as part of desktop software, EAM has benefitted from the evolution of visualisation technologies which can now deliver insights in dashboard form... and most of the rest is history.

But even EAM faces a point where it may be, if not superceded, then at least twinned with a higher, deeper, wider and more broadly spread level of intelligence and control inside any given organisation. This is the asset management technology proposition of our time i.e. asset managers are now being told APM is the natural evolution point for EAM.

### Auto grease guns in Maintenance 4.0

Zealous EAM converts and evangelists need not hang up their boots just yet. But they must at least realise that in

As we embark upon a new digital era, accelerated by COVID-19 and underpinned by initiatives such as Industry 4.0, many experts are questioning whether EAM goes far enough? So where does Price stand?

“While the principles of EAM are absolutely valid, maintenance per se is typically a discipline confined to the factory floor, designed to monitor and optimise the management of equipment, reduce downtime and maximise productivity. But with collaboration and connectivity across the enterprise representing some of the critical shifts in 2021, strong asset performance should, and indeed must, be an enterprise-wide goal,” said Infor’s Price.

He explains how we move forward and says that in response to this shift, APM has been heralded as the next big

4.0 is the set of tools and strategies used to help companies optimise operations. It works by deploying the mountains of data now available to keep equipment and production lines in peak operating condition.

Price says he has worked with customers who have already embraced EAM as part of their APM evolution and are already witnessing the extent to which gains can be made. Once a system exists that has the ability to capture asset condition information streams correctly and maintain an electronic system of record, it’s hard to imagine life before it.

“APM is the tool that allows manufacturers to make sense of the data, develop a more profound understanding of assets, predict and prevent failures, improve failure management,

**“The APM systems (and processes) that yield low hanging fruit and fast returns following investment in technology, still surprise a lot of manufacturers.”**

**JACO  
VERMUELEN**  
BML  
DIGITAL



improve budgeting and cost control - all without having to install, then try to manage and maintain multiple software operations,” said Price.

APM pulls in data that has traditionally been stored in an EAM system as well as data from a wide range of asset measurement solutions, then applies algorithms or AI and ML models to enable decision support, predictive analytics and what-if analysis. The result is improved analysis and greater automation to increase asset efficiency, manage asset reliability and sustainability, improve customer-centricity and optimise Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

#### **Low hanging digital fruit**

“The APM systems (and processes) that yield low hanging fruit and fast returns following investment in technology, still surprise a lot of manufacturers. One of the more sophisticated is digital-twin based asset/facilities tracking and management that uses sensors to monitor equipment and

conditions,” said **BML Digital** CTO Jaco Vermuelen.

“This is mapped against business rules for optimal operation and when certain conditions are met, automatically generates a work order to supplier for maintenance, as well as notifying facilities managers of expected maintenance service. The same tech can automatically update accounting for the work order transaction,” he added.

All these APM processes combine to help create a work environment with much faster issue resolution, proactive repair and maintenance, better resource optimisation, reduced admin, far more effective service provider management, plus an ability to manage problems proactively.

Price summarises this thought stream by saying that as part of any practical digital transformation, tools in the asset performance field have huge potential for most businesses in

the industrial sectors, but the issues of a legacy mindset and resistance to change remain.

“This is improving, but considering how quickly discrete projects such as these can yield results, many UK manufacturers could likely increase the pace and scope of change and see results fast,” concluded Price.

A company-wide APM strategy built on transparency and real-time visibility stands to translate the potential benefits of digital, Industry 4.0 and IoT into very tangible improvements for the bottom line and underpin future planning. For those already on their asset management journey, this next evolution is crucial in marking out the visionaries and future leaders. ■

## **THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF APM, BY INFOR**

- 1** The asset registry gives managers visibility into asset inventories and risks, tracks metadata on each device, and monitors the device’s position in the larger system as well as its current condition.
- 2** The work history consolidates work orders, closing codes, solution codes, and more into a comprehensive portrait of an asset’s life cycle and provides a foundation for predicting future failures.
- 3** Real-time condition data is readily available through a complex web of IoT and Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) sensors and instrumentation. An APM system makes sense of the continuing cascade of incoming data on individual devices, parts and components, triggering alerts and work orders when pre-set tolerance limits are exceeded.
- 4** Algorithms and modelling analytics turn data into action, allowing organisations to predict how assets will behave in real time and use AI or machine models to perform what-if analysis.
- 5** Connectivity between an APM solution and other elements of a corporate ERP adds depth and texture to APM plans while driving actions beyond the realm of maintenance and asset management.



# THE FUTURE OF WORK IN TECH: Saying goodbye to women's roles

BY DR ZARA NANU

It will come as no surprise to the readers of ERP Today that the future of work is shifting towards a more tech-focussed approach. We are constantly utilising the latest technology to create fresh workplace opportunities and tech skills are becoming increasingly in demand within the world of work.

Despite this, when looking at the figures collected by **Women in Tech**, a mere 19 percent of the tech workforce identify as women. In my opinion, this shows that we are currently at a cross-roads: one that displays a divisive, gendered employment landscape.

## Diversity and pay

The **World Economic Forum** report on the Future of Jobs shows us that the gender split between the 'Top 20 job roles' that are increasing and decreasing demand is extremely stark. The occupations that are in demand are what we'd typically expect of a tech-focussed future of work: cyber security, data science, robotics engineering and so on.

However, the job roles that are decreasing in demand include clerks, accountants, customer service representatives and HR specialist roles, that those who identify as women are far more likely to occupy, and therefore be at greater risk of unemployment for. No doubt that along with the digital advancements we are making, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will have even more of an impact on these roles.

I took it upon myself to conduct an experiment with the World Economic Forum job data and examine the average pay for each job from **Glassdoor** and data from the **ONS Gender Pay Gap Explorer**, in order to gain a better understanding of the ever changing landscape in which the UK employment market resides. I have even colour-coded this



picture to show the impact on genders.

My conclusion is that low paid populations who largely tend to be women, risk complete removal from the economy if we do not take action now.

As you can see from the table on the right, jobs with increasing demand are male dominated with roles such as data science or data specialists occupied by a whopping 91 percent of men. These jobs are also highly paid, averaging £44,500 per year. Going one step further, if we factor in average inflation rates, increased demand for these roles because of digitization and living costs, these are likely to grow even further.

Jobs in increasing demand that are female dominated only average £28,053 per year in comparison. So

even in roles of growing demand, women are likely to earn just over 60 percent of what men earn by 2025.

Looking at the opposite end of the spectrum, jobs with decreasing demand are both low paid and female dominated. They average £26,989 per year and only seven of these are jobs dominated by men - even then at a very small margin with the exception of the construction sector. In 13 of these decreasing jobs, women account for over 60 percent of the workforce.

## Why does workplace inequality still exist?

You may be wondering how in 2021 the above could be the case - after all, we tend to associate rigid gender roles and inequality with the past. That is exactly it - we have inherited an archaic system that needs updating, one that defines how society values jobs and subsequently defines their pay. This system was developed post World War II and shaped by the male dominated environment in which it existed.

Top 20 jobs with increase demand		Top 20 jobs with decreasing demand	
Data analyst and scientists	£45,124	Data entry	£17,685
AI and machine learning	£72,871	Admin and secretarial	£24,010
Big Data specialists	£50,000	Accountancy and bookkeeping	£20,927
Digital marketing & strategy	£31,077	Accounts and auditors	£39,014
Process automation	£42,841	Factory workers	£21,097
Business development	£28,549	Admin managers	£21,097
Digital transformation	£65,298	Customer services	£20,000
Information security	£59,017	General managers	£42,000
Software and applications	£40,000	Mechanics	£25,161
IoT	£58,500	Materials and stock keeping	£20,659
Project managers	£45,697	Finance analysts	£38,000
Business and admin	£29,665	Postal services	£19,026
Databases and networks	£35,119	Sales reps	£25,115
Robotics	£41,918	Relationship managers	£42,000
Strategic advisers	£44,240	Banking and retail	£19,354
Analysts	£34,725	Door to door and street sellers	£27,535
FinTech engineers	£55,000	Repairs	£25,558
Mechanics	£25,161	HR	£43,189
Organisational development	£26,147	Training	£35,177
Risk	£85,275	Construction	£22,296

**Women are likely to earn just over 60 percent of what men earn by 2025.**

My research doesn't even take into account historical inequalities faced in the workplace by other marginalised groups such as People of Colour, members of the LGBTQ+ community and the disabled community - many of whom will have overlapping identities and thus face even greater inequality.

If I was to take a more intersectional approach to my research and divide it along the lines of race/ethnicity, the divisions would become even more stark. Recent research from **Fawcett Society** highlights the fact that across all sectors there is a higher percentage of People of Colour in low paid positions and fewer are to be found further up the career pipeline. Similarly, they found that whilst women make up 6 percent of CEOs of FTSE 100 companies and 35 percent of civil service permanent secretaries, not a single one of these are Women of Colour.

Luckily, we have evolved in our thinking over the past 70 years and it is absolutely crucial that our systems reflect our values: values of equity, inclusion and fairness across all spheres of life - the workplace, where we spend the majority of our days is arguably one of the, if not the, most important.

**The solution**

So what knowledge is to be gained from my experiment?

For policy makers, this should be about creating inclusive policies that prevent large unemployment rates and

foster thriving economies and environments. For example, **Fawcett Society's** research also suggested that if educators, employers and the government invested in helping Women of Colour overcome the barriers they face in the workplace, the UK economy could see an extra £24bn boost to the economy.

For companies, this is about ensuring diverse talent can thrive, reskill and adapt to change - a sentiment we live by at Gapsquare. The business benefits of a diverse workforce have been researched and reported time and time again. A study by **Deloitte** shows that 69 percent of millennials and Gen Z are more likely to stay on with a company for more than five years if that company appears to value diversity and inclusion within the workplace - so not only is it the 'right thing to do,' it makes practical business sense.

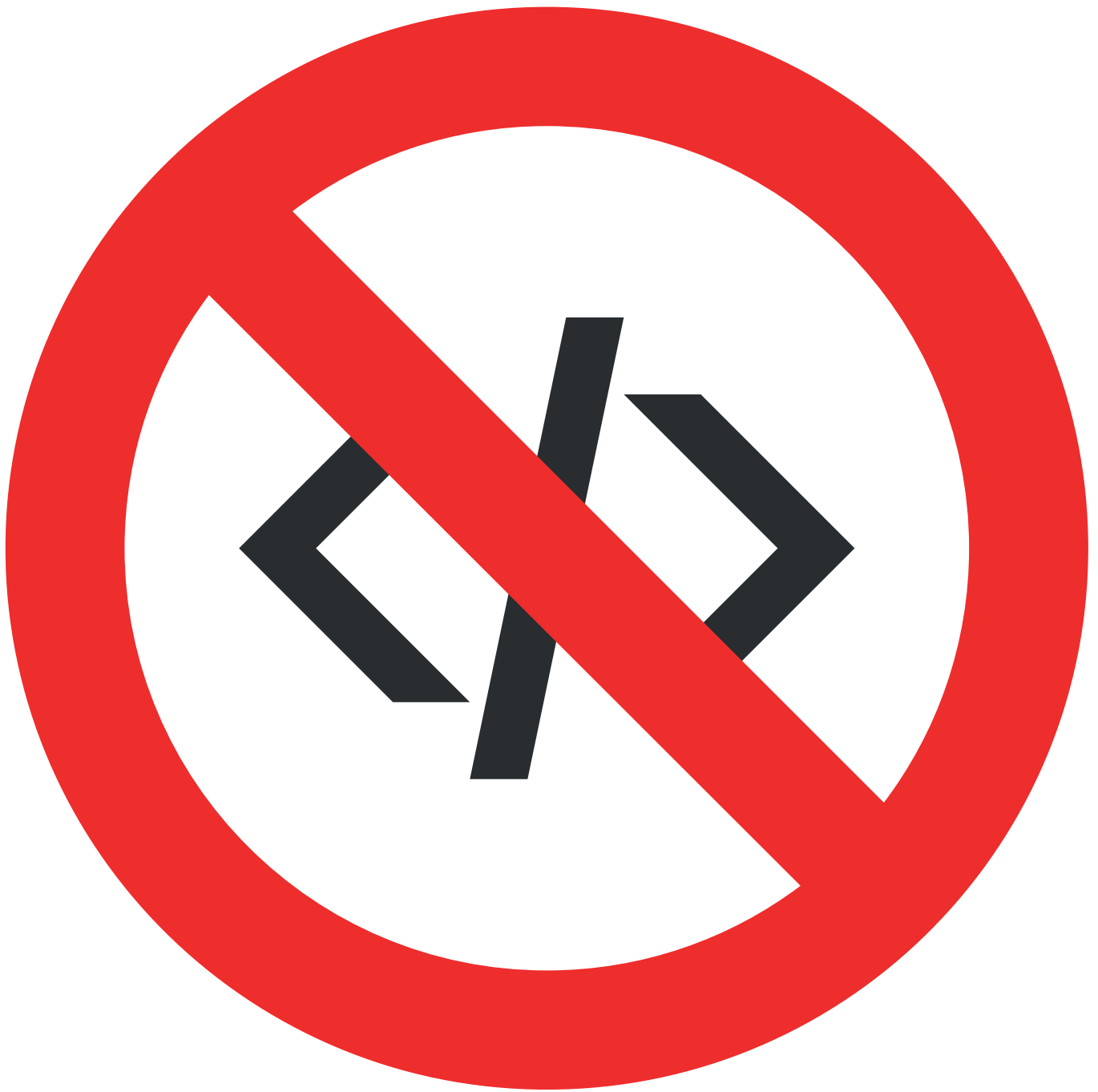
For dreamers, like myself, who want to foster innovation in creating a better future of work, this becomes about re-wiring the world of working altogether and dismantling the unequal systems of days gone by.

Many would argue the solution is simply reskilling. After all, even though Fatima is a ballerina, she could be in cyber - she just does not know it. Others would say we need more awareness about unconscious bias. Although these suggestions have some merit, as solutions they are slow and have been proven to be largely ineffective without deeper societal changes being implemented. What we need is a radical rethinking of our traditional ideas about what a workplace should be.

