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FROM THE CEO'S DESK

The 5-Legged Stool

Now almost three months into my role as CEO at ERP Today, I've noticed a pattern. It is difficult to categorize what ERP Today is (https://erp.today/about-us/), and as a consequence we are often pigeon-holed as a media company, or an industry analyst firm, or a marketing services agency, or a buyer/seller marketplace & community, or on rare occasion, a strategic advisory firm. Truth is, we are a combination of all five of these things. In a very real sense, we are a "5-legged stool."

We deliver independent, fact-based perspectives and analysis on relevant enterprise technology happenings and trends. We are a unique voice trusted by 500K+ digital visitors annually, 300K+ e-newsletter subscribers, and 25K+ LinkedIn followers occupying functions such as CIO, CTO, CISO, Chief Digital Officer, Chief Data Officer, Chief AI Officer, VP of Innovation, VP of Infrastructure & Cloud Operations, VP of Enterprise Architecture, VP of Enterprise Applications, VP of Cloud Strategy, and VP of DevOps.

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There you have it. Five legs. One stool. Not your grandfather's ERP Today, eh? Are you taking advantage of all we have to offer? Here's one way to get more involved in our vibrant and growing global community of innovators. It's called "Enterprise Views," a video and podcast series we are launching in the first half of this year. As the name suggests, these will be candid conversations with end-users in a variety of functions, industries and geographies who have war stories, best practices, and lessons learned to share about evaluating, prioritizing, selecting, deploying, integrating, extending, augmenting, maintaining, operating, and sunsetting enterprise software, emerging technology and services. Are you a business or IT leader with tales from the trenches to share? Are you a provider of enterprise software and/or services with customers that have leveraged your offerings to slay corporate and competitive dragons and transform their companies? Let me know! Send me an email at mark.vigoroso@wellesleyglobal.com and we'll capture your stories in a 15-20 minute interview and distribute globally through widely accessible on-demand video and podcast platforms.

No tech column in 2025 would be complete without at least one mention of AI. So here it is. I've become quite fond of the concepts espoused by Wharton School professor Ethan Mollick in his book "Co-Intelligence." The concept is simple. Think about GenAI as a semi-intelligent being with which we as humans can now collaborate to do our jobs and live our lives. Our historical roles as content and knowledge creators have already evolved to content validators, sanity-checking and approving the outputs of our co-intelligent colleagues. Cheers!

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NEWS DEALS &WINS

Carbon and financial accounting get sustainable with SAP Green Ledger

—

BY RADHIKA OJHA

Around 30-40% of organizations' carbon emissions data is inaccurate, SAP research shows, affecting their carbon footprint accounting. Regulators are also changing the playing field to accelerate decarbonization, and only companies that comply are likely to succeed.

All these factors have made Scope 3 emissions accounting a business imperative. However, many organizations are severely limited in terms of data accuracy, accessibility and credibility as they still record this data in static spreadsheets. Additionally, environmental costs—often not considered while making business decisions—become apparent in the long term and hurt an organization's financial optimization.

In 2023, SAP unveiled SAP Green Ledger, which allocates carbon emissions to specific economic activities and transactions in SAP ERP. As of December last year, this solution has become generally available to help organizations reduce their dependency on manual data for their carbon accounting.

It helps an organization analyze, account for, and report its carbon footprint across products, services, and organizational units in an auditable, transparent, and reliable manner.

"Only by moving from averages to actuals—audited at reasonable assurance—can freeriding and greenwashing be avoided, thereby protecting such valuable investment and our planet. SAP Green Ledger delivers precisely that,"

—

SAP GREEN LEDGER HELPS ORGANIZATIONS STEER GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY REGULATIONS

said Dominik Asam, CFO and member of the Executive Board of SAP SE, on December 16, 2024, when the solution became generally available.

SAP Green Ledger was developed with support from Accenture, Deloitte, EY, and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). Covestro, which is one of its pilot customers, is evaluating the solution and testing the linking of carbon dioxide values to SAP Green Ledger as they are generated during the manufacture of specific products in the supply chain.

Green Ledger's benefits

Apart from improving the data accuracy and quality of carbon accounting, SAP Green Ledger helps organizations steer global sustainability regulations like the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), enforced on January 5, 2023. It can also adapt to evolving or future rules like the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) and the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Green Ledger can also adapt to global sustainability regulations under development by the International Sustainability Standard Board (ISSB).

The solution also complements SAP Sustainability Footprint Management and SAP Sustainability Data Exchange as the company looks to integrate capabilities across its portfolio to drive the reuse of data from all SAP sources and optimize the management of carbon footprint data. Thus, for SAP users, Green Ledger:

• Tracks and accounts for carbon footprints relative to their financial impact

• Lowers emissions alongside financial optimization, facilitating carbon budgeting

• Establishes carbon planning for carbon neutrality and net zero goals

• Benchmarks departments, profit centers, and business units from a financial and environmental perspective

• Prepares the organization for sustainability audits

In 2025, SAP also plans GA of Green Ledger's features to improve supplier-based processes to reduce carbon emissions in the supply chain.

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SAP & Onapsis
strengthen security incident response

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

WHEN IT COMES TO THREAT DETECTION AND INCIDENT RESPONSE, ORGANIZATIONS STILL NEED ASSISTANCE

SAP customers have a responsibility when it comes to threat detection and incident response for their systems, whether their applications are running on-premise or in the cloud. These responsibilities are clearer in an on-premise environment where the customer manages secure configuration and operations including the servers on which the solution runs, databases that are in use, and the networking infrastructure. Responsibilities are less clear for cloud operations, which is why a shared responsibility model that includes privacy, compliance management, business continuity planning, and threat detection is essential. This is the case with the Shared Responsibility Model that SAP has published for RISE with SAP S/4HANA Cloud Private Edition.

A specific example is that, when an organization moves SAP workloads to the cloud, SAP manages protecting, monitoring, and responding to threats impacting the cloud infrastructure, networking, data stores, and cloud operations. These are the parts of the environment that the customer cannot access directly. Similarly, SAP has no access to the secure configuration and transactions within an application running in an on-premise infrastructure, for example, where customers are responsible for tasks like user provisioning and authorizations, business process configuration, and deciding who can access data and functionality in the system. Even for responding to tickets, SAP cannot access a customer system unless allowed.

Understanding these responsibilities is crucial for customers because unclear roles can lead to oversight of critical elements. This is particularly important because cybersecurity attacks continue to increase in volume and impact. Even if an attack doesn't directly impact SAP systems, it may indirectly affect these systems through cross-contamination, which can force organizations to shut down SAP systems to prevent them from being impacted.

However, even with a clear understanding of roles, customers may be unsure how to proceed in the event of a cybersecurity incident. Research from sister platform SAPinsider has highlighted that

UNCLEAR ROLES CAN LEAD TO OVERSIGHT OF CRITICAL ELEMENTS

when it comes to threat detection and incident response, organizations still need assistance. The research reveals that 37% of surveyed organizations require guidance on handling detected threats, 34% require guidance on identifying potential threats, and 33% need help understanding how to best use threat detection tools.

Organizations can address these challenges by reporting new security issues to SAP. However,

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

Security is one of the most important topics for ERP Insiders today with, for example, 66% of organizations citing it as a key factor when choosing a cloud provider for RISE with SAP. This is because cybersecurity incidents are increasingly impacting SAP systems either directly or indirectly. Ensuring that systems are secure is top of mind for both SAP and IT organizations. But recognizing security as a priority does not equate having the capabilities or expertise to respond to a security incident. This makes solutions like Onapsis' SAP Incident Response, a big advantage for organizations as it enables them to use the knowledge and resources that may not be available internally. Given the security challenges faced by organizations today, what should ERP users do to be prepared?

• Ensure that there is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities when it comes to securing SAP solutions. SAP has

published guides such as the Shared Responsibility Model for RISE with SAP, but such detailed documents do not exist for all SAP solutions. This is why it is critical to ensure that SAP teams and the customer's security and IT teams they work with have a clear understanding of their responsibilities when it comes to securing SAP systems. Creating RACI charts can be a starting point, but it is also imperative to understand what SAP will secure and not secure when it comes to cloud-based solutions.

• Follow security trends and put in place response plans that can be activated when threats or vulnerabilities are detected. Having a detailed response plan in place can be critical when a new threat or breach occurs. Ensuring that team members know where and how to access this plan, and have practiced doing so, can be the difference between something that is quickly stopped and a major breach. While response plans should

include the steps that internal teams need to perform immediately after detecting a security incident, this can also include the ability to reach out to SAP or security partners to receive assistance in dealing with such situations.

• Ensure that SAP teams collaborate closely with customers' IT teams or dedicated security teams when it comes to managing the security of SAP systems. Historically, SAP teams were responsible for managing the security of SAP systems. This not only included managing system and data access but also patching and reacting to security incidents. However, it also meant that the customer's IT and security teams had little insight into the way these systems were managed and secured. While this has evolved, it is still vital to ensure that SAP teams collaborate closely with the customer's IT or dedicated security teams to ensure that SAP systems are properly secured.

what SAP can achieve will be limited by the access that they have to the system, and a security incident may exceed the expertise or capacity of in-house teams. To support organizations in

addressing this, Onapsis recently partnered with SAP to provide faster investigation and incident response assistance to SAP customers. Onapsis' SAP Incident Response enables organizations to use an

SAP-endorsed incident response when faced with an attack. Having access to expertise, support, and technology when managing a security incident can help hasten investigations and accelerate recovery.

Cybersecurity services jump on the AI progress train

BY WELLESLEY
NEWS ANALYSTS

THE INCREASED ADOPTION OF GEN AI INTRODUCES NEW RISKS

Cybersecurity innovations never stop, especially when something in the water has triggered an AI infusion with many firms, along with an overall impetus to be more proactive with enterprise security measures.