Billions of pounds have been spent on unconscious bias training, taking the emphasis off gender in job adverts and mentoring and sponsoring women in STEM roles. This has generated steady but extremely slow progress that is, in my opinion, unable to keep pace with the demand for speed of change. To further back up my point, the number of women in STEM (women graduating in core STEM subjects) has grown from 21 percent of the workforce in 2016 to 24 percent in 2019.

It is clear that business as usual is simply not an option anymore. We don't have time for slow, low impact solutions that have already been tried and tested. What we need is bold and innovative change that tackles the root causes of the issues we face. In more practical terms, this comes down to reviewing how we value certain jobs and why we think the way we do in regards to them. ■

*Dr Zara Nanu is CEO of Gapsquare*



**WILL**  
**< LOW-CODE**  
**/ NO-CODE >**

**DRIVE OR FIX ERP TECHNICAL DEBT?**



## It's easy to jump on a bandwagon, especially in technology circles.

When the next 'killer app' comes along (or the next Twitter starts to emerge), every protagonist, futurist, evangelist (and possibly a few tech-polygamists) wants a share of voice and a slice of the market pie. BY ADRIAN BRIDGWATER

**M**any times this results in organisations developing copycat products. These are software applications and tools produced by vendors who develop some form of 'me too' offering that aims to compete in the same space.

Sometimes these vendors simply 'wash' (i.e. rename) their existing offerings with a new label. Cloudwashing, open source washing, automation and AI washing - they all exist - and they all refer to a sometimes quite cosmetic re-branding, where true hard core engineering has not actually occurred.

### Low-code is the new high ground

Latest among the sub-disciplines of IT ripe for copycat branding is low-code. Not actually particularly low, low-code offers professional programmers a degree of pre-configured templates and accelerators to make some tasks faster. Low-code is still comparatively deep programming, but its shortcuts do validate the use of the term i.e. it is somewhat 'lower' in terms of coding burden.

Analyst house **Gartner** has stirred its pot of magical potions this year to come up with an estimate which suggests that as many as 80 percent of technology products and services will now be built by individuals who are not technology professionals, with code shortcuts having a driving impact on that figure.

Although Gartner's arguably quite finger-in-the-air figures are interesting, they should perhaps be regarded as no more than an already identified compass bearing, rather than a core market deliverable. So as low-code is joined by no-code, where business professionals can 'build' application functionalities using drag-and-drop visual interfaces, will there be a price to pay?

Chief technology evangelist at low-code software application development specialist **Mendix** is Nick Ford. Reminding

us that the COVID-19 pandemic put increased pressure on IT departments that were already stretched, Ford says that forms of citizen development (no-code, rather than low-code then) are the best way to fix this problem.

"These platforms enable IT departments to partner with the business function to build solutions the organisation needs - faster and with less rework. The business users know their domain better than anyone else and working collaboratively will ensure that the right processes and technology are in place," said Ford.

### Business users know business use cases

Mendix's own research suggests that some 60 percent of UK workers want to put their skills to use by supporting their organisation's digitalisation projects. As low-code/no-code now develops, both techniques, platform styles and methodologies are having an impact on enterprise software stacks, with ERP clearly being a key target area for short-cutting the development of functions that suit business users.

The question we are posing then is: how far can low-code/no-code be applied in the ERP space and, crucially, will it lead to an increase in technical debt where applications and services need to be fixed, patched and replaced over time?

Modern application development company **OutSystems** says that more than two-thirds of IT leaders identify technical debt as a major threat to their company's ability to innovate. The organisation's 2021 'Growing Threat of Technical Debt' report examines the cost of technical debt facing businesses across defined industries and geographies.

"The combination of old code along with the new generation of mobile apps, stack applications and SaaS sprawl are robbing organisations of resources, time and the ability to innovate," said Paulo Rosado, CEO and founder of OutSys-

**"These platforms enable IT departments to partner with the business function to build solutions the organisation needs - faster and with less rework." NICK FORD / MENDIX**

## APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

tems. “Our report shows that technical debt will continue to compound. It requires a new approach to move past it and innovate at a pace and scale for true competitive advantage.”

### The technical debt cost factor

As businesses strive to rebuild following the challenges of the pandemic, technical debt has emerged as a major roadblock to innovation and recovery, especially for enterprises focussed on growth. Technical debt is generally defined as a technical design or development choice made for short-term benefit, but with inevitable long-term consequences.

Technical debt happens when organisations decide to develop solutions that can be implemented quickly to maximise speed of implementation and deployment, rather than ones that are optimised for future use and longevity. Just like financial



structures and team priorities, an ERP-centric IT team should be capable of chipping away at their debt without compromising the timelines of their current projects.

A more balanced argument would perhaps suggest that the low-code/no-code road will not be without its bumps. Some applications will be created in haste, some on a hunch (without an exhaustive use case analysis process) and some may even be created to serve unproductive workflows or parts of the business that do not propel the organisation forward in the right way.

### Policy, protocol and procedure

But there is still hope. Professionally engineered low-code/no-code platforms provide a degree of self-checking policy-based controls to ensure that users cannot simply start to create applications and application extensions without due care and attention. Importantly for ERP applications, these same

**“The combination of old code along with the new generation of mobile apps, stack applications and SaaS sprawl are robbing organisations of resources, time and the ability to innovate.” PAULO ROSADO / OUTSYSTEMS**

debt, technical debt ultimately needs to be paid back in the form of software engineering processes focussed on refactoring any clunky quick-fix code solutions.

**A**ccording to the OutSystems study, technical debt is a misunderstood phenomenon impacting all kinds of organisations that is too often ignored or reluctantly accepted because it is just a fact of life. “Simply put, technical debt is the coding you have to do now because of the shortcuts you took yesterday. More specifically, it’s the technologies and time spent maintaining old, bad and broken code, rather than developing new ideas,” notes the company.

Our question was, will low-code/no-code drive the creation of technical debt? The specialist vendors in this space are obviously arguing that it won’t; Mendix is saying that aligning the IT and business function through these tools counters the technical debt problem and ultimately creates software (in this case, ERP suite functions) that are more closely aligned to users’ needs.

The OutSystems CEO concurs and is obviously stressing the need for a new and modernised approach to software development. His firm has said that the good news is that it’s entirely possible to pay off technical debt creating a development process that meets both short-term deadlines and long-term strategic goals. By carefully aligning modern application development platforms, organisational

checking protocols will also ensure that business users don’t start to make use of datasets that are private, sensitive or subject to some form of legislative regulations.

Traditionally (by which we mean in pre-pandemic times) companies in the health care and social assistance category have incurred significantly higher technical debt issues than many other industries. That unfortunate status may have only increased over the last 18 months. Also, high ranking for technical debt are firms in banking, finance and insurance; education; government and public administration; utilities; and media and telecommunications.

Mendix’s Nick Ford says that he sees a way forward. He explains that when it comes to ERP specifically, APIs and the interconnectivity they offer can open up core ERP systems to external additional applications and services. This process can then enable differentiated solutions to be built on top and away from the core, which in theory, is another smart side-stepping mechanism to avoid technical debt.

“Low-code ERP also comes with guardrails and controls within the platform itself. This helps the apps created with it to preserve the integrity of the ERP system. Unlike legacy systems, organisations are able to take advantage of upgrades and new releases. These same organisations can also implement components that maintain business rules which users can’t break, ensuring low-code is used in a responsible manner. Essentially, low-code platforms reduce the need for refactoring, as best practices and common patterns are built-in,” said Ford.

### Learn, productise, sell to all

Equally passionate on this subject is Sathya Srinivasan in his role as vice president of solutions consulting at low-code pioneer **Appian**. Srinivasan is realistic about the fact that most ERP vendors take all their learning and experience from client implementations over the years, only to then productise them into a software offering. This means that all ERP buyers will end up getting the same, standard solution.

"Some organisations might be happy with that type of standard off-the-shelf offering, but it won't work for everyone, because every company and their business needs are unique. When any company starts customising a standard ERP solution, that is where the challenges come in. This puts more pressure on IT to deliver the solution on time, which adds to technical debt. Furthermore, once the ERP solution has been implemented, IT has to work very hard to keep those up-to-date, secure and prepared for migration when new versions come out," explained Srinivasan.

**"Some organisations might be happy with that type of standard off-the-shelf offering, but it won't work for everyone, because every company and their business needs are unique." SATHYA SRINIVASAN / APPIAN**

What Srinivasan is calling for is not just low-code (and perhaps a degree of no-code) to create applications faster or generate more code, but for IT and business to create applications hand-in-hand at speed. He sees the greatest advancements reaped in environments where business leads to visualise an application in a simple and intuitive manner with no programming knowledge. Then, subsequently, for IT to quickly transform this vision into a functioning prototype and deploy an enterprise business application in the field with security and scalability.

"This is how complex enterprises can leverage assets that they have to be successful, including existing ERP systems. This does not only apply to just ERP systems, but to any complex business applications that organisations are currently maintaining and managing. Most products will continue to evolve and be more user friendly for the business and IT. They do this by either hiding the complexity through more intuitive interfaces, or they create layers and connectors that makes it easier for people to collaborate and systems to work together," said Appian's Srinivasan.

### Visualised workflow functionalities

From the Appian team's perspective, the new code for programming today is to visually represent a business work-

flow challenge first. This way, organisations can visually conceive what the business wants and give the IT function a better steer on taking care of scalability, security, maintenance and upgrade. All of which, again in theory, should work to reduce technical debt.

As a trend then, we can see where low-code/no-code has the potential to chip away at older monolithic approaches to ERP suite applications and services development. These coding accelerators are breaking apart the previous methods used to extend and augment modern systems.

"Most truly progressive contemporary ERPs have essentially become low-code platforms with no-code elements in them. This offers users the ability to perform 'simple' configuration via drag-and-drop functionality to create applications, data services and so on," said Jaco Vermeulen, CTO of **BML Digital**.

"An important consideration with all the low-code/no-code platforms is that for the life of that application in question, the organisation will be tied to the providing



platform. It won't be easy to port code to other servers and just get developers to write custom code and augment an application outside of the platform - and if the business wants to extract the IP, then it requires a complete rebuild in full code or a process to replicate it in a similar platform," he added.

But Vermeulen is balanced about what these platforms can do and says that low-code/no-code should not be viewed as a means of fixing ERP technical debt in the first instance.

Instead, he says that the role of low-code platforms in ERP (along with a degree in RPA) exists to compensate for legacy ERP systems and stand-alone bespoke applications where they come up short. He advocates moving to a contemporary SaaS-based ERP system that is centred on strong configuration control as the only prudent approach to eliminating technical debt.

The coming together of low-code/no-code with ERP systems that have long promised better customisation controls was always going to be a thorny subject. This discussion is not over; if anything this analysis is merely the start of two major enterprise software forces coming together. Whether we take the no-code or the low-code road forwards, our goal is to reduce technical debt and head for ERP gold. ■





# CAN ERP SAVE THE WORLD?

BY PAUL ESHERWOOD

THERE'S A HYPOTHESIS IN COSMOLOGY AND ASTROPHYSICS CALLED THE FERMI PARADOX THAT PONDERES A SIMPLE QUESTION – WHERE ARE THE ALIENS? THIS THOUGHT EXPERIMENT ILLUMINATES THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE AND THE MATHEMATICAL PREDICTION THAT LIFE SHOULD BE EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE COSMOS.

**N**o matter where we look in the observable universe we see the same chemistry, physics and conditions. When we peer into a distant galaxy billions of light years away we discover that it is made of exactly the same stuff as our own galaxy including all the elements for life. There is nothing special about earth – the same ingredients are present throughout the universe so it's ludicrous to assume the process which created life on earth is an anomaly when the rest of the cosmos is constant and predictable. There must be life out there so why haven't any super-intelligent aliens said hello to us?

There are many possible answers to the conundrum: perhaps the science is wrong and the spark that ignited life on earth was a unique occurrence. Maybe there is life out there but they have no interest in making contact with us. Or is it more likely that all life forms (including ours) destroy themselves before they

## SUSTAINABILITY

reach the level of technological maturity required for space travel and intergalactic communication?

Some cosmologists and theoretical physicists argue that we are somewhere between 100 and 1,000 years away from developing technology capable of interstellar travel (although many believe it will never be possible). These guestimates are very loose because we are considering technology that we can barely conceive of let alone develop - and Moore's Law simply doesn't apply to fantastical ideas like space travel.

Given that we have at least 100 years, and possible 1,000 or more, before we can make contact with our alien cousins - what do you think will be left of the planet and humanity by the time we are theoretically able to spread our intergalactic wings?

### THE GREATEST CHALLENGE WE WILL EVER FACE

The greatest challenge to humanity is bearing down on us with inextricable certainty and we are blindly ignoring it. At the rate we are consuming the planet's resources it's possible to consider humanity's survival in terms of centuries rather than the billions of years left in the earth's natural life. The climate crisis is well documented and some action is being taken. However, our current efforts to halt the destruction of our environment amount to little more than using a hosepipe to put out an oil rig fire.

Governments across the world have acted swiftly and decisively (although some may disagree) to combat the coronavirus crisis. Actions have been taken that many consider draconian and disproportionate but at least we have demonstrated humanity's ability to act rapidly and collectively in the face of a crisis. Whether you agree with the decisions taken or not, or that the pandemic has been a mild inconvenience or a source of grave anguish, most will have considered the fragility of their own existence during these shocking times.

However, despite the hardship of COVID-19 it has not posed an existential risk to humanity. On the other hand, the climate crisis threatens our very existence (or at least our great grandchildren's). It therefore remains a mystery that we are so reluctant to tackle it with meaningful and lasting action.

Ever since humans developed the means to damage the environment - the only environment we will ever

have - we have done so with breathtaking recklessness. It has only been during the last 20 years or so that we have even become widely aware of the destruction we are causing. Like generations of cigarette smokers who puffed on tobacco only to learn of the damage when it was too late, we too have been blowing smoke in the face of Mother Nature and expecting her to love us unconditionally.

**At the rate we are consuming the planet's resources it's possible to consider humanity's survival in terms of centuries rather than the billions of years left in the earth's natural life.**

### ARE WE THE AUTHOR OF OUR DESTRUCTION?

"At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reaches us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must

live through all time, or die by suicide."

While Abraham Lincoln's often misquoted statement about destruction from within references the challenges that Americans faced in the mid-1800s - the sentiment behind the narrative can be applied much more broadly to humanity itself. As Lincoln suggests, the greatest threat is one of our own making and we have been slowly killing the planet for long enough.

Humans seem conditioned to act only when the crisis is already upon us: the alcoholic who drinks until the doctor says your liver has failed; the smoker who waits for lung cancer before binning the fags; the sunworshipper with melanoma who was desperate for a tan; how bad does the climate crisis have to get before people will act? Sadly, the answer is the same as with my three analogies - not until its effects are overwhelming and irreversible.



## HOW CAN ERP SAVE US FROM DISASTER?

Our development of technology over the course of the last century has done little more than expedite our cataclysmic course - but, we now have the means and the knowledge to change that. The only question is will we?

We are in the first flushes of a new technological era and change is all around us. Those changes are happening at an ever-increasing click and if we don't pause for thought and consider what kind of world we want to live in we could find ourselves heading blind-folded into an abyss.

Human history is littered with terrible ideas. Putting lead in petrol, filling airships with hydrogen, asbestos roofs, plastic beads in detergent - the list could go on. When we made bad choices it often took us decades to understand the negative consequences - and that was during a period of time when change happened slowly. In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, change happens at a ferocious pace with very little opportunity to interrogate the long term implications.

The race to alter how we work, what work we do and which materials we need to do that work has never been faster. My concern is that we have developed the means to do all these things but not considered whether those things are going to make the world better or worse. As Duncan Prior notes over the page, one such area of concern is global supply chains. Modern technology allows us to source and distribute the stuff we consume like never before - but are we making the right choices? Who is guiding the way we architect the world? And what safeguards are we imposing to ensure that decisions taken in competitive haste are actually going to improve the world for generations to come?

Technology vendors are blessed with the tools to change the world but what seems like a good idea today could turn out to be another Hindenburg moment if the appropriate checks and balances are not embedded in their decision making.

Consider how far we have come in 30 years - in 1990 we were using IT that barely had the compute power of a modern day pencil sharpener. Now think how fast technology changes today and it's possible to dream up a scenario where you imagine what type of tech we could have at our disposal in another ten years from now, or even another 50 years from now. Just imagine what could be possible with the right purpose.

That purpose must be embraced and adopted at scale - not in pockets of isolation. There are examples where companies in the tech sector are doing incredible work to arrest the environmental crisis but sadly it won't be enough. We need a fully circular economy where waste is eliminated, materials are re-used and initiatives are implemented at a global scale rather than confined to headline-grabbing, narrowly-focussed initiatives.

How we achieve that is for minds greater than mine. What I do know is that we now have the tools at our disposal to completely rethink our impact on the environment. Until recently, our failure to positively influence humanity's direction was limited by our inability to thoroughly test and implement ideas at scale. For the first 99.99 percent of our existence we did not have the knowledge or resources to make an impact on a global scale. Whereas during the most recent 0.01 percent of our existence we have developed the means to affect every human on the earth and the environment in which we all live.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning have the potential to do a lot of our thinking for us. That could be a good thing but it could also have grave consequences if the technology isn't aligned with the long term goals of humanity. Narrowly tasking a machine to consider the most efficient way to build a supply chain (and by efficient, I mean cost effective and beneficial to the enterprise it serves) could have disastrous unforeseen implications in the future.

If other lifeforms are as reckless with their environment as we have been with ours, the answer to Fermi's question may be as simple as the question itself.

They're dead. ■

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**Human history is littered with terrible ideas. Putting lead in petrol, filling airships with hydrogen, asbestos roofs, plastic beads in detergent - the list could go on.**

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DUNCAN PRIOR

# How ERP can help create a sustainable future

BY DUNCAN PRIOR



I am going through an awakening, a realisation. This is no sudden flash of light on the staycation road to Norfolk, but a gradual, stumbling focus on how I and the club to which I belong – ‘ERPers’ – can play a part in the major challenge the world faces: global warming and the need to cut emissions.

I cannot pretend to have a solid grasp of all the details and arguments. However, the situation is changing so rapidly that I think it is worth taking stock and setting out a few tentative conclusions.

Firstly the easy part: changes as a consumer. I allow myself to be guided to a certain extent to recycling and cutting out products whose harm to the environment is well published. There is always more I could do and there is a downside that even products that are environmentally credible have problems somewhere in their supply chain.

As an economic unit, I wasn’t altering my other side – a producer. However, I am now starting to realise that I have a part to play in that challenge too.

## ERP’s role

Firstly, let’s take a look at the field I work in – ERP. As you no doubt know, this acronym stands for Enterprise Resource Planning which means it facilitates how organisations exploit resources as efficiently as possible. Over the last 30 years it has enabled large-scale cost reduction in sectors ranging from oil and gas, to mining and retail. Waste was eliminated, raw material stock levels reduced, utility bills slashed. And it managed this at scale across the globe in a market valued at over \$70bn a year, utilising the skills and expertise of hundreds of thousands of us.

The ERP market has helped clients master various challenges and opportunities along the way: client server, Y2K, the internet, reduction in trade barriers, global supply chains and increased digitalisation and cloudification. But I now would put forward a greater one – and forgive the grandiose nature: the planet.

## The requirement

In a nutshell, despite the progress so far, mankind is not doing the right things quickly enough. To quote the **Economist** newspaper:

“To stay on track for net zero by 2030, annual production of electric vehicles needs to be ten times higher than it was last year and the number of roadside charging stations 31 times bigger.”

“By 2030, wind and solar farms need to be four times the pace of 2020, and clean energy investment will need to be three times its average of the past five years.”

“Scarce raw materials critical for energy saving devices – cobalt, lithium and nickel for batteries, copper for wiring and neodymium for magnets – will need to be tightly managed because demand is predicted to grow 9 or 10 times by 2050.”

## Green shoots

So, what I now realise is that the field in which I work can play its part to enable more efficient use of these resources and to translate good ideas into action. And at the same scale as before and across an equally staggering range of organisations.

As I start to look around, I can see that we are already beginning to enable:

- **New business models.** Several automotive companies are now offering transport as a service, instead of only selling individual vehicles. This reduces CO2 emission and the demand for raw materials. But it requires significant changes to the supply chain such as the provision of regularly maintained and serviced vehicles at transport hubs. We can make these happen through changes in the ERP and associated business processes.

- **Respond positively to reputational challenges.** Fashion houses can no longer afford adverse reporting of destruction of old collections or of the devastation to regional water systems caused by intensive cotton farming. Instead, they are having to use raw materials even more efficiently and

recycle as much as possible. Not only that, but they must provide proof of the new ethics of their supply chain. Again, only possible through a re-wiring of processes and systems.

- **Ethical reporting.** Provision of new information for ethical consumers who want to know the environmental cost of their consumption. Many beverage companies are responding by providing data on the carbon emissions per drink. And heaven help them if they don't get this right!

- **Continued market presence.** The environmental regulations are (rightly) growing ever more stringent in many markets. Several agrochemical companies have to invest in bio-

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## To keep up with the environmental pressure applied through society and regulators, these companies must embrace a circular model

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logical products and ingredients in order to compete in Europe. Similar to the previous example, we can enable this through systems and processes that provide greater transparency.

- **Recycle to avoid fines.** Packages and consumer product companies are redesigning the majority of their products in response to taxes for single-use packaging. The reintroduction of material back into the supply chain requires some reconfiguration of existing processes and systems which we can manage.

- **Data led decisions.** Strategic sourcing or manufacturing decisions based on global sustainability objec-

tives. Today many companies currently make decisions based on their financial cost and time and as a result, manufacturing is carried out at the most cost-effective locations. But as more weight is placed on sustainability factors, managers will demand a wider range of data from their ERP.

- **New products produced in bulk.** Wind farms and other energy mechanisms have to be produced in bulk, which means as old industries decline new ones are emerging. This large-scale production is built upon the efficient processes, flows of data and initiative systems that we can provide.

Some of the changes will have a direct impact on global CO2 emissions, others will improve sustainability factors. Many long-established organisations have to move from a linear model of raw materials to goods to sales and then it is someone else's job to worry and pay for scrap and disposal. To keep up with the environmental pressure applied through society and regulators, these companies must embrace a circular model in which material is constantly recycled. Meanwhile, others launch new products and services in response to the small challenge.

## Conclusion

This new information and know-how will be at a premium. Indeed, in some quarters it already is because everyone is watching closely the early adopters and trend setters for hints and tips. We ERPers have our part to play. It is not just down to the scientists and inventors because good ideas need rapid application at scale to have a positive impact, as the current vaccination programme shows. Rapid and efficient deployment of new processes, systems and data is what we ERPers have been doing for years. Let's apply that to the companies we serve and to the new economy. That way we play our part to help mankind overcome the greatest challenge yet. Together we might just make it. ■





# The cloud goes

## The backdrop – commercial elasticity and the demand for workloads

**T**he cloud has been one of, if not the, most transformative IT innovations in the short history of the IT discipline. The ability to convert CAPEX into OPEX has an irresistible lure to enterprises in a pandemic world more than ever. And the pandemic has enforced the move to the cloud even more, as enterprises struggle to align their IT costs with their businesses' ups and downs. The strategy is clear: tie an enterprise's operational performance with its IT costs. When the business is up, costs are up. When the business is down, costs are down. To achieve that, enterprises need to exploit the commercial elasticity which only the cloud can offer.

In the meantime, cloud vendors have not been resting on their laurels. They realise that to move the last 50-66 percent of on-premise workloads to the cloud, they need to make migration easier or create unique automation advantages. All vendors have been doing this now for a decade; two years ago it was time to play the next strategy card – the verticalization of their cloud offerings. That is the specific offering of industry specific capability and processes, with the hope that it will entice enterprises to move to the cloud that offers these vertical offerings.

## A word of caution: horizontal technology progress vs. vertical offerings

While the verticalization of cloud offerings is in full swing, CxOs need to consider what they have already known for a long time: technology progress that benefits all industries always beats out vertical offerings and the investment into them. The rationale is - who will want a vertical solution that is perfect in terms of industry fit but based on the last generation of technology. So vertical investments by vendors across all software categories come to a screeching halt when horizontal technology progress makes them obsolete. This was the case for the ill-fated vertical offerings

by e.g. **Oracle** and **SAP** in the 1990s, which were halted once the internet architecture became the next platform every enterprise wanted to be on.

So CxOs need to consider – is there another horizontal technology in the making that will stop all the vertical offerings that we are seeing launched by the cloud vendors? The good news is that it's unlikely. The biggest reassurance here is the cloud by itself. Instead of forcing enterprises to switch products or upgrade to bridge towards a new technology, the cloud will add that technology and provide migration to that technology, often without customers even noticing. This is how cloud vendors upgrade the underlying server platforms and infrastructure. Or take the current AI offerings of the major cloud vendors as an example and reassurance at the same time. 10 years ago, there were no AI offerings in the cloud. Today all cloud vendors offer their AI architectures and solutions without any disruption amongst them. As it looks in 2021 – the future of the vertical cloud looks bright.

## The vertical strategies of the major cloud vendors

Let's look at the vertical cloud strategies of the three major cloud vendors (in alphabetical order).

**AWS:** The general **AWS** strategy is characterised by the creation of horizontal offerings, for instance its BI tool Amazon QuickSight and Amazon Connect for call centres etc with the vendor typically releasing one or two new horizontal offerings at its yearly re:Invent conference late November in Las Vegas. More recently AWS looked at simplifying its offering by providing more bundled services and reducing complexity for its customers. When it comes to verticals, not long-ago AWS would point to its many industries specific security certifications (e.g. Fed-Ramp for the US public sector, HIPAA/HITECH for the healthcare sector etc.), but clearly that was not enough.

Today AWS offers 16 vertical solutions, from automotive all the way to travel and hospitality. Typically, the vertical offering is a combination of

# vertical

BY HOLGER MUELLER

**HOLGER MUELLER**

mostly horizontal solutions (tailored to various degrees to the specific industries) and fewer vertical offerings (e.g. Seismic Workflow offered in the energy vertical, in a combination with partner offerings). AWS also benefits from the large number of ISVs that have chosen its platform (e.g. **Adobe** and **Salesforce** are solutions mentioned as part of the advertising/marketing vertical).

**GOOGLE:** Google is the cloud vendor that started it all when it comes to cloud verticalization. Google Cloud executives know that it needs to be innovative to catch up with its two key rivals from its distant third place in the cloud market share rankings. With Thomas Kurian coming over from Oracle, Google Cloud has an executive at the helm that knows very well about the importance of vertical offerings.

Google Cloud offers 17 vertical offerings ranging from automotive all the way to telecommunications. Google breaks down its government offerings further separating state/local government and federal government as well as financial services and capital markets offerings. Google is the only vendor of the three breaking out its COVID-19 solutions as a 'vertical' offering. Like its competitors, each vertical offerings is a mix of predominantly horizontal capabilities (sometimes with an industry localisation, e.g. retail analytics powered by **Looker**) and few deep vertical offerings (e.g. the Lending DocAI for financial services).

**MICROSOFT AZURE:** Contrary to AWS and Google, **Microsoft** has a wider product portfolio and more importantly has a history of vertical offerings reaching back to the last century. The consequence is that Microsoft offers industry clouds (a total of 17 – from automotive to telecommunications) which are offering all that Microsoft can offer into these verticals, and then more narrowly **Azure** Industry Solutions for its specific cloud offerings (a total of seven – from energy to retail).