While the enterprise industry was quick to utilize AI to enhance process efficiency and save costs and time, it's taken a bit longer for cybersecurity to latch on and become proactive with implementing artificial intelligence to give security tools a much needed boost.

Capgemini's GenAI cybersecurity report
Digital transformation consultant, Capgemini, and its research institute, The Capgemini Research Institute, unveiled a report: "New defenses, new threats: What AI and GenAI bring to cybersecurity", to spread

awareness about integrating AI with security measures. Regarding threats, 97% of all organizations surveyed revealed they have encountered breaches or security issues related to the use of GenAI.

The increased adoption of GenAI introduces new risks, like more sophisticated attacks, a larger cyber-attack surface and increased vulnerability for custom GenAI solutions. Despite the risks, the majority of those surveyed believe that GenAI is essential for effective threat response - leveraging AI not only enhances proactive defense strategies, but it can also speed up the detection of cyber incidents.

Accenture leverages GenAI to boost cybersecurity resilience
Reinforcing how GenAI could be the next big innovation, and risk, in the cybersecurity space, advisory service provider Accenture recently released research findings that reveal a 223% rise in the trade of deepfake tools on the dark web. Accenture's research highlights the need to adopt AI-driven cybersecurity measures that make it easier to detect and respond to attacks as they happen.

To help combat the rise of GenAI-enhanced threats, Accenture expanded its security tool offerings with Accenture mySecurity, a centralized suite of security apps that integrate GenAI with cyber-resilience

services across supply chain and cloud assets, which can ultimately help drive efficiency when protecting against AI-driven threats.

Accenture's cybersecurity workforce, after multiple security acquisitions, has reached over 25,000 professionals. To support the new GenAI security initiatives, Accenture is expanding its network of Cyber Future Centers, with new locations in Brussels and Washington, D.C.

Amazon Web Services show dedication to cyber resilience
Once again demonstrating an industry-wide renewed motivation for digital defenses, Amazon Web Services (AWS) recently joined the Sheltered

Harbor Alliance Program, a non-profit consortium dedicated to enhancing cyber resilience within the financial sector. The collaboration's aims are to simplify the building of cyber vault capabilities for AWS users, reinforce defenses against ransomware attacks, boost operational efficiency and help remain compliant with regulatory mandates.

COMPANIES ARE KEEN TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AI CAPABILITIES

"As the frequency and sophistication of cyber-attacks continue to escalate, financial institutions must have robust data

protection and recovery strategies in place," said Scott Mullins, general manager of worldwide financial services at AWS. "The Sheltered Harbor partnership demonstrates AWS's commitment to continuously innovating to meet the unique security and resilience requirements of the financial services industry."

With a seeming, all-encompassing shift towards more robust cyber defenses, it's easy to see why many companies are keen to take advantage of AI capabilities. As hacker techniques and software grow more sophisticated, it's up to businesses to be proactive with their digital defenses if they want to properly control the fallout of an attack.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• **Double down on security while implementing new AI initiatives.** As Capgemini's Gen AI cybersecurity report shows, organizations encounter breaches or security issues related to the use of Gen AI. Thus, it is necessary for organizations to ensure they are up-to-date with their cybersecurity innovations before implementing new technologies.

• **New cybersecurity solutions use AI to enhance security.** Most recently, Dell announced

Dell Services for Microsoft Copilot Studio and Azure AI Studio in response to Microsoft's ongoing push of its own Copilot AI assistants. Companies like Accenture have also expanded their security tool offerings to integrate Gen AI for enhancing cybersecurity. Dell has also rolled out a Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification alignment to help US federal contractors comply with Department of Defense CMMC standards.

• **Technology companies must collaborate to**

enhance cyber resilience. While it has taken a little longer for cybersecurity providers to become proactive with new AI technologies, new cybersecurity innovations are giving security tools that much-needed boost. In this case, companies like AWS and Dell are also pioneering collaborations with other tech providers and non-profit organizations to simplify building security for end users, while ensuring that their defenses against threats like ransomware are enhanced.

CAOSYS launches Oracle E-Business Suite CS Applications for Risk compliance

BY YOANA CHOLTEEVA

CAOSYS, a software solution company in the Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) space, has announced the release of CS Applications 2024/R1A, the latest iteration of its integrated solutions tailored for Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS).

The new version reflects CAOSYS's determination to enhance user experiences by incorporating customer-driven improvements and new features across its lineup.

The enhancements aim to address evolving Oracle EBS requirements while

THE ENHANCEMENTS AIM TO ADDRESS EVOLVING ORACLE EBS REQUIREMENTS

maintaining system stability and performance with the release offering an optimized upgrade process, taking less than 30 minutes in most cases, to ensure less disruption for users.

CAOSYS has encouraged its existing customers to adopt the new version to benefit from new features, crucial system fixes and improved functionality to meet today's

operational challenges. Users can download the update directly from the CAOSYS Support Portal, where comprehensive documentation and release notes are also available.

Enhanced tools for access and risk management

One of the key tools in this release, CS Comply, provides robust capabilities for managing Segregation of Duties (SoD) and sensitive access risks. Its features include:

• Comprehensive risk reporting to assist auditors.

• Easy identification and management of SoD violations.

• Preventive controls to mitigate risks before they arise.

• Integration with Oracle EBS for a seamless user experience.

THE RELEASE OF CS APPLICATIONS ALIGNS WITH BROADER TRENDS IN THE GRC SOFTWARE MARKET

Similarly, CS Provisum PAR simplifies and automates user access reviews. With features like automated de-provisioning, access risk visibility and process owner reviews, it streamlines what was once a manual, labor-intensive task. Automatic reminders and escalations can further ensure deadlines are met efficiently.

CAOSYS also highlighted that it remains committed to supporting its customers

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• **Revolutionizing the ERP Workflow for Oracle EBS Users:** For Oracle EBS professionals, from system administrators to compliance officers, the launch of CAOSYS's CS Applications 2024/R1A can be a game-changer. Designed to streamline workflows and mitigate risks, this release prioritizes user needs with an optimized upgrade process requiring minimal downtime. With enhanced tools like CS Comply for managing Segregation of Duties (SoD) and CS Provisum PAR for automating user access reviews, the new functionalities can reduce manual workloads and bolster regulatory compliance. These innovations promise to simplify day-to-day operations while delivering greater system stability, enabling ERP users to focus on strategic initiatives instead of routine maintenance.

• **A Growing Market for GRC in ERP Systems:** The release of CS Applications aligns with broader trends in the Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) software market, which is expected to surpass $70 billion globally by 2027, driven by growing regulatory demands and digital transformation efforts. Competitors like Fastpath and SafePaaS are also innovating within the Oracle EBS ecosystem, offering solutions that address SoD management and access risk. At the same time, CAOSYS's tailored focus on Oracle EBS ensures its offerings are tuned to the platform's unique challenges. This commitment positions CAOSYS as a partner in navigating the increasingly complex GRC landscape.

• **Choosing the Right GRC Solution for Oracle EBS:** When evaluating GRC solutions, Oracle EBS users should prioritize key factors such as seamless integration, scalability and ease of use. Providers like CAOSYS that offer robust support, clear documentation and customer-driven enhancements stand out in this competitive space. Tools like CS Comply, with its comprehensive risk reporting and preventive controls, exemplify the importance of proactive risk management capabilities. Additionally, the ability to execute upgrades with minimal disruption reflects a provider's understanding of operational priorities. By focusing on these criteria, organizations can ensure they select a solution that meets immediate needs while adapting to future demands.

with personalized assistance for this release. Users with questions or seeking additional guidance are encouraged to reach out to the support team.

With CS Applications 2024/R1A, CAOSYS continues to deliver innovative solutions that enhance the Oracle EBS ecosystem, ensuring organizations stay ahead in a dynamic business environment.

# Accenture expands Gen AI-powered cybersecurity services

BY MARK VIGOROSO

In a bold step toward strengthening corporate cybersecurity, Accenture has unveiled an expanded suite of generative AI-powered cybersecurity services aimed at helping organizations bolster their resilience against evolving threats. The announcement, made on October 25, 2024, underscores Accenture's commitment to integrating advanced technology into cybersecurity practices, providing businesses with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of the digital landscape.

Rising vulnerabilities

The rise of digital transformation initiatives has increased vulnerabilities as organizations adopt more sophisticated technologies.
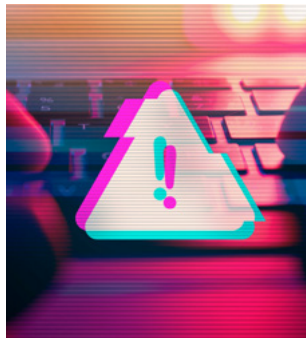
Cybercriminals are continually evolving their tactics, making it imperative for businesses to defend against threats and innovate their cybersecurity strategies. Accenture's new offerings leverage generative AI to analyze and respond to cyber threats in real-time, giving organizations a significant advantage in their defense mechanisms.

Speaking about the initiative, Karthik Ramakrishnan, Accenture's Global Cybersecurity Lead, emphasized the critical nature of this evolution. He

stated, "As cyber threats become increasingly sophisticated, organizations must enhance their resilience and embrace a proactive approach to cybersecurity. Our expanded generative AI capabilities allow businesses to anticipate, detect, and respond to threats more effectively, ultimately helping them to not just survive but thrive in a challenging environment."

Improved threat detection

One of the standout features of Accenture's enhanced services is the integration of machine learning algorithms that continuously improve the system's threat detection capabilities. This allows organizations to react to incidents and predict potential vulnerabilities before they can be exploited. Generative AI technology also aids in automating incident response, significantly reducing response times and operational risks.

Accenture's offering includes tailored cybersecurity solutions that address specific industry needs, recognizing that different sectors face unique challenges. By harnessing the power of

THE RISE OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES HAS INCREASED VULNERABILITIES

generative AI, Accenture is equipping businesses with the ability to simulate potential attack scenarios and develop robust mitigation strategies. This capability is particularly vital for finance, healthcare, and critical infrastructure industries, where data integrity and security are paramount.