The Azure Industry Solutions greatly rely on the horizontal capabilities of Azure. For instance for manufacturing, the Microsoft offerings for industrial IoT and mixed reality are the closest

to being manufacturing specific. On the flipside, given Microsoft's longer history with helping enterprises, it has the richest customer reference use case repository compared to its two other competitors. Interestingly, Microsoft does not point to its in-house ERP offering, Microsoft Dynamics as part of the Azure vertical cloud offerings.

**Strategy blocks for a vertical cloud strategy**

When charting their vertical cloud strategy for their enterprise, CxOs should consider the following aspects:

- **It is (very) early days.** In the tight cloud market race, any message that resonates with enterprises will be quickly re-used by all three players. Messages are easy, software development is much harder, so tangible vertical capabilities will take time to build.
- **Don't get blinded by the marketing.** All three vendors have superb marketing and can portray 'massive' vertical offerings, even in the early days. Don't get fooled but lock down the specific vertical offerings and demand to see their roadmaps and references.
- **Thoroughly test drive the new capabilities.** If vertical capabilities are available, understand the reference situation well and test drive them thoroughly for your enterprise. Insist on a roadmap with dates as the offering will have to mature in the coming years.
- **Your ERP system matters much more.** It is almost ironic that all three vendors feature SAP as a vertical solution for

almost all their vertical offerings. This points to the reality that the 40 years of ERP history have created more vertical capabilities than the cloud vendors were able to in three years.

**Takeaways**

Obviously, it is very early days for vertical cloud offerings. Like with any new offering, CxOs need to approach them with a healthy dose of caution. While the fear that the vertical offerings will be short-lived due to underlying horizontal technology changes can be classified as minimal in 2021, it still is not clear if the drive to a vertical cloud is a mere messaging battle or will be a real functionality battle going forward. There is a lot of appeal in a vertical cloud offering in terms of adoption speed and fit for an enterprise – but there is also a lot of work that needs to be put in by the cloud providers. If they will be really up to the job, remains to be seen.

In the meantime, the vertical support of your ERP product dwarfs the functional range that is provided by the cloud vendors today. So, the focus on what your ERP system can do from a vertical automation perspective is much more important for your enterprise than the cloud you choose. As mentioned, all cloud providers include SAP in their vertical offerings - which conveniently for enterprises supports all three cloud vendors.

The fact that it is not easy for all ERP vendors, including SAP, to build vertical capabilities is a topic for another article in ERP Today. ■

FIG. #1 COMPARING THE TOP 3 CLOUD VENDORS VERTICAL OFFERINGS

The Top 3 Cloud Vendors Vertical Offerings			
	AWS	Google Cloud	Microsoft Azure
"Launch" of Vertical	2019	2019	2020
Scope at launch	Multiple	Multiple	Healthcare
# of Vertical Clouds	16	17	17/7
Vertical Offering %	5%	10%	5%

NOTES

The "launch" data is based on the respective vendor's first press release on the topic. The scope at launch refers to the number of clouds announced. The # of Vertical Clouds is based on the vendor's vertical cloud website. The % of vertical cloud offerings is based on the author's research and conversations with enterprises. It is not to be understood as a hard %, but an anecdotal collection of vertical offerings made available across the verticals.

SOURCE: HMCC & CONSTELLATION RESEARCH, INC.



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ANDREW HICKS

# Productivity and people



– why finance is so much more than balancing the books

Advanced CFO Andrew Hicks discusses insights and statistics that have come from the Advanced Workforce Trends Survey. The article analyses key take-outs from a finance perspective.

**T**he past 18 months completely changed the way finance teams operate. Typically an office-based function, the move to remote working combined with new expectations and priorities from the wider business certainly flipped things on their head.

Our finance teams rose to the challenge and steered the ship with strategy, analysis and foresight. However, this changing world of work required new ways of doing things.

Being agile and delivering real-time

insight, alongside high levels of productivity, has been key for weathering the storms of the pandemic. However, I would be the first to admit that overcoming the distractions of these new working environments while reporting daily on figures has not been easy.

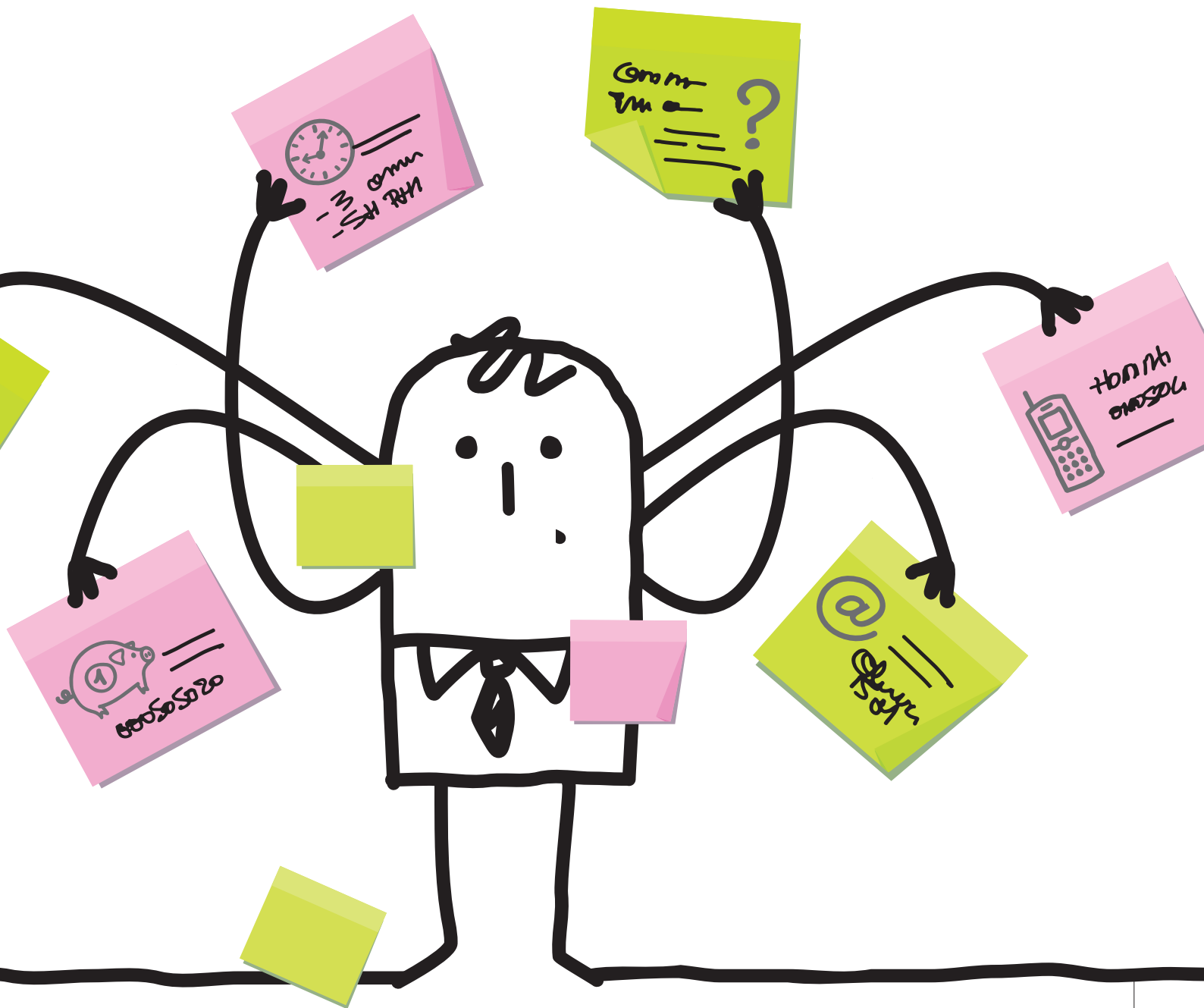
In June 2021, Advanced commissioned its first Workforce Trends Survey with over 1,000 UK business professionals and leaders having their say on important topics affecting work productivity since the start of the pandemic. Our survey examines how challenging it has been for

finance teams and shares some food for thought for finance leaders on how to improve productivity for their teams moving forward.

## **What it means to be productive**

Workplace productivity is all about how everyone in the organisation can deliver maximum value to the business in their role. It's about working smarter, not harder, to meet objectives and targets.

However, the journey to a truly productive workplace continues to be an ongoing challenge. The idea of 'being



productive' was, and still is, commonly mistaken for multitasking, taking on more than you can handle and working overtime.

Our Workforce Trends Survey found that over 60 percent of finance professionals have received urgent work requests from their bosses to be completed outside of working hours.

Over a quarter of finance professionals feel they have so many distractions that their working day is impacted and never fully spent on actual work. Concerningly, almost 40 percent of people have taken less sick leave in the last 12

months – perhaps partly because they felt they were able to continue working despite being unwell as they were based at home.

It's clear that productivity needs to remain a visible business matter, and every employee within the organisation should understand what productivity actually is and how it's measured.

### **Steering the ship with cloud technology**

The pandemic shook up the status quo of the 9-5 office overnight. Many finance teams quickly made significant

strides to enable remote working and boost productivity through the adoption of cloud technology. For finance teams using cloud technology today, it has enabled a stronger understanding of cash flow, a clearer overview of business activity, opportunity for real-time reporting and the automation of low-value tasks that previously held finance teams back.

The automation and digitalisation of day-to-day mundane tasks has given finance teams the opportunity to work on more value-adding projects such as scenario planning to ensure busi-



## ANDREW HICKS

ness stability and continuity. This in turn has boosted agility and efficiency without compromising any delivery of work from the finance function.

Digital transformation in the workplace was always going to be inevitable. However, the pandemic fast-forwarded what was once considered a one to three year IT integration plan into a one-month implementation of cloud software.

Our **Workforce Trends Survey** results showed that 44 percent of finance professionals agreed that the cloud had supported them to work from home, with a further 48 percent seeing an increase in flexibility during their working day.

### Maximising productivity with cloud technology

On the other hand, the survey results also highlighted that almost 50 percent of finance professionals felt that the introduction of new software platforms and apps has hindered their productivity. Some of the contributing factors included too many notifications from messaging tools like **Microsoft Teams** and **Skype** (32 percent) and not being able to switch off (75 percent).

Technology is very much a part of increasing productivity in the workplace. However, having too many separate applications at hand to fulfil

day-to-day tasks is counterproductive.

By using a single sign-on platform, employees can access all the information they need from a single, unified source. It also reduces the amount of notifications received from separate applications which can be difficult to keep track of. By ensuring your employees only receive notifications for what they need, focus increases and more time is spent on value-adding tasks rather than facing ongoing interruptions.

CFOs and finance directors should also consider a digital upskilling programme to familiarise employees with new systems so they hit the ground running. Ideally this would feature personalised training modules based on preferred ways of learning and regular technology onboarding reviews to ensure their finance teams are getting maximum benefits and efficiency gains from the software at their disposal.

### Maintaining work/life balance

Understanding what helps and what hinders work productivity has been of

Over **60%**  
of finance professionals  
have received urgent work  
requests from their boss  
to be completed outside  
of working hours

paramount importance to me when leading my team over the last 18 months. Team culture and connection in the remote workplace have been essential.

Giving regular feedback and reinforcing the positive impact of work and completed projects has helped my team members recognise that their time and effort is valued. To support this, we introduced Clear Review performance management software to the team. The platform ensures that your employees are engaged, supports their wellbeing and improves their performance at work.

Using Clear Review provided the opportunity for my team and I to set and track clear and short-term goals, as well as schedule ongoing conversations to discuss individual targets and ambitions for career growth. Eliminating the annual personal development

Almost **40%**  
of people had taken  
less sick leave in the last  
12 months



review session with each team member in exchange for regular catchups and setting monthly/quarterly goals has helped motivate each individual member through clear purpose and direction.

Maintaining a healthy work/life balance throughout the pandemic has also played a key role in productivity amongst my team. As we navigated multiple lockdowns, we found ourselves evaluating the different elements of our lives and really taking into account what makes us happy and brings value to our lives.

Ensuring that people were having regular breaks, working within work hours only and perhaps taking the time to go for lunchtime walks are some of the ways we have found make for a healthier and more productive relationship with work. With this in mind we rewarded our teams with 'Summer Fridays' which entitles all staff to half-a-day off work per week throughout July and August 2021. The improved flexibility offered by Summer Fridays has allowed my team to be one step closer to achieving a healthy work/life balance.

**44%**

of finance professionals agreed that the cloud had supported them to work from home

#### **Staying connected with your finance team**

Being empathetic is a soft skill that CFOs and finance directors have had to develop further over the past 18 months. Fear, uncertainty about the future, keeping up to date with the latest lockdown rules and adapting to working remotely are all factors that have understandably hindered focus and work productivity. Good mental health and wellbeing are now more important than ever, with the human crisis of the pandemic requiring a human response from CFOs and finance directors.

Invest time in understanding your finance team's needs and realise that every individual will have different priorities and requirements. Listen to your people and make sure they know that you are available for them with open communication channels. Whichever way works best to motivate and assist those in your team, do it with purpose and authenticity.

Use technology to support your people, wherever they are working. Monitor wellbeing with effective software, share powerful communication channels and provide tools that help people get their work done in the most efficient ways. The Workforce Trends Survey found that 67 percent of finance professionals want to play an active part in the decisions to adopt new technologies – involve your team in the digital transformation journey so they can reap benefits that will make a difference in their lives.

#### **Knowledge is power**

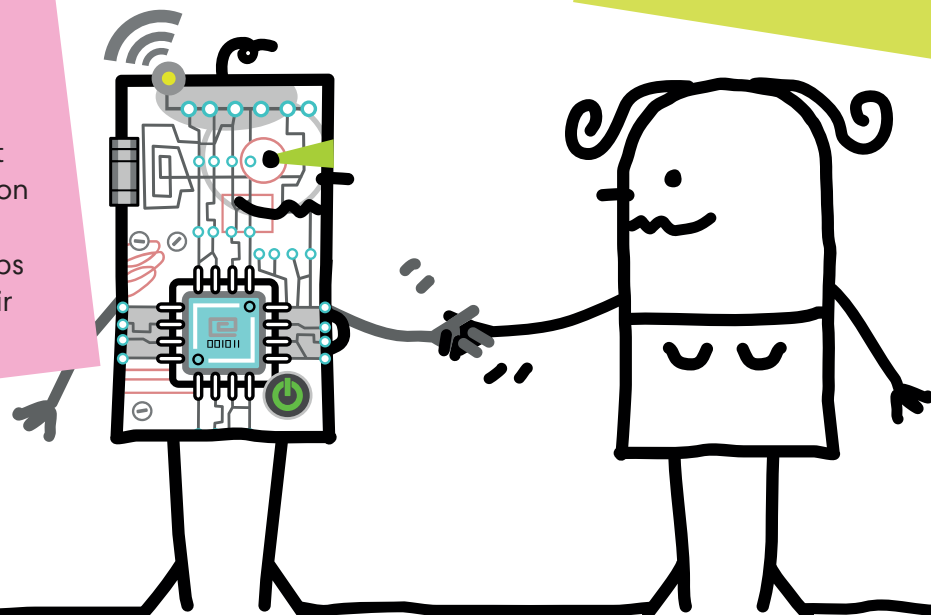
Access the eight secrets to workforce productivity in the Advanced 2021 Workforce Trends Survey Report. Based on independent research and influencer insights into the changing face of business productivity as we get ready for a new era of hybrid working, it reveals urgent trends for leaders. ■

**67%**

of finance professionals wanted to play an active part in the decisions to adopt new technologies

**50%**

of finance professionals felt that the introduction of new software platforms and apps has hindered their productivity



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# UNLOCKING THE VALUE OF **Smart contracts**

BY WAYNE LLOYD

**T**he Ethereum whitepaper, written and released by Vitalik Buterin in 2013, put in motion the wheels of change that are set to have a profound impact across every industry in the coming years ahead. “Originally conceived as an upgraded version of a cryptocurrency” (Buterin, 2015), Ethereum offered new features that some believed were required from existing decentralised currencies at the time. As Buterin concluded in his whitepaper, however, the “Ethereum protocol moved far beyond just currency” given its quasi-Turing-complete programming language (Grishchenko et al. 2018), which “makes it possible for anyone to write smart contracts” (De Filippi & Wright 2018). Smart contracts were a concept originally proposed by computer scientist, Nick Szabo, in 1994. He analogised them to vending machines, “which take money and dispense products automatically” (Raskin, 2017).

Another definition is that smart contracts are hard-coded, autonomous contracts that verify and execute unique and specific functions on a blockchain network when specified terms and conditions are met. As such, “smart contracts are a scripting language overlaid on the blockchain that enables transactions on a blockchain that mirror ‘real-life’ contracts by defining if/then conditions” (Compagnucci, 2021). They can be applied to solve a wide variety of use cases, from a basic agreement between two parties (Party A pays Party B) as well as more complex transactions that might require interconnected smart contracts to interact with one another to form a platform that provides operational services.

Whilst smart contracts have been applied to a wide variety of use cases, they remain in a relatively early stage



of their development and although competing blockchain platforms have followed Ethereum’s lead by developing their own smart contract features, “the deployment of smart contracts in the real world still need further testing” (Compagnucci 2021). The “nascent state of the technology means that there are few tested solutions to the legal issues to which smart contracts give rise” (Law Commission 2020). With just 0.5 percent or 40 million of the world’s population actively using blockchain technology today (Edureka, 2021) it provides a sense of how much room this technology has to grow, particularly when we consider that number against the 4.66 billion active internet users of today (Orbello, 2021).

**S**ome predict that 80 percent of the world’s population will be utilising blockchain technology in some form by 2030 (Edureka, 2020), which is a rate of adoption that is hard to comprehend. This is particularly true when we consider some of the current user experiences that come when utilising some of the existing blockchain based services that are available today. However, as discussed in a previous ERP Today article, it is during these times that the largest opportunities present themselves and given the high growth projections of blockchain adoption, it makes this a moment in time that businesses cannot afford to overlook - particularly if they are to remain competitive in the future.

To capture this opportunity businesses must understand “how to evolve at the speed at which things change, largely originating from technology innovations, taking place” (Mundra, 2018). This need is exacerbated further given that the historical barriers to entry that have often protected big businesses from competition are becom-

ing increasingly easier for new market entrants to overcome. In some instances, this is due to regulations that are designed to stimulate competition, such as open banking, whilst other new market entrants have been able to take advantage of the opportunities that blockchain and smart contracts are uniquely placed to unlock.

Mindful of such things, the importance of organisational agility is “becoming essential” (Aghina et al. 2020) and this has also been accelerated by the pandemic, which has created a greater and “immediate need for adaptability, speed and efficiency” (McKinsey, 2021). Agile defined means being “able to move quickly and easily” but to achieve true organisational agility requires businesses to understand the distinction between wanting to be agile and becoming agile. The distinction is important because “agility is a measure of responsiveness” (Harraf et al. 2015) to the external environment and this can only be done effectively if businesses foster safe and empowering work cultures. Such cultures allow teams to reasonably critique and improve current ways of working without fear of reprisal. Empowerment is a pillar that describes the relationship between leadership and employees through authority and autonomy, with the most basic sub- component of empowerment being how centralised and decentralised the organisation is in relation to “decision making authority” (Harraf et al. 2015).

There is an argument that the more decentralised the decision-making authority is, the more effective their innovation might be. Such models represent “trust in the capability of the involved actors to decide on the best suited solution” (Klein, 2021) towards the challenges and friction points businesses need to overcome. The success of the Ethereum network is testament to the power of decentralised decision-making structures, and with a market capitalisation of \$364bn at the time of writing, it makes the **Ethereum** network more valuable than recognisable brands such as **Netflix**, **Cisco**, **Nike**, **Shell**, and **Wells Fargo**.

It is business critical for organisations to comprehend these external factors if they are truly to understand and service their customers better than the rest now and in the future. Given that agility is customer-centric in nature, agility and customer-focus become inherently interrelated as the changing demands of customers produce new demands on business operations. This must

be accounted for when evaluating the external pressures that influence the organisation’s overall agility (Doz & Kosonen, 2008), particularly when business-to-business expectations are beginning to mirror business-to-consumer expectations. According to **Salesforce** (2018), 82 percent of business buyers want the same experience as when they’re buying for themselves but only 27 percent say companies generally excel at meeting their standards for an overall business to business experience. Customers are demanding faster, frictionless and more trusting experiences.

**A** central feature of almost every customer experience and a core asset of any business is contracts. Whilst they “pervade every aspect of our lives” (Stim 2016) they have eluded effective automation and digitalisation, which leads to delay, inefficiencies and lost value. Research conducted by World Commerce & Contracting (2020) found that the “typical contracting process has more than 40 friction points for each party, the buyer and the seller.” Admittedly, this is not a “one size fits all” problem, with some industries able to use standardised agreements more frequently. Indeed, “it is when agreements become negotiable, or when products or services are customised, that the intensity of friction increases.”

Friction impedes the agility of any organisation and contradicts the ideals of customer-centricity that underpin it. “To deliver value, the contracting process must make the user its priority” (World Commerce & Contracting, 2020); therefore, consideration of digitalising contracts and contract management without using smart contracts makes that task increasingly difficult. Historically it has been argued that smart contracts are not ‘smart’. However, with the evolution of blockchain oracle providers, the infrastructure required to automate smart contracts is now being laid.

Given the average added-value to be achieved from friction-point reduction and elimination is estimated to be equivalent to 0.5 percent of contract revenue or spend, and 12-15 percent for complex contracts (World Commerce & Contracting, 2020), it’s easy to understand why Ethereum is so valuable. It has never been more important for business to act. ■

Wayne Lloyd, CEO, Smarter Contracts



**A central feature of almost every customer experience and a core asset of any business is contracts**





# PERSONAL







# MATTERS



## **CRM AND THE CHALLENGE OF KEEPING EVERYONE HAPPY IN A CRISIS**

CRM HAS A MAJOR ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING ORGANISATIONS JOIN THE DOTS AND MANAGE INTERRELATED EXPERIENCES AND SERVICES BUT THERE ARE CHALLENGES AHEAD **BY MARC AMBASNA-JONES**

## CRM

## WHILE BREXIT RED TAPE AND COVID HAVE LED TO A SHORTAGE IN HGV DRIVERS, THE IMPACTS ON CONSUMERS HAVE YET TO BE FULLY REALISED.

**T**he **British Retail Consortium (BRC)** and **NielsenIQ Shop Price Index** in August this year warned of impending price inflation, while many shops in multiple sectors have already started to feel the pinch of supply chain problems. Delays in product deliveries and empty shelves are going to be increasingly commonplace in the coming months piling pressure on businesses and their relationship with customers.

Managing customer expectation is now going to be increasingly crucial when it comes to designing and delivering consumer experiences. Businesses with a real, personal understanding of their customers should, in theory, be well placed to at least pre-empt demand for certain products and plan accordingly. This should in turn feed into the supply chain, creating a cycle of real-time product visibility that can be matched with demand.

It's what **Gartner** refers to as "total experience", the idea that customer experience, employee experience and user experience are combined to transform business outcomes.

"The goal is to improve the overall experience where all of these pieces intersect, from technology to employees to customers and users," says Gartner, looking ahead to the key enabling technology trends of 2021. "Tightly linking all of these experiences — as opposed to individually improving each one in a silo — differentiates a business from competitors in a way that

is difficult to replicate, creating sustainable competitive advantage."

Covid has only accelerated this need to connect experiences, with an increase in remote and mobile working, as well as progressively distributed customer bases. In many ways, consumer grade experiences are now the benchmark for both B2C and B2B interactions and, as such, technology adoption has to reflect that shifting trend. Personalisation and the data-driven technologies that enable it, should be front and centre.

"Personalisation has traditionally been based around 'learn what I usually like to buy', where mostly the emphasis was on service," says Steve Ingram, director at **Deloitte**. "Now there are three aspects that are in play: experience, convenience and service."

Experience is now around 'what does this bring to me over and above the product or service that I am buying from you?', suggests Ingram, adding that this is where we are seeing examples of tutorials of new technical products, nutritionist services available with food or fitness products, and even interest groups and affiliations that can bring similar interests together. Where convenience used to focus on delivery

within a timeframe, the expectation has now shifted to accurate delivery slots where and when we want them, plus the convenience of various payment options to suit our specific requirements at that point in time.

Ingram adds that in terms of service, it is now all-encompassing, "not only from knowing what I like, and what I am likely to need, but there is another — more social — aspect appearing with service," he says. "The Covid pandemic really brought a focus on giving me a service that is particular to what I need now. Because circumstances change, and have been changing many times (especially for businesses during lockdowns), they want to know that they have their current needs taken into account."

Of course, given the current shortages in delivery drivers and pressures on supply, this becomes even more difficult, even if you have total vision of customers and suppliers. If you don't, the future must seem a little scary right now, because while the latest CRM technologies, for example, give you customer insight, they can also act as conduits for managing interrelated data that feeds other services, such as accounts, warehouses, sales teams and supply chain management.

As Ingram asks, given the need for good management of inventory, "knowing warehouse capacities, rates of sale, risks of shortages due to Brexit and Covid... does supply chain cooperation begin to move into the world of CRM too?"

For leading CRM vendor **Salesforce**, this is surely music to the ears. Michael Green, retail and travel, transport and hospital-



NOW THERE ARE  
THREE ASPECTS  
THAT ARE IN PLAY:  
EXPERIENCE,  
CONVENIENCE  
AND SERVICE

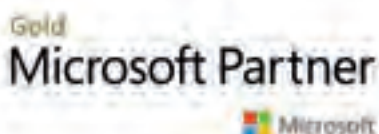
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## CRM

ity industry leader at Salesforce UK and Ireland says “that businesses can offer more contextually aware, personalised services by building a 360-degree view of every customer,” which is the Salesforce mantra. The aim, admits Green, is to help businesses meet changing customer expectations by finding ways to enhance service and convenience, based on customer knowledge.

“This relies on having the right infrastructure in place to capture a full view of each customer, equipping employees with insights that allow them to provide these highly personalised interactions,” adds Green.

**A**ccording to **Forrester**, this encapsulates the key CRM trends of 2021, where hyper-personalisation “underpins true one-to-one interactions” and engagement with customers means putting greater context into those interactions by harvesting information from alternative sources, such as “third-party, digital touchpoints like asynchronous messaging channels, social media, voice apps, and even gaming consoles.”

It’s a clear indication of the extent to which organisations need to travel to achieve a granular level of detail on customers. Data is everything and to a large extent, there are no excuses for not realising this and the role it plays in driving customer insight and loyalty. As Grant Caley, CTO at **NetApp** says, “personalisation is nothing new,” but technologies now exist to enable businesses to take the data and CRM capabilities to a new level, one that drives “more sophisticated forms of personalisa-



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MICHAEL GREEN /  
SALESFORCE

tion used in everyday customer service, marketing and communication,” he says.

“As well as providing access to the compute power required to store and organise data, cloud providers also offer value-add technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), object storage, and big data analytics,” continues Caley, “which allow organisations to obtain greater insight about the data they have. There’s a ton of possibilities for businesses, but it boils down to being able to offer more personalised service based on better quality data.”

He cites companies like Amazon and Netflix that have been leaders in using machine learning analytics to make more accurate recommendations and serve content to users based on individual preferences. So why can’t everyone do it? Perhaps they can.

#### PERSONAL GOALS

Emile Van Den Berg, marketing manager at Salesforce integrator partner

Upper Sigma says that the business sees a number of common technical and cultural challenges when it comes to implementing strategies that enable personalisation.

A common customer challenge is “over-complicated systems that have too many processes that are there to tick a box as opposed to serving a purpose,” she says, adding that many customers “accrue technical debt over

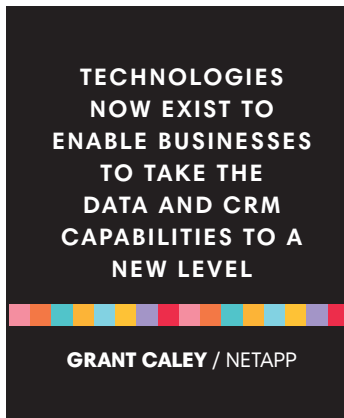
time, making it difficult to change people’s mindsets. Instead of personalising the system, we quite often have to look at the processes and ask what is the deliverable that a company is looking for and what is the most efficient way of getting there?”