GEN AI TECHNOLOGY AIDS IN AUTOMATING INCIDENT RESPONSE

Furthermore, the company is committed to continuous innovation in the cybersecurity arena. Accenture plans to collaborate with leading technology partners to further enhance its generative AI capabilities, ensuring that its clients benefit from the most advanced solutions available. The firm also focuses on educating and training cybersecurity professionals, equipping them with the skills necessary to leverage AI tools in their roles effectively.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• **Understanding the advancements in generative AI and cybersecurity is crucial for CIOs and senior business leaders** as it directly impacts their organization's ability to safeguard sensitive data and to rapidly scale monitoring and other security services. With cyber threats constantly evolving, leveraging AI properly is essential for staying ahead of potential attacks.

• **A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work when it comes to cybersecurity.** By recognizing industry-specific challenges, business and technology leaders can develop more targeted strategies to enhance their security.

• **Accenture's commitment to continuous innovation and collaboration** with technology partners signals a shift towards proactive cybersecurity measures. For senior leaders, this means that embracing emerging technologies like generative AI is crucial.

Patch Up, Lock Down:
SAP's Latest Security Patches

BY SUPARNA CHAWLA BHASIN

The threat landscape for SAP systems is steadily growing, with ransomware and malware attacks becoming more frequent. While these attacks may not directly target SAP systems, they often affect connected systems and environments. For SAP customers, social engineering and credential compromise attacks are particularly worrisome, as they can expose sensitive data within SAP systems if successful. As a result, addressing system vulnerabilities has become a top priority for SAP users.

In a 2024 Wellesley Information Services report on cybersecurity, unpatched systems emerged as the leading cybersecurity threat to SAP environments. While unpatched systems, ransomware, and credential compromise remain the top concerns, the urgency of applying patches has gained

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT APPETITE FOR AUTOMATED TAX SOLUTIONS

more prominence in recent years. This is because delayed patching leaves systems exposed to exploitation, data theft, malicious code injection, and unauthorized access.

Security patches are essential to protect the platform from vulnerabilities that could be exploited by malicious actors, leading to data theft, operational disruptions, or compliance violations. SAP NetWeaver, a technology platform that serves as the foundation for many SAP applications, is a prime target for

attacks. Especially for the NetWeaver platform, patching addresses weaknesses that could allow unauthorized access, code injection, or privilege escalation, safeguarding sensitive information and ensuring system integrity. Neglecting security patches to such systems leaves systems exposed to exploits, operational inefficiencies, and potential data breaches, highlighting the need for a proactive patch management strategy.

SAP has released 14 new security notes in its January 2025 Patch Day, addressing several critical vulnerabilities. Two high-severity issues in NetWeaver AS for ABAP and ABAP Platform, CVE-2025-0070 and CVE-2025-0066, both with a CVSS score of 9.9, were highlighted. CVE-2025-0070 is an improper authentication flaw that could let attackers steal credentials and impersonate internal systems, compromising confidentiality, integrity, and availability. CVE-2025-0066 is an information disclosure vulnerability that could expose plaintext credentials used for system communication. A high-severity SQL injection vulnerability in NetWeaver, CVE-2025-0063, with a CVSS score of 8.8, was also patched, along with two bugs in the BusinessObjects Business Intelligence platform and a DLL hijacking flaw in SAPSetup. The remaining notes address medium-

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• Establish a Robust Patching Program: Regularly update SAP systems and solutions by creating a clear policy for system and security patching. This should include designated times for applying routine and high-priority updates. Conduct routine audits to identify vulnerabilities and prioritize patch management to reduce risks.

• Evaluate and Upgrade Technologies: Perform a thorough inventory of existing tools to identify obsolete systems or untapped capabilities. Invest in emerging technologies and make cybersecurity a budgetary priority to proactively address evolving threats.

• Integrate SAP Security into a Holistic Cybersecurity Plan: Treat SAP as a critical system and ensure IT and security teams collaborate through cross-training. This will enhance mutual understanding, strengthen integration, and build a comprehensive cybersecurity strategy.

COMPANIES SHOULD ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE RIGOROUS DATA QUALITY STANDARDS

and low-severity issues in various SAP components.

Onapsis Research Labs helped SAP to develop patches for two critical vulnerabilities, along with another medium priority note. Additionally, the team helped address some issues with remote-enabled function modules that were not checking for the appropriate authorizations that they were supposed to. If left unaddressed, a hacker would have been able to access data that should have been restricted.

For help with patching SAP vulnerabilities, many organizations rely on third parties like Onapsis to gain deeper visibility into their deployments and address any potential security issues as they arise.

Thomson Reuters Acquires Tax Technology Provider SafeSend

BY GRANT SUNESON

Thomson Reuters recently announced it acquired tax technology provider SafeSend for $600 million. The deal aims to help companies access automation to accomplish manual, repetitive tasks within the tax and accounting workflows.

"The needs of our customers and their clients drive every decision we make at Thomson Reuters. This acquisition underscores our commitment to addressing the evolving challenges faced by tax professionals and taxpayers alike. By integrating SafeSend's innovative technology with our existing solutions, we're simplifying tax preparation workflows, and meeting the dynamic demands of businesses we serve to help them thrive in an increasingly complex tax landscape," said Elizabeth Beastrom, president of Tax, Audit and Accounting Professionals at Thomson Reuters, in a press release.

Thomson Reuters signaled that it will continue to offer SafeSend as a solution that users can leverage as part of their larger tax software ecosystem. SafeSend automates the functions that are known as the "last-mile" of the tax return, including assembly, review, taxpayer e-signature, and delivery.

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT APPETITE FOR AUTOMATED TAX SOLUTIONS

The acquisition supports Thomson Reuters vision for tax and accounting professionals, advancing efficiency in workflows for

COMPANIES SHOULD ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE RIGOROUS DATA QUALITY STANDARDS

tax preparers and taxpayers across the U.S. Thomson Reuters intends to continue to offer SafeSend as a market solution, supporting the ability to interoperate with multiple vendors across a connected tax software ecosystem.

"Today marks an exciting new chapter for SafeSend customers. Becoming a part of Thomson Reuters will enable us to accelerate product development

efforts and realize our shared vision of an end-to-end tax workflow solution," said SafeSend co-founder Steve Dusablon.

Meeting the Market

Thomson Reuters' acquisition of SafeSend comes as many organizations are seeking to infuse automation into their tax processes. These advanced capabilities are emerging quickly as

RESEARCH **REPORT**
SAPinsider

DECEMBER 2024

Tax Technology Innovation and Automation

By Rizal Ahmed

Avalara Insightsoftware SOVOS VERTEX

companies seek to ensure accuracy and compliance from their finance and accounting teams.

Wellesley Information Services' recent Tax Technology Innovation and Automation benchmark research report found that the desire to reduce tax risks and potential errors and increasing regulatory complexity and compliance requirements were the factors that most significantly affected how organizations approach tax technology innovation.

Businesses are searching for solutions that reduce the chances of manual errors to be introduced throughout the tax process. They also have indicated that the rapid changes in tax regulations in different jurisdictions around the world pose significant issues, making it difficult to remain compliant.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• Automation is here to stay, be prepared for it. Major organizations like Thomson Reuters have demonstrated through their investment that there is a significant appetite for automated tax solutions. Companies should ensure that they have rigorous data quality standards that allow them to take advantage of automated solutions.

• Be proactive when dealing with shifting regulations. Companies cannot afford to have delayed reactions when different tax authorities update tax rates or other regulations. Using solutions that can automatically update these regulations can help ensure that companies remain compliant and avoid any major penalties.

• Ensure that all parts of tax workflows have automation. Organizations should avoid half-measures whenever possible. When deploying automation, companies should ensure that all areas of a given process have automation. For instance, if tax information is automatically collected, businesses should also have automation in the "last mile" of their tax return as well.

Diligent's SuiteApp for GRC gets NetSuite recognition

BY YOANA CHOLTEEVA

Diligent, a SaaS company specializing in governance, risk and compliance (GRC) has announced that its new board reporting tool, Diligent Boards for NetSuite, has achieved the 'Built for NetSuite' certification.

Developed on the Oracle NetSuite SuiteCloud platform, the SuiteApp integrates with the Diligent One Platform to provide organizations with secure access to financial metrics and insights across risk, compliance audit and ESG domains. It also offers board education and best practice resources to enhance governance practices.

Brian Stafford, president and CEO of Diligent, explained that Diligent Boards for NetSuite combines NetSuite's comprehensive ERP capabilities with the Diligent One platform to

DILIGENT BOARDS FOR NETSUITE AIMS TO INTEGRATE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT WITH GOVERNANCE PROTOCOLS

"improve how boards and executives access and digest financial data for effective oversight".

"As organizations prepare for IPOs or navigate

regulated markets, it's essential to have reliable, real-time financial data, which NetSuite provides. This integration adds to NetSuite financial metrics in board report templates to help streamline reporting and design work. Diligent's visual reports can be customized with commentary highlighting key takeaways to bring clarity and consistency to board and leadership reporting," he added.

Targeted at small to mid-market companies, pre-IPO businesses and publicly traded organizations, Diligent Boards for NetSuite aims to integrate financial management with governance protocols. The SuiteApp facilitates the creation of reports using templates crafted by industry experts and delivers these directly

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THIS LAUNCH ALIGNS WITH BROADER TRENDS IN THE GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY SPACE

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• Diligent Boards for NetSuite expands users' capabilities: Diligent Boards for NetSuite represents a significant step forward for key stakeholders like financial controllers, governance professionals and board administrators. This integration can redefine how these roles interact with data, enabling more efficient, streamlined board reporting and governance oversight. By connecting NetSuite's real-time financial insights with Diligent's expertise in governance, risk and compliance (GRC), users are to expect reduced manual effort, improved data visualization and actionable insights tailored to leadership needs.

• Grow in tune with the GRC software market: This launch aligns with broader trends in the governance and financial technology space, where demand for integrated, scalable solutions continues to rise. According to industry reports, the GRC software market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of over 12 percent, reaching $75bn by 2030. Competitors like SAP, Workiva and Tableau are also innovating to capture this growing market, emphasizing features like enhanced data analytics and ESG compliance.

• Choose the Right GRC Solution to integrate into ERP systems: When evaluating technology providers in this category, end-users should prioritize key criteria such as ease of integration with existing ERP systems, the robustness of data security protocols and scalability to meet evolving business needs. Solutions that offer customizable reporting, industry-standard certifications and a strong support ecosystem stand out in a crowded market. Beyond functionality, organizations should also consider a vendor's track record in delivering GRC solutions and their commitment to staying ahead of regulatory and technological trends, ensuring long-term value and operational resilience.

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to leadership and board directors through the Diligent Boards platform.

"Delivering clear and digestible data-informed insights to leadership is essential for sound decision-making and business success," said Guido Haarmans, group vice president of SuiteCloud developer network and partner programs at Oracle NetSuite. "This new SuiteApp extends our robust solution for financial reporting and can help NetSuite customers improve board communications and
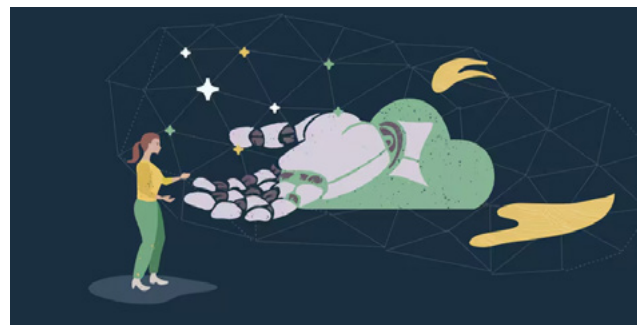
governance oversight."

The 'Built for NetSuite' certification ensures SuiteApps meet Oracle NetSuite's standards and best practices. This program is part of the SuiteCloud Developer Network (SDN) and is designed to give customers confidence in the quality and reliability of third-party integrations like Diligent Boards for NetSuite.

IBM raises Oracle public sector reach with AST deal

BY GIACOMO LEE

IBM is broadening its Big Red reach with its announced intention to acquire Applications Software Technology LLC, a global Oracle consultancy.

Headquartered in Lisle, Illinois, Applications Software Technology (AST) specializes in business transformation expertise with Oracle Cloud Applications (OCA), including for clients in the public sector such as local government and K-12 education. This sector's cloud transformations frequently face issues such as difficulty transitioning legacy systems, scarce skills or high security and compliance requirements.

The acquisition is aimed to help further enhance IBM's Oracle solutions to help public sector and other clients across North America, the UK and Ireland to address such complexities and achieve long-term digital

IBM IS ACTIVELY STRENGTHENING ITS CLOUD TRANSFORMATION PORTFOLIO

transformations with OCA. The deal also helps build on IBM's 2024 acquisition of Accelalpha, expanding Big Blue's ability to help clients deploy, manage and drive value from their Oracle cloud solutions.

"Public sector clients' cloud transformations often require a consulting partner with industry, domain and technology expertise," said Kelly Chambliss, Senior Vice President, IBM Consulting, Americas. "The acquisition of Applications Software Technology will boost IBM's public sector and Oracle

Cloud Application skills to help clients confidently navigate their business transformations."

Applications Software Technology's large team of consultants brings expertise across the OCA Suite, particularly around Oracle Fusion Cloud Enterprise Resource Management (ERP) including Enterprise Performance Management (EPM), Oracle Cloud Human Capital Management (HCM), and Oracle Fusion Configure, Price, Quote (CPQ), as well as Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI), JD Edwards, and NetSuite. With teams across the US, UK, Canada and India, AST also brings expertise and partnerships with Salesforce and MuleSoft,

APPLICATIONS SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIZES IN BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION EXPERTISE WITH ORACLE CLOUD APPLICATIONS

specializing in public sector solutions and more.

The consultancy has been an Oracle partner since 1996 and a leading provider of Oracle solutions covering areas such as business process redesign and Oracle Cloud deployment. In addition to its strong public sector presence, AST also serves commercial clients in the manufacturing, energy and consumer

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• Strengthening Public Sector Cloud Transformations: Applications Software Technology (AST) specializes in OCA solutions for public sector clients, who often struggle with legacy system transitions, skill shortages, and high security and compliance requirements. AST brings deep knowledge of the Oracle Fusion Cloud suite, including Enterprise Resource Management (ERP), Enterprise Performance Management (EPM), Cloud Human Capital Management (HCM), and Configure, Price, Quote (CPQ). Additionally,

AST's expertise spans Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI), JD Edwards, and NetSuite. With teams across the US, UK, Canada, and India, AST also bolsters IBM's capabilities in Salesforce and MuleSoft integrations, particularly for public sector clients.

• Building on IBM's Cloud Transformation Strategy: IBM has been actively strengthening its cloud transformation portfolio, following its 2024 acquisition of Accelalpha. The AST acquisition further reinforces IBM's ability to support Oracle cloud deployment, process redesign, and

digital transformation. AST's history as an Oracle partner since 1996 has positioned it as a leader in Big Red solutions.

• A Strategic Move for Future Growth: IBM's acquisition of AST highlights its commitment to advancing cloud transformation solutions and enhancing Oracle capabilities for both public and commercial clients. With complementary strengths in consulting, service offerings, and cloud expertise, the combined IBM-AST team is well-positioned to drive digital transformation success across industries.

packaged goods industries.

"We are excited to join IBM and open up new opportunities for our people and expand transformative solutions to deliver business outcomes for our customers," said Justin Winter, CEO, Applications Software

Technology. "Applications Software Technology and IBM have complementary capabilities, client relationships, service offerings and values around our people, innovation and commitment to client success. Together, we will continue to grow

in the market for cloud transformation solutions."

Notable past acquisitions contributing to AST's growth include Symatrix Limited, 9EDGE Inc. and Computer Technology Resources Inc. The consultancy is currently a portfolio company of funds managed by Recognize Partners LP. The acquisition is expected to close in the first quarter of 2025, subject to customary closing conditions and regulatory approvals, upon which Applications Software Technology will join IBM Consulting. Financial details of the transaction were not disclosed.

MARIANO NUNEZ

A STEP AHEAD

SECURELY ACCELERATE YOUR ERP TRANSFORMATION WITH ONAPSIS

BY SUPARNA CHAWLA BHASIN | PHOTOS ERIC MCCALLISTER

THE DREAM STARTED WITH A MOVIE –*HACKERS.*

The cat-and-mouse game between attackers and defenders sparked his curiosity, but it was an 800-page book, *Maximum Security*, found on a street vendor's table in New York, that truly set him on his path. While barely grasping its complexities, Mariano Nunez, the CEO of Onapsis, knew he had found his calling. By 18, he was studying computer science while working in offensive penetration testing, exposing vulnerabilities in customer's systems before real attackers could. What started as childhood fascination became a mission—one that led him to co-found Onapsis and redefine cybersecurity for business applications—safeguarding the systems that power the global economy.

Nunez's journey into ERP security began with a penetration test on an SAP application, where he discovered a massive security blind spot—business-critical ERP systems from major vendors were highly vulnerable to attacks yet were largely unprotected. Unlike traditional security approaches, like user access and segregation of duties controls, he examined these systems from a threat actor's perspective and uncovered attack vectors that allowed unauthorized access even without credentials. As ERP systems moved to the cloud, the risks intensified, yet defenders lacked the expertise to secure them while cybercriminals were already exploiting these weaknesses. Recognizing this gap, Mariano founded Onapsis in 2009 to proactively protect the world's most critical business systems. Today, Onapsis is a leader in ERP security, helping enterprises safeguard their most valuable assets against an evolving threat landscape.

Since its founding, Onapsis has tracked a dramatic shift in threats targeting ERP systems. Traditionally, ERP security ensured employees had appropriate access to business data and functions. However, attackers have now shifted to exploit unpatched vulnerabilities, insecure configurations, and flaws in custom code. These attacks bypass traditional security controls, leaving no traces in audit logs and creating a dangerous blind spot. The consequences are severe, ranging from payroll fraud and financial theft to ransomware attacks that cripple manufacturing and supply chains. Beyond financial losses, regulatory penalties and reputational damage further compound the risks. In this environment, ERP security is about protecting the foundation of business operations. Organizations must adopt proactive, modern security strategies to stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated threats.

Traditional Security Measures Fall Short

A common misconception among ERP users is that traditional security, such as firewalls and segregation of duties controls, is sufficient. While these controls are necessary, they are not designed to detect or prevent cyberattacks targeting application layers. Many organizations that have experienced breaches had these security measures in place yet still fell victim to attacks because they lacked visibility into application-level threats.

Cybercriminals have become highly sophisticated, often targeting ERP systems directly. The transition of ERP systems to the cloud has significantly increased exposure to cyber threats, presenting a growing risk. Threat actors are acutely aware of this shift and are actively exploiting vulnerabilities in cloud-based environments. Recent findings from
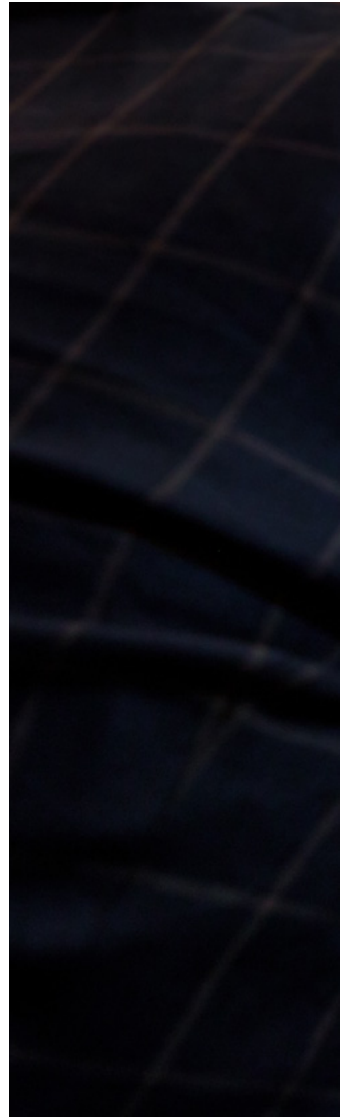
the Onapsis Research Labs highlight a 400% increase in ransomware attacks targeting SAP systems and data, alongside a 490% surge in discussions on criminal forums regarding SAP vulnerabilities and exploits. This sharp escalation in threat activity underscores the urgent need for organizations to strengthen their cybersecurity posture.