So, how will any shift to personalisation help?

“Personalisation of the system, streamlining the processes, and adding automation where possible makes individuals more productive and in turn, gives the end client a better experience,” says Van Den Berg. “By focusing on the architecture, we create personalisation with the intent that encapsulates the individual corporate culture, where the system can take the ‘workload strain’ and not the user.”

Van Den Berg cites some examples, where Upper Sigma has implemented Salesforce Experience Clouds, which enable its clients to access an interface enabling easy data input and management, down to a personal, granular level. It means that when certain events occur, such as a period of good weather or sports tournaments, for example, these Experience Clouds can trigger an automated process that identifies and creates follow-up tasks with certain customers.

“For one of our clients, this took a huge ‘workload strain’ off the employees within the organisation, and following on from the deployment they achieved a



TECHNOLOGIES  
NOW EXIST TO  
ENABLE BUSINESSES  
TO TAKE THE  
DATA AND CRM  
CAPABILITIES TO A  
NEW LEVEL

GRANT CALEY / NETAPP

21.5 percent growth over the next year," she says.

Breaking down data silos is essential but so too is the need to manage skills. As ever, we are facing a shortage of those too, and automation will go some way to alleviating the shortfall. But Green at Salesforce warns organisations need to "future-proof the workforce," now, to prepare for the continued and changing demands of delivering digital services.

"Upskilling and reskilling employees creates more diverse teams, enhancing their ability to innovate in the way they personalise services for their customers," says Green, "making engagements more memorable and productive. Creating an equal workplace culture, where all employees are encouraged to learn and apply new skills, is vital for unleashing the full potential to create exceptional customer experiences."

It's a good point and feeds into the narrative that any organisation looking to pursue a customer personalisation strategy needs to be skilled and interconnected. Customer experience is driven as much by engaged employees as it is data. It's CRM capability has to be more than just a tool for keeping track of what customers buy or when their subscriptions up for renewal. It's a coming together of the organisation as a whole and forging a customer-centric business, where decisions always consider the customer and not just what looks good on a balance sheet.

As **SugarCRM** suggests in a recent blog, a failure to promote positive customer experiences leads to customer dissatisfaction and churn and while organisations will understandably vary on their journey, understanding



that personalisation is a cultural shift in how a business thinks, is key.

"Rather than just providing a single touchpoint with a company's brand, customer experience addresses sentiment and long-term engagement and strives to deliver delight at every point of interaction. Investing in CX improves upselling and cross-selling, customer satisfaction, and customer retention," writes Aleighjean Traver, senior customer marketing manager at SugarCRM.

As **Accenture** reveals in its study, *Life Reimagined: Mapping the motivations that matter most for today's consumers*, how people engage with brands and what they expect from brands is changing fast. The pandemic has acted as an accelerator, both in terms of how we want to buy and interact with businesses but also what we now look for in brands, given the rapidly changing world around us. Nothing is set in stone. Preferences are increasingly fluid, as are expectations.



For any business, this is going to be an on-going challenge but those organisations with a more personal view of customers almost certainly stand a better chance of thriving.

So, what does the future hold? According to **McKinsey**, it's quite simple. Predictive customer insight is the future. While CRM platforms are the natural backbone of personalisation, AI and predictive analytics are the star players of the team, delivering customer

intelligence that will form the basis of actions. The report, *Prediction: The Future of CX*, claims that any predictive customer experience platform should consist of three key elements.

The first is a customer data lake, formed from multiple data sources that serves as the foundation for developing a rigorous understanding of customer experiences. The second is predictive customer scores, where algorithms track and understand influencing factors on customer satisfaction and business performance and assign customers scores relating to their value and loyalty, for example. The third is an action and insight engine, that shares with all employees, information and suggestions based on the findings of the other elements.

Delivering what customers want, when and how they want it, has long been a refrain in business and while many organisations over the years, no doubt paid lip service to this idea, and probably got away with it, today things

are a little different. The consumerisation of business tools and services, the expectations of a younger, influential demographic, the pressures of global competition, the growing desire for business resilience and the on-going challenges of the Covid pandemic and Brexit have all conspired to change how customers are now viewed and serviced. Personalisation is now, almost certainly not just a nice-to-have capability but a must-have tool for future viability. ■



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# PETS VS CATTLE

## 2.0

AN ANALOGY AND  
APPROACH FOR MODERN  
INFRASTRUCTURES

BY DANIEL RIEDEL





**Pets vs. cattle is an analogy with modest beginnings that has grown into an industry staple.**

A simple Google search will spawn more than four million results and a myriad of developer memes.

Although origin stories are a little hazy, the actual, original quote was 'cattle, not pets.' Microsoft engineer Bill Baker used it during a discussion about SQL deployments to explain how server treatment changed over time.

At its heart, the illustration is simple: it is based on considering how much bandwidth a farmer puts into caring for a cute pet like a puppy or kitten, versus how much care goes into maintaining a herd of cows on a farm.



## DANIEL RIEDEL

**T**he puppy will get all the trappings of individualised attention, like a name, toys, tasty food and treats, and specialised medical care when they are sick or injured.

On the other hand, cattle typically do not have names and they do not require the same level of nurturing and attention as the puppy.

The two sets of animals are equally essential to the farmer, but for different reasons. There are different levels of emotional attachment, financial return, and senses of purpose for the two categories. And most critically, for the purposes of this analogy, the level of maintenance differs wildly.

Applying this idea, management styles of servers would depend on the grouping:

**Pets:** Servers get unique names and special treatment – when they are ‘sick’ they are carefully nursed back to health, often with a substantial financial investment and allocated resource. There is an undoubted preference for keeping the server as it is, or at least in the healthiest version.

**Cattle:** Servers are part of an identical group and numbered, not named. They receive no special treatment and when they go wrong, they are replaced rather than repaired in place. They are inherently a commodity and treated as such.

The analogy has received a lot of recent attention because of the way infrastructures and management have changed since the early days of the internet.

The dominant force in this change has been the issue of scale – as businesses have grown, as well as more complex consumer demands taking hold, the need for cloud infrastructure has increased massively. This has led to a huge jump in the management burden of those resources and a need for streamlined processes to handle this technological estate.

At the same time, organisations have realised the need to eliminate their tendency to rely on one large, monolithic entity. Aside from forcing technology leaders to go against their instincts and



overcome significant cultural barriers and ideas of ‘this is how it has always been done’, this move away from one core technological entity has meant even more server requirements.

This has been driven by the desire to enjoy the increased security and flexibility of modern infrastructures. Thus, in the case of the business drivers behind revisiting pets vs. cattle, we can see there is a lot at stake – scaling for growth, better processes, and lower cost profiles for new revenue streams – if technology leadership can figure out how to handle the server farmyard.

### Making the decision

Developers have had to realise that while the treatment of pets sounds more positive, it is the cattle approach that they need to target. The cold, somewhat harsh truth of business is that cattle are essential; pets are less so. The good news is that a cattle-centric view yields substantial results, quickly.

This is not to say the cattle approach will work all the time. Not everything is disposable, and when an asset is not, it requires pet treatment – and the methodology for assessing such assets is reasonably straight forward, borrowing heavily from cyber security best practice. However, for any enterprise, the goal is to minimise the number of pets and maximise cattle to create an easy way to protect and manage infrastructure.

The practical application of pets vs. cattle centres on minimising the systems which require individual attention. Establishing the right business rules and then employing automation is a crucial component, as the sheer number of cattle that will result from a company undergoing rapid growth, is unsustainable without these tools.

These rules are based on the DIE principles of ensuring the infrastructure is distributed, immutable, and ephemeral.

### Why cattle need (to) DIE

Long lived cattle are dangerous because a business does not and should not support them like pets. The role of the DIE strategy is to ensure that even at scale, with large numbers of cattle servers, a business has not increased the attack surface of the infrastructure.

Obviously, large numbers of servers need to be distributed to improve the management of scale. From a scalability perspective, distributed architectures help to meet fluctuating demand for services, while also decreasing downtime.

But from a security standpoint, distributing software and infrastructure across large environments can make things much trickier. In a distributed environment, a business has more moving pieces.

This is where immutable containers in infrastructure can help provide trust. They cannot be changed in production, and if they change later, a business can delete them immediately and redeploy with a known good state. Consequently, the attack surface shrinks, and an adversary has less ability to infiltrate a given system.

The benefits of being ephemeral – that is to say, temporary, and dynamic – are that the servers allocate resources from a pool and when those instances are terminated, those resources are freed and go back into that pool until they are needed again. This is not just an operational benefit – the enterprise can avoid the investment and depreciation schedule that comes with establishing new applications on expensive, new hardware.



### Drilling into the immutable

At first glance, the immutable infrastructure - which cannot be changed - seems counterintuitive to the cattle approach that sees rapid swapping out of old assets. The key is standardisation. If there is something wrong with a server, it is not reconfigured or patched. It is replaced with a new server built from a standard image - a core template - with necessary changes incorporated. It can be thought of as cloning the cattle but making improvements with each iteration.

Just as a side note, patches and updates are an unavoidable reality of operations at scale; they ensure the ongoing security and compliance of the infrastructure. However, legacy operations apply these patches in-place, often inconsistently, which can result in further issues. It is 'pet' behaviour when the far better outcome (for the business) may well be simple recognition of the commodity function of the asset that would be patched and opting for replacement.

Immutable systems move the responsibility for this 'standardised evolution' to the image creation process and optimize it for replacing the running image quickly. This reduces the scope of change to a single, well developed and well tested image that can be deployed repeatedly. Critically, this is often without interruption to ongoing operations. These systems also cut configuration drift cases, where changes are not mapped effectively, making reproduction into a backup or secondary source near impossible.

### IaC

Infrastructure as code (IaC) is a crucial component of building these immutable systems. Establishing the IaC base ensures rapidly configured replacement servers and accessible IaC repositories are essential.

Users should be able to understand the code provisioning to troubleshoot problems and run applications. IaC also helps eliminate the need for extensive documentation. Changes are visible within the code itself. Excessive or dated documentation increases er-

ror risk, so this is a definite benefit.

Essentially, however it is manifest that the cattle philosophy minimises changes to the configuration, breaks programmes down to their smallest possible components, and leverages standardisation and automation to control all these moving parts. The result is an infrastructure that is scalable, secure, and flexible without needing lavish amounts of attention on specific assets that also create likely points of failure.

allows teams to automate tasks related to provisioning and deploying containers, allocating resources between them, and monitoring their health. It is - almost - entirely hands off farming or management.

All of this comes together with cloud-native providers to enable the organisation to scale rapidly in both directions (up and down) to meet the demands of the consumer of the application.

**Chickens, unlike cattle, are small and require little space. That means you can use a lot more of them while minimising the resources they consume. On top of that, chickens have much shorter lives than cattle.**

### Expanding the farmyard - additions to the analogy

We need to add another important analogy to the mix, and it involves chickens. In 2015, Bernard Golden, software guru and founder of the **Emerging Tech Academy**, used this concept to describe the containers necessary in such a flexible environment.

Chickens, unlike cattle, are small and require little space. That means you can use a lot more of them while minimising the resources they consume. On top of that, chickens have much shorter lives than cattle. Cluster (cattle) instances have lifespans of days. The longevity of containers (chickens) is measured in minutes.

There is also a speed element involved. Physical servers take the longest amount of time to provision and configure, followed by VMs (with appropriate automation in place) and then Containers. The closer you move to a well-architected container model, the faster it is to remove and replace one of the components. And speed will typically equate to agility and time to market.

Container orchestration is another vital component of the practical cattle environment, as microservice architectures require the deployment of granular level services. This process

### Herding cattle in the organisation

Over time, other industry experts have added their own entities to the cattle, not pets analogy. Insects may be used to refer to a serverless environment that makes use of ephemeral applications and services. Snowflakes was a term coined to describe highly delicate, detailed servers that developers try to avoid. All these additions serve a single purpose: to help developers put the analogy to practical use.

Organisations should not eliminate pets in the pets vs cattle analogy entirely. Instead, they can be isolated to instances of absolute need - and technology is still awash with many examples of where such assets exist.

However, the above strategy also ensures that where administrators must concentrate their efforts on irreplaceable pets, they can take a more turn-key approach to disposable assets. It also forms a natural point of outsourcing - working with a team of infrastructure experts who leverage decades of experience can help a business keep its cattle grazing on technologically and economically green pastures, while the in-house team keeps the pets in the best of health. ■

—  
*Daniel Riedel, SVP, strategic services, Copado*



The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the pace

# **THE STATE**

of global change and the pressure on companies

# **OF AI**

to respond. But, despite rapidly building their digital

# **AND UK**

capabilities during the pandemic many organisations

# **HEALTHCARE**

are yet to fully embrace transformation.

BY TIM SKINNER



## TIM SKINNER

**T**here has been a rapid uptake in the adoption of digital resources and data in UK healthcare since the onset of Covid-19 – from the government’s new NHS data strategy announced in June, to the launch of the NHS Covid-19 app, which had been downloaded 10 million times by July 2021. The result of this surge in activity, has raised the question, amongst members of the public, of how this data will be used, while for healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical companies, it has paved the way for innovation possibilities stemming from this digital transformation.



Continuing this momentum could enable the UK healthcare industry to make significant strides in fields such as diagnostics, drug delivery, health, and social care. By also using this data to apply Artificial Intelligence (AI), it can provide healthcare professionals with the critical insights which can fuel innovation. This could drive new outcomes from improving patient care and reducing clinician burnout to up levelling the overall care experience and lowering costs.

**Accenture** figures estimate that AI applications in healthcare could save up to \$150bn annually by 2026. Given the ongoing challenges faced by the NHS to provide universal healthcare to all UK citizens, cost savings on this scale could help keep the doors open.

This article explores the current state of AI in the UK’s healthcare system, its potential and what steps are needed to realise this.

### AI WILL SUPPORT RATHER THAN REPLACE HEALTH WORKERS

There’s a lot of confusion around AI, so let’s start with the current state of play in UK healthcare. Essentially, there’s two types to be aware of: Narrow AI and General AI.

General AI is where a machine can start solving a problem as a human would, or perhaps even better than we would, however instances of machines actually doing so are rare. Indeed, this is usually shown only through gimmicky applications of AI such as playing chess or completing puzzles. For healthcare, the focus is on Narrow AI – more specific use cases – where rapid organisation and analysis of data can support healthcare professionals to make better decisions more quickly.

This is not a way to replace healthcare roles in the future, but to support individuals to achieve a more intellectual layer of capability through the support of AI. Here, we’re talking about levelling up healthcare professionals to support in the more menial, time-consuming tasks. This means, at an educational level, our approach to teaching in healthcare must adapt to ensure human expertise is being used to its fullest potential.

Radiology is one such area. AI is already impacting radiology more quickly than other medical fields. We should view any uneasiness among radiologists to embrace AI as analogous to how airline pilots were reluctant to embrace autopilot technology in the early days of automated aircraft aviation. Today there’s a certain comfort in knowing that pilots are supported by cutting edge navigational systems and aerospace engineering. AI is not going to replace radiologists. Instead, it will simply allow radiologists to increase the number of patients they are able to process, accelerating diagnosis and treatment.

To succeed, radiologists must now be aware of the basic principles of how AI observations are obtained and how they should be interpreted. Datasets used to train AI models do have limitations and can potentially include bias. In this new paradigm, radiologists will need to know how to interact with AI solutions, how to flag studies that provided incorrect results or failed AI processing, and how to interact with the data scientists and IT supporting these solutions.

### IT’S NOT AN AI PROJECT, IT’S PATIENT OUTCOMES

Too often we see time spent discussing AI as the end goal – the sole focus of a project – when really, it’s simply a means to an end. The purpose of any healthcare project should have patient outcomes at its heart.

When discussing projects involving AI in healthcare, it’s vital to focus on the data – the availability of ‘clean,’ labelled data to train deep learning models and the need for datasets that represent diverse patient populations. Additionally, focussing on the importance of an appropriate infrastructure to support moving large amounts of training data quickly and efficiently to graphics processing unit (GPU) compute environments.

These areas are crucially important to the success of a project, but the narrow focus on technology can reduce the efficiency of a project and prevent those involved from getting to the end goal.



Shifting the focus from what AI can do, to how it can help achieve a set of more specific objectives to deliver a beneficial patient outcome, will be critical to AI maturing as a healthcare technology service, rather than remaining the preserve of technologists. It is also imperative that ease of use is a focus for any AI-incorporated project to ensure healthcare professionals are actively using AI rather than feeling that it is being imposed on them.

### IMPLEMENTING AI AND CLOUD IN THE UK'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

There are many considerations here and a key one is data – data outcomes, biases, and influences. These need to be understood and addressed from the outset to understand influences that have the potential to impact outcomes for years to come.

But the issue that today's industry faces is multifaceted. Remaining agile and keeping options open is of paramount importance, as is setting realistic and achievable objectives. Another is processing systems, with the need for compute power to process data at pace. Here, understanding storage as a key element in achieving data access and agility is key.

Data and resources already exist across complex ecosystems of in-house datacentres, private and public clouds, and trusted delivery partners. Embracing new cloud technologies and attempting to place data at the heart of everything requires alignment of policy, governance and risk management through software development and architectural disciplines, right down to the underlying IT infrastructure. Realising this data-led vision and shaping its future pathway ultimately comes down to how data is stored and processed at the very foundation of the IT stack.

The government recognises this need, stating that it "must expand work to treat data as a strategic asset, and create a

whole-government, collectively responsible approach to investing in data foundations, so that everyone can benefit from the improved outcomes data can offer."

We recently found that digital wastage – paying for services not used or failing to maximise the potential of these services – could be reduced by up to 60 percent using hybrid multi-clouds. When it comes to the UK's healthcare sector, it can sometimes be easier to secure a large sum in one go as opposed to a smaller sum on a recurring basis – but whilst cloud migration may seem like a destination, it's actually a journey that needs to focus on patient outcomes and take clear steps to ensure maximum roll-out flexibility and minimal impact on service delivery.

All of this is underpinned by the need for collaboration – bringing disparate groups and sets of data together to deliver against an outcome-focussed project. Again, here there needs to be a clear and defined focus on the project, understanding how technology can provide support but not allowing it to become the end goal. A great example here would be the innovations in AI to support glaucoma pixel examinations. AI is used in imaging analysis to find the white specks that are the root cause of glaucoma and spot its development early, with the overall goal to identify the problem early and ensure patient treatment can happen quickly.

### SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

The recent announcement of the government's new NHS data strategy highlighted the fundamental importance of data in modern healthcare decision making. If harnessed correctly, the data retained by the NHS has the potential to provide huge value to research and enable health and care staff to make quicker, more informed decisions with up-to-date information and support from AI.

However, such a drive does not negate the fact that, within a wider data strategy framework, cloud adoption and migration is an intimidating task. Much of the industry's discussion seems to jump from A to Z in the migration process; cloud and legacy systems are positioned as almost opposing forces, with resources often organised in the same, uncoordinated way. The reality we face is a complex array of interdependent systems that cannot simply move from A to Z; some of them may never move. And if we are to harness the information stored in these systems, it needs to be made accessible as well as secured with due regard to patient confidentiality.

With disparate and legacy systems across the UK's healthcare system still in place, a data-first mindset will be essential to making information readily available at the point of care. Data was a vital resource in dealing with the pandemic and now is the time to press forward and invest in the infrastructure for the needs of tomorrow as we face post-pandemic challenges. ■

*Tim Skinner is public sector director at NetApp*



MICHIEL SCHIPPERUS

## WHY IT'S CRITICAL TO INTEGRATE YOUR ERP WITH YOUR ECOMMERCE PLATFORM

It's no surprise that one of the biggest beneficiaries of the pandemic is the medical and healthcare sector. Driven by consumer demand, the market is likely to see continuing growth way beyond the pandemic, as consumers access healthcare more readily and easily through technology. **Deloitte** says the pace of change is accelerating and "consumer expectations are driving the transition to patient-centric care delivery." Amid this change in focus, consumers are, according to Deloitte, "driving the... push for interoperable data... use."

As part of the focus on customer experience in healthcare, providers have had to ramp up plans to deliver products and services online. During the height of the pandemic, we received a number of enquiries from medical and healthcare companies looking for a quick-to-market solution so they can sell their product online. Investment bank **Goldman Sachs** believes that health ecommerce is set to grow more quickly than any other brand of digital commerce.

Yet for many in the sector, selling online is often a challenge. Accuracy is crucial when it comes to an online offering. Mistakes and order errors drive customers away and the customer experience becomes a negative. A survey of 560 global B2B buyers, which we ran in 2019, found that more than three quarters of B2B organisations are losing sales due to online order errors, causing significant repercussions on wider business growth. 84 percent of businesses witnessed a decrease in efficiency due to order errors; 81 percent saw a drop in productivity and a further 81 percent saw a decrease in profitability. Following the pandemic, with organisations moving online quicker than ever, these errors are likely to have increased.

This is where your ERP system comes in. Rather than simply pushing data from your ERP platform into the ecommerce solution, which is likely to result in a delay of



BY MICHIEL SCHIPPERUS

data and inaccuracies – companies need to fully integrate with their ERP to deliver customers a 'single source of truth'. This automatically shows the data and logic you've built in your ERP on your web store, without duplication, disruptions, delays or manual synchronisation. It's no surprise then that organisations that do have integrated solutions are more likely to attribute both improved cross-sell/upsell opportunities and improved profitability per customer to ecommerce compared to those running standalone ecommerce software.

That's because integrated ecommerce enables improved profitability through greater efficiencies. It helps to eliminate the need for manual integration processes, and as a result can support accelerated growth, digital

transformation, and streamline and simplify operations in the process - both after and well beyond 2021.

One such business which has realised these benefits is weight loss company **Ideal Protein**. It works with over 3,000 global clinics to offer end-users a medically developed, weight loss protocol of both food and supplements, run by fully licensed practitioners. Its systems and processes were built, maintained and executed upon internally - including their ecommerce platform, back-end logistics and ordering, manufacturing and finance related processes. Not only was this a major efficiency and workload challenge, but it also stunted their ability to scale and accelerate growth.

Ideal Protein selected **Microsoft Dynamics AX** to handle their existing back-end maintenance as well as their warehousing. Integrating its ecommerce platform means that it's able to pull real-time data into the web store, simplifying maintenance and reducing internal workloads by ten-fold.

But it's not all about efficiency. Ideal Protein's mission is to offer an improved customer experience and to make it easier for customers to order from them. It's also imple-

mented further improvements including user experience optimisation, shopping cart enhancements including more real-time feedback and information for customers placing large orders, and speed and performance improvements.

**F**ull integration with the ERP doesn't just mean that you improve the customer experience through accurate stock levels and shipping times, it also means being able to deliver personalised pages, pricing, contractual details, or even recommendations based on previous purchases amongst other features. Whether the business is enabling repeat prescriptions online or selling medical devices to public health care organisations, having an integrated ERP and ecommerce solution is key to improving customer retention.

This was the goal of healthcare cleaning company, **Diversey**, whose services are critical in delivering a clean and hygienic clinical environment to its customers, when it created nine new webstores using Sana Commerce.

Central to its decision was maintaining existing customer relationships (including customer data and history), making the buying experience transparent and accessible and improving satisfaction.

Diversey had long used a custom ERP platform, which held customer-specific relationship data, to service its vast European region. By integrating it with its ecommerce platform, it was able to deliver a much-improved shopping experience using customisations to match country-specific ERP processes. The first web store was launched in Switzerland, closely followed by France, and by the end of 2020 nine stores across Europe had been launched – all implemented at the height of the pandemic. Customer satisfaction rates are up to 4.25/5 and it's witnessed a 100 percent increase in order frequency.

Medical organisations are also challenged by regulation and compliance issues – of both their own industry and their customers as well. Paperwork abounds and ecommerce healthcare and medical providers must ensure that they're able to deliver within these boundaries. R&D scientific pharma company, **Fagron** specialises in customised medication and supplies pharmacies, hospitals and clinics in 32 countries worldwide. It needed to create a medical supplies online portal where its customers could access very specific documentation with product details and requirements, as well as offering the

ability to buy online. All with the end goal of delivering a strong customer experience that is compliant with industry regulations.

Not only that, the customer portal had to support global expansion (with multilingual and multicurrency capabilities). Fagron uses Microsoft Dynamics NAV, and to minimise data maintenance challenges, needed its ecommerce solution to integrate with it. Fagron has made product documentation stored in Dynamics NAV directly available via the web store's search functionality. Not only is it always up to date, as all product information files are created based on the information in Dynamics NAV at the time of request, it makes ordering online more reliable. All of Fagron's online orders are placed directly into Dynamics NAV.

Fagron has launched an impressive 14 sales portals in multiple countries, 12 of which were launched in just 12 months. The result is that 40 percent of Fagron's sales are now made online – and online sales have exceeded initial projections.

## COMPANIES NEED TO FULLY INTEGRATE WITH THEIR ERP TO DELIVER CUSTOMERS A 'SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH'

Medical and healthcare organisations considering or evaluating ERP platforms must consider how the solution will work with its other systems. Not all ERP platforms are equal but businesses are demanding closer integration to help boost efficiencies and meet increasing customer expectations. And with healthcare institutions predicted to spend \$32bn on technology this year alone, according to Goldman Sachs, it's set to be a market well worth watching ■

*Michiel Schipperus, CEO,  
Sana Commerce*





## CASE STUDY

## NUGENT CARE LOOK TO PUT THE FUN BACK INTO FINANCE WITH CLOUD FINANCIALS AND MYWORKPLACE

BY MARK DEWELL

Longstanding OpenAccounts customer **Nugent Care** is looking to the future with Advanced, moving onto their Cloud Financials management solution.

We're pleased to share that Nugent Care, the largest education, health and social care charity in Liverpool, is extending its relationship with Advanced by adopting its cloud-based financial management solution, Cloud Financials. Nugent Care has been a long standing customer of Advanced for not only financial management but also for its care home management software, Caresys.

Nugent has a cloud-first strategy across the charity and was looking at how its finance solutions could move onto the cloud. Upon finding out more about Advanced's offering, Cloud Financials, it was immediately impressed.

Julia Shaw, head of finance at Nugent Care, commented: "We were introduced to Cloud Financials by our account manager at Advanced and were impressed by how user friendly the solution was. The product fits with our cloud-first strategy and we love that it is a Software-as-a-Service model. Once we delved into the solution we could see that it absolutely hit the spot and is exactly what we need. We love it. From the price, to the support and the scalability of the solution, we could see it was perfect for us."

One of the main drivers for change at Nugent was not only the move to the cloud, but a drive to save time for the finance department. Shaw added, "With Cloud Financials we can flash financial results to the CEO and COO in simple dashboards.

They can see ongoing performance against budget in a user friendly way which streamlines processes and reduces anxiety for us. At the moment we use PDF reports and excel to give to senior team members a view of performance and we have to jig it around a lot to give them a view of what's going on. We're looking forward to being less scared of the numbers with Cloud Financials."

Another aspect of Cloud Financials which Nugent was impressed by was the MyWorkplace platform. MyWorkplace is Advanced's cloud platform which brings not only Advanced

products together in one place but third party solutions and partner applications too. MyWorkplace is designed to surface specific 'applets' of functionality to users within their 'desk' to make it easy for them to quickly complete tasks in the software. Shaw commented,

"One of the things which knocked our socks off was MyWorkplace. You can simply press a button to raise a purchase order or input expenses. MyWorkplace is such a huge win as it makes it so easy for people to access systems. People in our business are getting system fatigue and this is going to make it so much easier from an adoption perspective. There is often a reticence to use systems and people say 'we don't know how to do it.' MyWorkplace will help us change this culture within the organisation."