As organizations transition to the cloud, they must move beyond perimeter defense and adopt a more proactive security approach. One of the key priorities is application-layer security, ensuring that ERP systems are properly hardened against attacks. Equally important is continuous monitoring, which enables real-time threat detection tailored specifically for ERP systems. Organizations must also focus on custom code security, regularly assessing code for vulnerabilities that attackers could exploit.

While ERP vendors such as SAP typically secure the underlying cloud infrastructure, including the network, hypervisor, and operating system layers,

customers remain accountable for securing their applications and data. Nunez emphasizes, *"Early cloud transitions often led to misconceptions that SAP would handle all security aspects, leaving organizations exposed to unaddressed vulnerabilities. However, SAP has further clarified the shared security responsibility model, emphasizing that while it safeguards the cloud infrastructure, customers are responsible for their application configurations, patches, secure integrations, and custom code security. Additionally, application threat monitoring is essential—not just to track access but to proactively identify incidents."*

Rather than treating security as a one-time implementation, companies must integrate it into continuous compliance and risk management frameworks. Cloud migration enhances ERP security, but only if businesses take a proactive stance in safeguarding their most critical assets. A robust security posture requires a multi-layered ap-

IN CYBERSECURITY, IT IS NOT ABOUT COMPETITION; IT IS ABOUT COLLECTIVE DEFENSE.

proach, emphasizing application-layer defenses. Nunez asserts, *"This risk is not SAP-specific, affecting all business-critical applications, including supply chain, HR, and treasury systems. Cybercriminals are exploiting these gaps, bypassing basic cloud and legacy security approaches. We're working to expand beyond SAP, bringing the same level of security and compliance protection to other essential business applications from various vendors and manufacturers."*

Cracking the Code: How Onapsis is Redefining ERP Security

Onapsis was founded to fill a critical technology gap with protecting SAP and ERP systems. Recognizing this vulnerability, the company developed the Onapsis Platform, a purpose-built solution that integrates advanced security capabilities to safeguard these essential systems from evolving cyber threats. At its core, Onapsis provides a comprehensive, three-pronged approach to securing ERP environments.

First, organizations need visibility into vulnerabilities before they become breaches. With Onapsis Assess, businesses can identify ERP application-level risks, prioritize threats, and remediate security issues. By taking a proactive stance, companies can reduce their attack surface and strengthen overall security posture. Second, cyber threats are persistent and increasingly sophisticated. Onapsis Defend provides real-time monitoring, detection, and response capabilities, ensuring that both insider threats and external attacks are quickly identified and mitigated. With automation-driven incident response, organizations can stay ahead of potential breaches while maintaining the integrity of environments. Third, as companies expand their landscapes, customizations can introduce hidden security gaps. Onapsis Control addresses this by allowing businesses to identify and remediate vulnerabilities early in the development cycle. It also automates fixes for legacy code security risks, en-

suring compliance and resilience.

Nunez emphasizes, *"Onapsis serves leading enterprises where security is mission critical. Our platform is especially vital for highly regulated industries such as energy, utilities, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. In organizations where SAP manages critical business data and processes, and SAP underpins essential operations, Onapsis ensures they can maintain resilience, security, and compliance at scale across cloud and on-prem environments."*

Going Beyond Technology

Beyond the technology itself, Onapsis has established a robust approach to cybersecurity. Onapsis is the SAP application cybersecurity solution officially endorsed by SAP, underscoring its critical role in securing enterprise systems against evolving threats. To enhance cyber resilience, SAP and Onapsis have also recently partnered to strengthen incident preparedness and response for SAP environments. This collaboration equips organizations with advanced threat intelligence and proactive defense mechanisms, ensuring they can detect, mitigate, and recover from security incidents with greater speed and efficiency.

The company's in-house Onapsis Research Labs also plays a crucial role in staying ahead of cyber threats. By continuously analyzing attack vectors and emerging risks, vital intelligence is provided on how ERP systems are targeted. This research is embedded directly into the platform, equipping organizations with proactive defense mechanisms. To further strengthen the security ecosystem, Onapsis launched the SAP Defenders Community, a network bringing together some of the world's largest SAP customers. This initiative fosters a confidential environment where members can collectively enhance their defense capabilities. By facilitating knowledge-sharing, the community empowers organizations to build more resilient security programs.

Nunez reinforces, *"Cybersecurity is about staying ahead of threats, and our research labs make that possible. We work with business application vendors to uncover and mitigate zero-day vulnerabilities, having discovered and mitigated over 1,000 critical issues to date. Our threat intelligence provides real-time visibility into attacker tactics, helping customers strengthen defenses before an attack occurs. Beyond technology, our SAP Defenders Community fosters collaboration among the world's largest SAP customers—sharing intelligence, best practices, and mitigation strategies. In cybersecurity, it is not about competition; it is about collective defense."*

Nunez also recognizes that cybersecurity is about expertise and process optimization. The company, with its certified partners including many of the world's leading system integrators, helps companies bridge the gap between traditional information security teams and ERP administrators. This support is particularly crucial during transformation projects, where different teams must work together to implement security effectively. By fostering collaboration between audit, application, and compliance teams with cybersecurity professionals, Onapsis ensures that security measures are clearly defined, operationalized, and sustainable.

The Future of ERP Security: Integrating Security from the Start

Onapsis helps organizations secure their environments, prevent financial losses, and enhance operational efficiency. Under the leadership of CEO Mariano Nunez, the company has proven that proactive security accelerates transformation as well as mitigating risk. A major retailer with $6 billion in revenue used Onapsis to integrate security controls from the start of their ERP migration, enabling them to finish six months early and under budget. In another case, a chemical manufacturer uncovered a long-hidden insider fraud where a former developer had siphoned confidential fi-

A CRITICAL ASPECT OF CLOUD SECURITY IS UNDERSTANDING THE SHARED SECURITY RESPONSIBILITY MODEL.

nancial reports for stock trading advantages—an issue only detected thanks to Onapsis' advanced monitoring when it was deployed years later. These success stories highlight how Onapsis goes beyond traditional cybersecurity, empowering businesses to move faster, operate securely, and protect their most valuable assets.

Nunez emphasizes, *"In the cloud, customers are still responsible for securing their applications and data. A key part of cloud security is understanding the shared responsibility model—the distinction between what ERP vendors secure in cloud environments and what remains the customer's responsibility. While cloud hyperscalers have long followed this model, the ERP space has historically been more ambiguous. Still, many customers only fully grasp these security gaps after experiencing an incident or audit finding. Proactively educating organizations on these responsibilities and ensuring security controls are designed with them in mind is essential to preventing costly security breaches. As cloud and AI adoption accelerate, organizations must recognize that cybersecurity is not inherently 'baked in' but requires a proactive strategy. Security teams must go beyond default protection, ensuring comprehensive risk management, compliance, and governance frameworks are in place to safeguard ERP environments effectively."*

In 2025 and beyond, cloud adoption continues to shape the enterprise landscape. While cloud solutions continue to drive transformation, security concerns remain a primary obstacle, particularly for large enterprises moving their ERP systems to the cloud. AI is also gaining traction, with organizations increasingly focused on leveraging it securely and ensuring critical data is not compromised. The challenge lies in balancing AI innovation with strong security measures, making confidence in AI-driven processes a key priority for businesses. Onapsis is eliminating these barriers, empowering organizations to securely accelerate and de-risk their ERP cloud and AI transformations. ∎

DELL STRENGTHENS

CYBERSECURITY

FOR MICROSOFT CUSTOMERS

DELL TECHNOLOGIES
AND MICROSOFT ARE
ENHANCING AI ADOPTION
TO PROTECT DATA AND
IMPROVE CYBERSECURITY
FOR MULTICLOUD
ENVIRONMENTS.

BY MARK VIGOROSO

Dell Technologies recently introduced AI innovations that help Dell and Microsoft customers simplify AI adoption, speed deployment and power demanding workloads in multi-cloud environments. Data protection, cyber resiliency and security advancements help joint customers strengthen their cybersecurity posture.

"Organizations modernizing their IT strategies to support emerging workloads, like AI, need solutions that help them innovate faster, control costs and protect data across multi-cloud environments," said Arthur Lewis, president, Infrastructure Solutions Group, Dell Technologies. "Our storage software, data protection and services advancements help customers in Microsoft environments accelerate their transformation efforts quickly and securely."

Dell APEX File Storage for Microsoft Azure now offers a Dell-managed option for organizations seeking simplified deployment and management experience. Customers can easily meet the needs of AI workloads in multi-cloud environments using the enterprise-class performance, scalability and data services of Dell PowerScale, and enterprise file storage from the industry's #1 NAS company. The service delivers:

• Burst capacity for performance-intensive AI workloads with an architecture designed to deliver superior performance density and scale.

• Reduced management complexity with seamless data mobility and operational consistency across on-premises and cloud environments.

• Faster time to data-driven insights through native integration with Microsoft AI tools.

Dell has also introduced new services designed to help organizations simplify AI adoption and create custom AI solutions. They include:

• **Accelerator Services for Copilot+ PCs** to enhance productivity and efficiency with expert guidance on new features, implementation plans, best practices and more.

• **Services for Microsoft Copilot Stu-**

MICROSOFT CUSTOMERS STAND TO GAIN FROM IMPROVED AI DEVELOPMENT IN COPILOT AND AZURE AI STUDIOS.

dio and Azure AI Studio to assist with the development and implementation of Copilot agents and AI solutions tailored to specific business needs.

• **Implementation Services for Microsoft Azure AI Service** to help customers support new business opportunities through AI application development on-premises with Azure AI services on Dell solutions for Azure Local.

Additionally, Dell APEX Protection Services for Microsoft Azure will deliver Dell-managed, AI-powered cloud data protection and cyber resiliency across edge locations, remote offices and data centers. The service improves operational efficiency and resource usage, while ensuring robust data protection using advanced data reduction capabilities. Now, organizations can:

• Enhance cyber resilience with zero trust security including immutability, encryption, multi-factor authentication and role-based access controls.

• Protect against ransomware and cyberthreats with efficient recovery options for traditional and modern workloads.

• Accelerate cyber recovery with AI-powered CyberSense threat intelligence that results in up to 80% less time spent on recovery.

Dell's new security services for Microsoft environments consist of two key features:

• **Advisory Services for Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC)** to help customers align their cybersecurity posture with CMMC guidelines through specific recommendations for Microsoft solutions.

• **Managed Detection and Response with Microsoft** that allows customers to focus on their core business while Dell experts monitor, detect, investigate and respond to threats 24/7 across their IT environment.

"Our customers are looking for ways to modernize their IT infrastructure and adopt hybrid cloud services safely and securely," said Aung Oo, VP of Azure Storage, Microsoft. "Dell Technologies is

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• **Microsoft customers will gain from improved AI development in Copilot and Azure AI Studios.** Dell assists with setting up and configuring Copilot Studio and Azure AI Studio environments. Customers can rapidly prototype and launch Copilot agents without needing extensive in-house AI expertise. Prebuilt workflows and templates provided by Dell further reduce time-to-market. Dell's services focus on building Copilot agents that align with an organization's unique processes, whether in finance, customer service, or supply chain management. Dell helps customers integrate Azure AI Studio's data analytics capabilities with their existing systems, providing real-time insights. Customers can seamlessly integrate Copilot agents and AI models into their current Microsoft 365, Dynamics 365, or other Azure-based platforms. And Dell ensures that AI agents communicate effectively with existing applications, leveraging APIs and connectors provided by Microsoft.

• **Microsoft customers can develop and run AI applications locally while leveraging Azure AI services.** Dell's implementation services for Microsoft Azure AI Service enable organizations to meet data sovereignty and compliance requirements in industries like healthcare, finance, and government. They provide low-latency performance for AI applications that require real-time data processing, such as manufacturing control systems or retail point-of-sale analytics. Dell's implementation services reduce the time required to set up and optimize Azure AI services on local systems. And customers gain access to Azure AI models, tools, and libraries on-premises, eliminating the need for significant in-house expertise. Dell's solutions support a hybrid model where customers can process less sensitive data in the cloud and sensitive workloads on-premises. These services reduce operational costs associated with moving large datasets to the cloud. Processing data locally eliminates the need for expensive bandwidth and reduces cloud storage costs. Organizations pay for Azure services on a consumption basis while benefiting from the cost-effectiveness of on-premises Dell hardware. Dell helps users customize Azure AI tools for unique use cases, such as predictive maintenance, fraud detection, or personalized customer experiences. Localized deployment allows for flexibility in integrating AI with other on-premises systems, such as ERP, CRM, or IoT platforms.

• **Dell APEX File Storage for Microsoft Azure will streamline enterprise file storage.** The Dell managed service on tap for 2025 will reduce the complexity of setting up and maintaining file storage systems. Dell will handle the provisioning, configuration, and ongoing management of the file storage solution, while end users can focus on accessing and utilizing storage resources without needing deep expertise in infrastructure setup or maintenance. Also, the service will include easy integration with Azure cloud services, enabling unified workflows. Users can leverage Azure-native tools, analytics, and applications while accessing file storage managed by Dell. Data stored on Dell APEX integrates directly with services like Azure AI, Azure Analytics, and Azure DevOps, streamlining operations. Additionally, end users can scale up or down as needed without worrying about provisioning additional hardware or reconfiguring systems. This flexibility is ideal for organizations with fluctuating storage demands like seasonal data spikes or growing datasets. Finally, the service supports hybrid and multi-cloud strategies, by combining Dell's on-premises file storage expertise with Azure cloud integration, offering a consistent experience across environments. Users will be able to move data seamlessly between on-premises Dell systems and Azure cloud resources for operational agility.

enabling their customers to bring their existing knowledge, trusted platforms, and enterprise data to Azure to speed the adoption of critical technologies including Azure AI Services."

Availability

Dell-managed Dell APEX File Storage for Microsoft Azure is available in public preview this first half of 2025. However, its Accelerator Services for Copilot+ PCs, Services for Microsoft Copilot Studio, Services for Microsoft Azure AI Studio, and Implementation Services for Microsoft Azure AI Service are available now. In its Security Suite, Dell APEX Protection Services for Microsoft Azure will be available beginning in the first half of 2025, while Advisory Services for Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) for Microsoft and Managed Detection and Response with Microsoft services are available now ∎

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The Future
of Digital Transformation

INSIGHTS FROM INETUM UK CEO KATHY QUASHIE.

BY MARK VIGOROSO

Last year was a landmark one for Inetum. 2024 saw the European digital services leader appoint Kathy Quashie as Inetum CEO of United Kingdom & Ireland (UKI) and Growing Markets. The company also strengthened its position as a global ServiceNow Elite partner with the acquisition of London's Unifii, one of ServiceNow's biggest European partners. And to round it all off, Inetum bagged an award at December's ERP Today Awards 2024 for its excellence in operational innovation.

2025 then sees Inetum start off in good stead, and Kathy Quashie sat down with ERP Today to lay out the roadmap ahead for the business both in Europe and abroad. Quashie describes Inetum, headquartered in France, as a truly European global business. The company, she explains, is one that is EMEA-focused, but also globally led, which plays into a promising opportunity for Inetum to scale, develop and grow.

In our conversation, the CEO underlines the Unifii acquisition as a sign of UK and Ireland's importance to Inetum's European scaling strategy. "When you look at the UK market, the focus is still heavily on transformation and automation," Quashie explains. "It's one of the most mature markets if you look at the investments for AI capability and automation within different sectors."

Drilling further into the deal, Quashie says that any good acquisition is made with a view on long-term potential and value - whilst also recognizing the value being created in the here and now.

"Unifii presented a fantastic offering for what they do with ServiceNow as a platform play, delivering great capabilities to great sets of clients in the UK, Ireland and Europe, from financial services to public sector, energy and utilities, enterprises, supply chain, manufacturing, insurance and retail. It touched most of the critical sectors across the UKI market, so

we were very intrigued by the ability of the opportunity to scale within those sectors - but also the relevance of what was already established."

Inetum Group

With Quashie as a driving force, Inetum wants to scale its UKI presence in the market, becoming more of an agile and transformative partner for businesses. This mission comes as a response to the increasing pressure to innovate, adapt, and scale, that businesses face in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Talking with the CEO, it's clear Quashie has an enthusiasm for technology matched by a dedication to creating value and real business outcomes for customers. "Clients are looking for better ways of improving themselves year on year," she explains, and with her Inetum role, she is in a position to combine her passion for technology with the opportunity to create significant impacts for clientele.

The company's approach optimizes platforms like ServiceNow, SAP, Salesforce, and Microsoft to provide end-to-end value. Besides being an Elite partner of ServiceNow, Inetum is also a SAP PE SELL Partner in the UK and Ireland, enhancing it's strategic vision and global presence in the tech sector. This way, Inetum operates as a one-stop solution for clients, enabling them to make informed decisions about costs and transformation while prioritizing their unique needs. But the aim is never to just sell a product or hours of work to a client, as Kathy explains.

"We see ourselves as true enablers of digital transformation," she states, noting Inetum's ability to foster deep partnerships with clients as a key differentiator.

"We're able to be agile and responsive. But more importantly, we're setting up a workforce that is able to react with the skills that the market needs and deserves. In doing that, we've established some key enterprise clients - but also clients that are looking for more transformative leaders that can support them on their journey."

Quashie sees Inetum as being joined in its relationships with customers and creating outcomes relevant for them - rather than just relevant for itself. As she succinctly puts it, "If our customers do well and we build those strong partnerships, then ultimately we do well, too."

Clients also face a large amount of regulation and consolidation, atop of a political geo-landscape that changes weekly. "This means the macroeconomics around how a business remains successful in that spectrum of change - we too are walking that path with clients to ensure they get there in a good way," reports the chief exec.

Stepping back for a look at the global picture of Inetum's growing markets, the company has offshoring sites in India, North Africa, Mexico, Colombia and more. Dedicated SAP services can be found in Portugal, whilst Bulgaria hosts a strong ServiceNow capability. Our Shared Service Centers (SSCs) in Spain, Portugal and LATAM focus on nearshoring with expertise in various technologies and offer a wide range of services, including system integration, delivery management, cybersecurity, and infrastructure management. Additionally, our Remote Services (RS) in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria offer services in DataBI, DevOps, IoT, GenAI and more, along with innovative solutions like agile-lean methodologies and blockchain. With its geo-resourcing model and a worldwide body of over 28,000 of consultants and experts, Quashie believes Inetum provides a "very compelling onshore, nearshore and offshore solution" for clients. In the UK market, offshoring is seen as business value whilst providing affordability for clients to scale and grow. Across EMEA, meanwhile, nearshoring is the preferred model, with the option to go offshoring provided by Inetum.

Inetum and AI

Inetum began developing AI capabilities 6-7 years ago and has integrated them throughout the organization, now accelerating with GenAI market trends.