FINANCE  
TEAMS  
CAN END  
UP DOING  
ARDUOUS  
TASKS

The team at Nugent Care are looking to go live in the summer and are already looking ahead to the impact Cloud Financials will bring. Shaw told us, "Moving to Cloud Financials means that our finance teams can stop doing the boring admin stuff and focus on value adding tasks which are going to drive a difference at Nugent Care. Often finance teams can end up doing arduous tasks, important tasks, but ultimately not what we want to spend our time on. We want our finance teams to focus on work they enjoy doing, and ultimately have fun at work, and Cloud Financials is going to enable us to do just that with the added automation and reporting it brings."

Mark Dewell, managing director - private, public and third sector at Advanced, commented: "We're absolutely delighted that Nugent Care have chosen to extend their partnership with us as they undergo their transformation into the cloud. Many organisations are reviewing their software in light of COVID-19 and accelerating their path to cloud software systems as organisations require further efficiency than ever before. We're looking forward to continuing our work with Nugent to ensure their charity continues to grow and succeed."

*Mark Dewell is MD at Advanced, commercial and third sector*









The Young Professionals Network (YPN) provides you with career opportunities, peer-to-peer support, fireside chats with industry experts and a platform to write for ERP Today.

### **What benefits can you expect?**

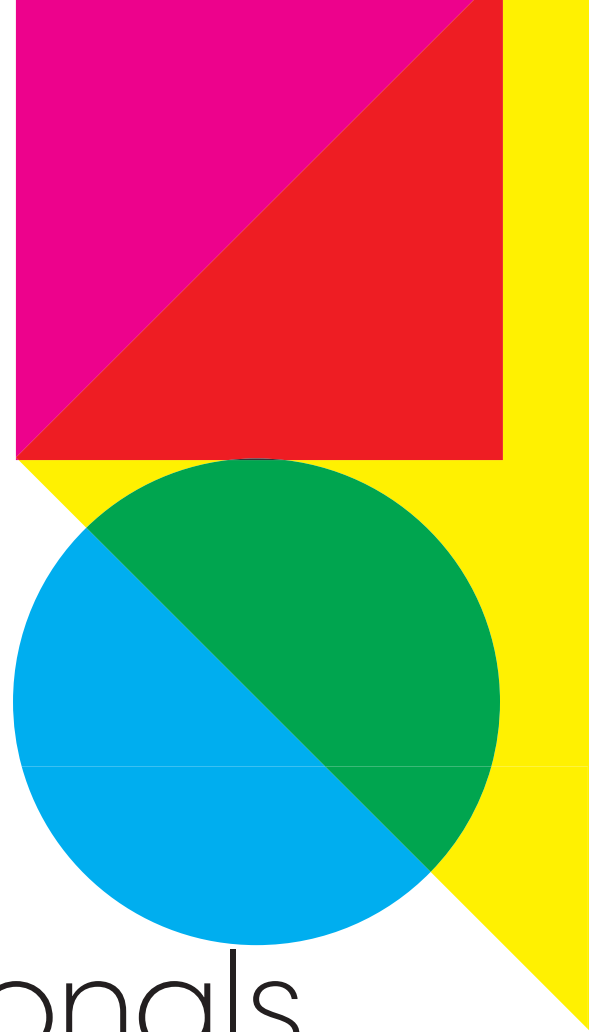
- Regular talks and live sessions with senior tech-leaders, geared towards your career-stage, needs and interests
- A net of peer-to-peer support from like-minded young professionals in the sector
- Opportunities to write for ERP Today's YPN column - platforming your projects, opinions and advocating for your companies
- Opportunities to host an ERP Today Live!
- 24/7 access to write for the ERP Today blog
- ERP Young Professional badges to include in your credentials
- Free invitations to ERP Today events
- Mentorship opportunities
- Resources dedicated to your wellbeing
- Free copy of the ERP Today magazine

**Membership is free and available for young professionals under 30. All members will receive a package of benefits. To sign up, head to [www.erptoday/ypn](http://www.erptoday/ypn)**





# young professionals network



**ERP Today, the independent media platform for the enterprise tech community, is delighted to announce the inauguration of its Young Professionals Network.**

**ERP Today** is a staunch advocate for young talent and is committed to recognising and rewarding the efforts of young professionals across the sector. **The Young Professionals Network (YPN)** provides under 30s in enterprise technology with peer-to-peer support, fireside chats with industry experts and a platform to write for ERP Today. We want to amplify the voices of young professionals in the sector and give them opportunities to ask tech-leaders candid questions, advocate for their companies and platform their latest ventures. The YPN will host Live! talks every month, write for the YPN blog and curate a double page spread in the ERP Today magazine. Amongst giving young professionals a voice in the sector, this will generate a two-way flow of information from young professionals back to their employers, giving employers insights into the concerns and ambitions of the youngest people in the sector.



**erp.today**



young  
professionals  
network

# Developing young talent

A VITAL INGREDIENT  
FOR ECOSYSTEM SUCCESS

BY EMMA SINCLAIR MBE

**W**hen I was three, it was my father who took me to pre school every day. He did that every morning until I left for university at 18, for which I am eternally grateful. There were a number of things I learned over those years. A detailed knowledge of the back streets of London to cut traffic when we were late, 50s and 60s music he used to dance to .... and lessons that, perhaps unintentionally, prepared me for a career in business.

We played 'I spy', practiced my times tables and he tested me on spelling but it didn't stop there. Those who know me understand I have a deep love of entrepreneurship and stock exchanges. This was entirely cultivated on those journeys.

My dad had a few shares in publicly traded companies. Each morning I would open the penultimate page of the **Financial Times** and scan the paper for the daily share price (pre iPhones when you read a hard copy newspaper first thing in the morning if you wanted to know anything current!) and played guess the share price. I have early memories of the newspaper being much bigger than me and struggling to open the pages without it collapsing due to my small hands and stature.

As I grew older we read other parts of the paper and intermittently, my father weaved in stories about people he knew or why a story mattered or something that brought the business world commentary to life. Born in Luton, my dad lost his father young and worked in a men's wear shop as soon as he was able whilst studying at night, to help support his mother and siblings and get a qualification. These early conversations taught me about being aware of numbers, curiosity, speculating to accumulate and that business was not an inaccessible



ivory tower. They taught me that from very humble beginnings, anything was possible. That the way you treat people truly mattered ('it takes a lifetime to build a reputation and a second to lose it' has been drummed into me). That who you were and where you came from didn't matter if you worked hard, seized opportunity and persisted. This was the best preparation for life and business anyone could ever wish for.

Pausing for a caveat: for those parents suddenly thinking that if you play this game on the way to school your daughter might start a company and then IPO it at 29, I'm not sure that's necessarily the case and you

might lose money on the way! But what I can guarantee is that a lot of those skills I learned are ones that we should be encouraging and nurturing in children and young talent alike for all of our collective success. Supporting and developing young talent is so important – whether on the way to school or early in professional careers.

But what support and development really matters? Not necessarily the categories you'll read in self help books or leadership training but I believe for young professionals wanting to get ahead, the top five things I know helped me and can help you are:

- **Building a network.** When I started my career I knew no one. I recall fondly my interview at **McDonalds** at 16 in a north London shopping centre, desperate to get a job so I could afford to occasionally go to **Top Shop** and buy myself a t-shirt. Many years later many of those people I worked with have been vital to my career. Andrew Reik, for example, is now a respected media man in mainstream TV. Many years ago he took my first professional photos and more recently, initiated and filmed me interviewing Nicola Mendelsohn, EMEA VP at **Facebook**, for **Stylist Magazine**. And to think that connection started

over packing French fries. It's never too early or late to start.

- **Knock on doors:** I desperately wanted to work in the City of London during my summer holidays and wrote letters to the people I read about in the newspapers asking them for work experience. One year, I sent my CV and a cover letter to 15 people I had read about who ran companies that sounded exciting, asking for a summer job. Every single one of them replied. To this day I apply that principle and when I want to reach someone, I go direct. Don't be afraid to cold email (but do make it short and interesting!) or tweet someone if there's good reason.

- **Continuous learning:** a newspaper, book, trade magazine or online course. People are rarely looking for existing knowledge or skills but rather a predisposition to be curious and an ability to learn when hiring. There's an immense skills shortage for the jobs of tomorrow and arguably a school education that ends in your teens is insufficient given today's employees likely have a fifty-year working life span. What you do today does not limit what you might do tomorrow. Invest in learning.

- **Get a side gig:** experiencing something other than a job or educational course to develop yourself will teach you as much if not more than you'll learn from any course or careers service. Get involved in a charity or local initiative where you can have impact. One of my favourites is **Refugees at Home** (now famous because Gary Linkeker hosted a refugee). I have had the pleasure of hosting people in my home from all over the world who arrived in the UK having suffered difficult and traumatic experiences elsewhere. What I learned from these guests has been immeasurable and created a vibrant and unexpected network of friends and life lessons I otherwise would never have had.

- **Speak up:** if you want to be part of a conversation, you need to make yourself heard. I was mortally shy as a child and into my 20s. Business and outside interests taught me that if I wanted to be involved, I had to let people know who I was and why I should have a seat at the table.



**She notes young people have shifted the world's attention towards an action orientated direction, which wasn't previously the case**

Recently, I sat next to the Astronomer Royal Lord Rees at the Braemar Summit and had the pleasure of listening to him talk to our small audience about the wonder children have for dinosaurs, aliens and space. We lose that wonder far too early. It's limiting for so many reasons when our minds don't wander outside of our daily lives; it limits how we address challenges, solve problems, innovate and create. Those limitations serve no one.

I also met Enass Abo-Hamed at the Summit, founder of **H2GO Power** who develop cutting edge energy storage solutions to help solve energy access problems for millions around the world. For her, developing young talent and ensuring they feel empowered in the workplace is vital to solve the largest challenges facing humanity including climate change.

In the case of climate, where her business is focussed, she notes young people have shifted the world's attention towards an action orientated direction, which wasn't previously the case. This, she told me, is what is pushing the very real change. As she rightly notes, 'young talent is closer to the future than the older generation', are more motivated to solve pressing problems facing the world around us... and likely understand the tech to do that better than some of their leadership.

Young talent at the table brings vital, fresh knowledge and perspective. If you're an employer, you can help your talent to teach themselves these skills. Mentorship, ERG (employee resource groups), days off for charity work or match funding for those raising money.

Invest early and sharply and all of us will benefit. Whether it's with children, colleagues, staff, peers and/or friends, what constitutes continuous learning isn't always done in a classroom or boardroom. It's in our everyday lives, before we start work, when we're starting our first paid Saturday job and on the fringes of the educational system. Broaden the mind, promote wonder and learning and tidal waves of fresh ideas and energy to execute them will follow. ■

*Emma Sinclair MBE, co-founder of EnterpriseAlumni*



# The Next Generation

OF TALENT WILL BOOST  
OUR WHOLE ECOSYSTEM

BY MELISSA DI DONATO

**T**he last 18 months have changed workforce dynamics, which gives us the opportunity to rethink how we train and retrain all of our employees, but in particular our young professionals. It's a moment for renewed attention and reflection for how we're bringing individuals into the enterprise tech sector and ensuring we can keep them in the industry.

Fast Forward for Digital Jobs, a recent report by **techUK**, highlights the discrepancy between the need for digitally skilled workers and the opportunity to retrain those who were made redundant due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent UK projections show that there will be three million new jobs that have a digital skills requirement by 2025.

As a woman and a leader in technology, I also see this as an opportunity to bring more girls and young women to the industry. From coding to design software, to hardware engineers to shape the mechanics of the devices the world runs on, to the creative intellects bringing AI to virtually every aspect of life, to the near limitless potential of even more advanced technologies like quantum computing, this is where the jobs of the future will be. And there's no reason why women cannot fill these jobs.

This should encourage us to act. However, it's important to take action by learning from obstacles that women and girls have experienced. For example, women in the workplace often face roadblocks, and I've seen that one of these roadblocks can be confidence. It may sound simple, but it is also daunting. I reflect on my own time as a teenager, and while there are certain things that are different, there is a lot that is still the same. According to research compiled by my foundation, **Inner Wings**, in the UK, 70 percent of high school girls believe they are not



**It's so critical  
to empower  
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to believe in  
themselves**

good enough. Only 21 percent of girls believe they have the qualities to lead. Confidence levels among girls fall 30 percent between the ages of 8 and 14.

As leaders in technology, we have the power to change this. It's so critical to empower the younger generation with the conviction to believe in themselves. This is not limited to those still in school but can extend to those already in or just entering the workforce. One of the first initiatives I led as CEO of SUSE was instituting a mentoring programme which partners early career employees with those further in their career to inspire and motivate them to gain new skills and confidence in doing their jobs and moving to the next level in careers.

As a society, we are stronger and more resilient when we embrace diversity of thought and in all of its borderless, magnificent forms. This includes diversity in age within the workplace. By mentoring and growing the next generation of talent, the entire enterprise tech ecosystem will benefit from fresh ideas and perspectives.

It's why I'm pleased to see ERP Today leading by example in launching its Young Professionals Network. This will engage and inspire young professionals within the enterprise tech community and positively impact our ability to fill the important roles our industry needs.

The time is now, and we all have our part to play. Amid the impact of COVID-19, this is perhaps more urgent work than ever. My vision, shared by so many others, is of a definitive, generational shift in how women see the power of their intelligence and the rewards of will power and hard work. Working together as an industry, we can make this real. ■

*Melissa Di Donato, CEO at SUSE*



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- Opportunities to write for ERP Today and host ERP Today Live!
- Peer-to-peer support with like-minded professionals.
- Regular events and live sessions with industry experts.
- A voice within the enterprise technology community.
- Free invitations to ERP Today events and free copies of the ERP Today magazine.

**Membership is free and available for young professionals under 30.**  
All members will receive a package of benefits.  
To sign up, please visit [www.erp.today/YPN](http://www.erp.today/YPN)



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