The company faces the dual challenge of deploying AI and GenAI internally and providing top-notch GenAI services to customers with strategic partners. With 7 "Fablab" laboratories for public co-creation and a team of 150 researchers, Inetum integrates and disseminates innovation. The GenAI Factory, a center of excellence, collaborates to deliver end-to-end GenAI solutions, train, identify use cases, conduct PoCs, and scale projects for business and IT enhancement.

We have also initiated a European ThinkTank on GenAI, bringing together approximately 50 customers from France, Spain, and Belgium to collectively explore the opportunities, risks, and scalability of GenAI within companies, fostering a shared vision for AI-driven transformation. Aligned with Inetum's AI vision, ServiceNow has just announced that Inetum have been selected as one of the first 10 partners to lead the way for ServiceNow's Agentic AI.

When discussing the Nordics, one of the growing markets of Inetum, Quashie notes a "compelling geography" placing a strong importance on sustainability. But discussing the region further, the CEO notes the Nordics' importance when it comes to AI development in Europe, with Sweden and Finland having been chosen by the European Commission for its ambitious AI Factory project.

Kathy puts the importance of the Nordics down to a combined offering of innovation, entrepreneurs and agility coming together to define and transform not just generative AI (Gen AI) but AI as a whole.

"When you think about the infrastructures in those markets, the environment for change and the embrace for change is already happening. The opportunity for investment in those countries is already materializing, so it presents the perfect opportunity for any organization to be part of. And they are on the growing edge of technology and growth overall - so why not be a part of it?"

All Inetum's growing markets share a

common focus on Gen AI, similar to the UK and Ireland. The CEO describes the tech theme as "not a new thing, but a now thing," highlighting the importance of AI readiness for businesses. Companies are increasingly focused on achieving such readiness, a critical step toward embracing Gen AI. But despite its transformative potential, challenges such as cost, complexity, digital skills and adaptability remain consistent for many organizations. To lead in this evolving landscape, Quashie believes businesses must prioritize trust, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring that upfront investments yield long-term value.

1. Data Strategy: Data is the bedrock of successful AI implementation. Organizations need to understand where their data resides, its value, and how it's managed - meaning a clear data strategy is essential to unlocking AI's potential.

2. Affordability and Tooling: With tools such as Microsoft's Copilot and Salesforce's Agentforce, ServiceNow's Agentic AI, there is a wide spectrum of AI capabilities available. Businesses must therefore align their data strategy with the right tools to achieve immediate and cost-effective results.

3. Cultural Shift: Kathy believes

Quashie says, ERP always bears a risk management and GRC component, touching as it does on regulated sectors and industries. This further demonstrates the importance of case studies and pilot programs to demonstrate the safety and value when it comes to deploying AI in ERP systems. But the CEO reminds ERP Today that in business, who dares wins, as they say.

"There are risks in being the first, but there's a real opportunity in being early, too. Nobody wants to be the last person in, everyone wants to be in the middle - the 'Safe Middle'. But for the customers that are willing to go

Kathy Quashie

> **"We've never lived before in a world with Gen AI. It's about embracing and creating what is a continuous learning academy for people to get comfortable with what Gen AI is, and that brings an element of how ethical Gen AI is - how safe is it?"**

"We've never lived before in a world with Gen AI. It's about embracing and creating what is a continuous learning academy for people to get comfortable with what Gen AI is, and that brings an element of how ethical Gen AI is - how safe is it?"

The Inetum goal is to help clients not only adopt generative AI but also scale and optimize its use. Quashie emphasizes that Inetum plays a crucial role in helping tech leaders drive innovation and achieve higher ROI through AI adoption, preparing clients for AI readiness. The CEO outlines three critical steps for ERP Insiders looking to integrate AI into their operations:

AI adoption requires a mindset shift. Building an academy of continuous learning within the organization helps employees adapt to and embrace AI-driven change. This includes understanding ethical considerations and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration.

Inetum treats AI like all other transformative technologies: Ensuring the end goal helps clients make optimal use of tech, and leverage tailored strategies and consultative approaches to drive growth and transformation across markets.

The only real hurdle is caution, especially from an ERP standpoint. As

out there early, there's a lot of reward and a lot of potential for their organizations."

And to navigate this potentially perilous path, Inetum stands out as a reliable guardian and partner in digital system transformation and integration. After all, the company's name comes from the Latin word for growth, incrementum. Inetum believes in delivering digital impact, but faster and easier for the good of all.

When it comes to AI, incremental experimentation may seem wise for ERP Insiders - but for gaining incremental business growth, one might have to go all 'in' with a partner like Inetum. ∎

ERP: Business's Beating Heart

An interview with Darryl Sackett, the CEO of Codestone, winners of Transformation Project of the Year at The ERP Today Awards 2024.

BY RIZAL AHMED AND CHARLES WHITMORE

Darryl Sackett

Solution-focused companies have always fascinated Darryl Sackett, Chief Executive Officer of Codestone. Whether Microsoft or SoftwareOne, the latter of which he spent a decade before taking up the reins at Codestone, Sackett's career trajectory has always led him towards the digital transformation space.

Sackett joined Codestone — a firm known for being the number one ERP-led digital transformation consultancy in the UK and Northern Europe — over a year ago as CEO. His mission in the hot seat includes enhancing customer centricity, positioning the company as the transformation partner for businesses of all sizes, and ensuring Codestone remains at the forefront of digital advancement by fostering a culture of excellence, curiosity, and innovation.

Evolution of Codestone

It's worth noting though that Codestone as a company began this journey long before Sackett joined. "Codestone is in Version

CODESTONE

3.0 of its growth journey," the CEO tells ERP Today. In Version 1.0, the company was founder-led. "In this version, it was owner-operated and grew organically and successfully built on its SAP heritage," the chief explains. "Version 2.0 began when the founders did their initial MBO and took capital backing, allowing them to accelerate the company's growth."

During that time, Codestone grew to a headcount of 300 through various acquisitions and could diversify its portfolio to make the company attractive to mid-market and enterprise customers.

Today, Version 3.0 of Codestone offers mission-critical ERP transformation with an offering including tangential analytics, AI, data strategies, security and productivity solutions. "So today, from a user perspective, we are stitching their core needs together with our end-to-end solutions," Sackett says.

As the company expands its digital offerings, Codestone will utilize its diverse portfolio to ensure that its clients get the end-to-end digital transformation they need in this day and age. For this to happen, the CEO argues, customers must look past software solutions from a simple surface level and ensure they know how to turn various promises into measurable action.

"It's great that there's wonderful technology in the world," says Sackett, pointing out that what customers want is to get constructive advice from Codestone on the best way to use today's tech in their business context.

"I find that a lot of people are trying to customize systems too far or potentially even create something which is perhaps not best practice. From our perspective, we want to understand the customer to ensure that we can show them what best practice looks like and what it means for them in their relevant business context," he notes.

An end-to-end approach

According to Sackett, the company's end-to-end approach to digital transformation is based on understanding a company's data, security, and technology.

"Apart from great platform technologies, we have an increasingly strategic role to play in data strategy and analytics," he says. Sackett argues that most companies do a sub-optimal job of realizing value from their data. So, how do people unlock the value of data?

"Organizations must return to Day 1 of the business to answer questions like, what is my purpose? How does data support that strategy? How do you structure it? What insights do you need? And therefore, what value does it generate? To align the goals of unlocking the value of your data," Sackett says, adding that this is one of the multiple approaches by Codestone to help organizations in their digital transformation journey. This methodology explains why and how Codestone impressed our judges for the recent ERP Today Awards, winning the headlining category of Transformation Project of the Year.

Secure it all

While data drives business insight, protecting that data is paramount. Codestone's approach to security demonstrates this understanding. The integration of security directly into core business systems like SAP and Microsoft ensures that an ERP system remains both powerful and protected.

Another unique aspect of Codestone's end-to-end play is its security offering. Sackett observes that while there is security integrated from the end user through to the core business systems, there are limited integrations, for example, between security platforms and [on-premise] ERP platforms. "We created those integrations," Sackett says. "We

have written them, so even if a customer wants to use an older technology as their ERP, we can put them in a modernized platform and make them secure."

He notes, "ERP is the beating heart of an organization; it processes your most critical business transactions and holds your most valuable data. That's why we've developed security solutions that protect these mission-critical systems while enabling business agility."

Codestone's distinctive security practice is machine-led then people-supported, particularly valuable for organizations with Security Operation Centres (SOCs).

"Typically, an organizations' security is people-led then machine-supported. We flipped that model as our security is AI-driven," Sackett explains.

He adds that the efficiency and effectiveness of Codestone's security offering are multiple steps forward from having a people heavy SOC. "Unfortunately, that model is too slow because the attack vectors are now inbound AI. So, the way forward is answering AI with AI."

Commercial considerations

However, the best digital transformation strategy is the one that fits with the customer's planned budget, which includes funding such projects. Sackett believes that this part is often missed.

He says, "We look at ways to optimize contracts, user profiles, licensing profiles, etc., not just on the SAP or Microsoft stack but generally across the whole business by determining whether people are best using their current software and where it can be optimized to fund the transformation initiatives."

He notes that if tech transformations are done correctly, the employees are happier as their processes become easier through better technology. "Digital transformation for me is technology, it is commercial, and it is cultural," he says.

Evolving with customer needs

Innovation must evolve with customer needs, delivering both immediate and long-term benefits throughout their digital transformation journey. Elaborating on the importance of this aspect,

> ## "From our perspective, we want to understand the customer to ensure that we can show them what best practice looks like…"

"ERP is the beating heart of an organization"

Sackett adds that customers can have a different goal six months from now - and certainly within 24 months.

Giving a practical example of innovation in action, Sackett describes how Codestone's onboarding team leverages AI to create personalized guidance videos, streamlining the customer journey from day one. These innovations help the company engage and service customers across industries and various company sizes. According to Sackett, the type of work also varies, ranging from something as small as the latter stage of data analytics, which may be done in a few weeks, to big lifecycle projects like core ERP transformation, which could take about 18 months.

However, the company or the project's size notwithstanding, Sackett says that Codestone focuses on not only implementation but also a culture change for the organization.

"Our ability to address and implement that adoption and change management piece makes Codestone different," Sackett observes. "You may have all the tech in the world, but if the people don't know how to use it or the best way to use it, nothing will change, and any change will be much slower than expected."

Managed services are also key. "One of our major objectives is to create customer advocacy, and we do that through proactive monitoring, measuring customer feedback, and conducting many case studies with managed service customers."

When it comes to platform choice, Sackett notes that Codestone's approach is "typically agnostic." However, he acknowledges there are clear use cases where a customer might be more invested in one platform than another. "You just have to go back to what they are trying to achieve, their requirements and their use cases, and then map that back to the solutions we have. We don't force a customer down a certain path because we want what's best for them."

Innovation in Action

Whatever platform or ecosystem a customer chooses, AI and associated investments are moving the needle today.

Giving the example of an automotive manufacturer customer, Sackett says that Codestone's real-time analytics offering ingests the latest news in real-time and then compares what is happening around the world to the orders the manufacturer has received from various countries in their ERP system. "For example, when the news shows that there's disruption in a certain region, the manufacturer can easily reroute to a more reliable country or route. They can also opt to order more to hedge their risk from supply chain delays."

Sackett adds, "This is real-time supply chain analytics that can only be done with AI engines behind it, irrespective of the ERP that the customer uses."

However, he believes that AI still needs one to three years to mature even though the advances in this space "are moving at light speed."

Addressing emerging trends

Looking at the big picture, Sackett observes that the future is not only about keeping pace with what vendors are doing in their software stacks but also creating a diverse and unique niche for Codestone's offerings. "Computing in the future will layer into running, creating and understanding a business without going into 16 spreadsheets," Sackett says. "It could help us forecast the top three things from a revenue generation perspective over three months where we're creating an upside; while managing the risks."

While technology continues to evolve at light speed, Sackett emphasizes that success depends on three critical elements: modern technology infrastructure, clean and reliable data, and an intelligent AI layer to derive actionable insights. "It's an entire stack modernization," Sackett concludes, "which is why we're building our business to cater to all those layers." ∎

Additional reporting by Radhika Ojha

Case Study from Rossum, Highly Commended Winner of Finance

Veolia's Invoice Processing Rehaul

BY GIACOMO LEE & YOANA CHOLTEEVA

Solution of 2024 at The ERP Today Awards

ROSSUM

In 2020, multinational water, waste management and energy services company Veolia supplied 95 million people with drinking water internationally, 62 million with wastewater service, produced nearly 43 million megawatt hours of energy - and converted 47 million metric tons of waste, with a recorded consolidated revenue of €26bn.

At the same time, Veolia found itself struggling with a Shared Service Center (SSC) serving 30 entities of the group, performing inefficient legacy operations as it was to post incoming invoices. It was time for something to change, but its Czech team in charge of invoice processing was too big and inflexible, with the process being fragmented across entities. For this reason, the SSC decided to launch a new vision of unified invoice navigation and centralize its process, increasing digitization with the help of Rossum, an AI-first platform for end-to-end transactional document processing.

Enhancing the process with RPA and AI

The SSC leadership began by convincing all stakeholders that an overhaul of the internal process held great potential, with the company then embarking on its collaboration with transactional document automation company, Rossum.

However, the assignment wasn't like any other; Veolia's SSC director Ondrej Beranek, explained to ERP Today that the cohort of accountants working in the SSC consisted of people who have been in the profession for a very long time. "It's important to say that most of the accountants had been working in that position since the time I was born and that's over 50 percent of them. So to change their way of thinking was the hardest thing in the beginning."

Before the proof of concept (POC), the accountants printed all documents they received as standard. But after the POC demonstrated that the new plan was solid, the team was able to cut this down and the team now openly communicates to its vendors that they don't accept anything else except electronic invoices - no matter the particular file format.

Partnering up with Rossum on a new

The solution was a UiPath robot built by RPA consultancy InnovationPath.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

In its quest to enhance efficiency and streamline operations, multinational utility leader Veolia has redefined its invoice processing practices. By integrating cutting-edge AI and robotic process automation (RPA) tools, the company has modernized its Shared Service Center (SSC) while fostering inclusivity and sustainability. Veolia's partnership with Rossum exemplifies how digital transformation can deliver remarkable efficiency gains and unlock new potential for employees.

Leveraging AI and RPA to Revolutionize Processes
Veolia's SSC, which previously relied on fragmented and manual invoice processing methods, collaborated with Rossum to centralize and digitize operations. Using AI-driven tools like Rossum's "Artificial Accountant" and RPA workflows designed by InnovationPath, the team automated tasks such as extracting invoice data and routing EDI messages to downstream ERP systems. These solutions reduced the need for paper invoices from over 80% to less than 6%, while enabling faster, error-free processing across 30 entities.

Change Management: The Heart of Digital Transformation
The transformation process required a cultural shift within the SSC, where many accountants were initially skeptical about adopting AI. Through proof of concept demonstrations and hands-on training, employees came to embrace the new system's benefits. Veolia also empowered its team by creating the role of AI Associates, which allowed former data entry clerks to oversee AI validation and handle exceptions, further solidifying the solution's effectiveness.

Inclusive Growth and Long-Term Benefits
Veolia's efforts extended beyond technology. By partnering with a Czech foundation, the SSC welcomed employees from disadvantaged backgrounds, offering remote work opportunities and specialized support. This inclusive approach contributed to the SSC's remarkable achievements, including an 87.5% increase in time efficiency and an eightfold boost in invoice processing speed. The new system also enabled accountants to focus on high-impact tasks, enhancing their roles while ensuring seamless onboarding for new hires. Veolia's experience underscores that digital transformation is as much about people as it is about technology. By investing in change management, inclusivity, and innovative tools, the company has set a benchmark for modernizing shared services while fostering a more adaptive and equitable workforce.

unified invoice navigation process, the chosen solution involved invoices arriving in a centralized entity-specific email inbox managed by a UiPath robot and built by the robotic process automation (RPA) consultancy InnovationPath.

The company started using RPA to extract information from invoices such as due dates, as well as an AI tool they call 'Artificial Accountant', with Rossum helping train other AI additions to facilitate auto accounting.

"As a result, we cut the necessity to print," Beranek says. "Previously the rate was above 80 percent; we are now oscillating between 4 and 6 percent of paper invoices that we still accept from new vendors. But we are pushing them hard to send them via email. It's getting better and better, but it is most difficult when it comes to invoices from manual labor".

Although not initially sold on the idea of AI as part of their daily work, when the senior accountants got familiar with the new approach and realized its benefits, they openly embraced the changes. At the same time, Veolia's AI Associates (the most technically savvy group of former data entry clerks) started operating mainly in Rossum's validation interface to quickly review documents and handle any exceptions from the norm.

Rossum's final output is a standardized EDI message which is paired with the other email attachments and sent to each entity's downstream ERP.

The numbers don't tell the full story
While continuing to enable Veolia's work with an overwhelming number of vendors - 60,000 in the Czech Republic alone - the new system has also decreased the need for further clarifications and one-to-one phone calls with vendors, further streamlining the process.

As time went by and some of the accountants reached their pension age and retired, the newcomers were also taught the same process with no impediments, continuing on the same strategy.

In another crucial step for the team, Veolia was able to rework its structure and continue to change the way it treats invoices, with the accountants having time to specialize in high-impact ac-

Ondrej Beranek

Veolia was able to rework its structure and continue to change the way it treats invoices

counting tasks. At the same time, partnering with a foundation in the Czech Republic, the team welcomed new employees from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as people with disabilities that impacted their ability to perform traditional labor and therefore empowered to make a stable living.

This new cohort of mostly remote workers was equipped with laptops and specialized desk equipment as needed to became a valuable part of Veolia's work. At the same time, the group ef-

fort and the work of the AI Associates in the Shared Service Center allowed it to speed up invoice processing by eight times, with time-saving efficiency reaching up to 87.5 percent.

Beranek says that the strategy followed goes to show that when implementing a solution, it's not just the technology and the numbers that make a difference, "It's actually change management and convincing people to change their ways" to achieve extraordinary results. ∎

University of Greenwich
Goes Green

This case study from IBM won ESG Excellence of the Year at The ERP Today Awards 2024

BY GIACOMO LEE & MELISSA EVATT

The climate clock is ticking and businesses around the globe are aiming to meet their sustainability goals, in the hopes of reversing the clock and paving the way for a more sustainable future.

For organizations that need help in taking those steps, companies such as IBM offer tailored ESG solutions to promote awareness and action, and empower organizations to meet their sustainability goals. One example is GreenHR, a tool developed in partnership with the University of Greenwich in London, UK that helps employees understand sustainability and how they can make a positive impact.

GreenHR – which won ESG Excellence of the Year at The ERP Today Awards 2024 - provides employees with a place to learn about the university's sustainability efforts, including events, networking opportunities, schemes and goals. The solution features Oracle Cloud HCM functionality with the aim of educating staff, promoting ESG initiatives and aligning employee behaviors with organizational sustainability goals.

Speaking of the award-winning initiative, Mickey Sidhu, Oracle HCM Leader at IBM said: "Our task was to see if we could use Oracle software for sustainability – what can we do to use our tool to help people and institutions to change mindsets; and education is a great place to do that. "The University of Greenwich are 'green' role models, and they are doing so much. With this tool, staff can log in and see all of these things the university is doing in one place – events, networks schemes and goals. It will enable

staff to see the positive impact they can have."

Working in collaboration with the technology and sustainability teams at the University of Greenwich, IBM conducted a series of workshops and regular sessions to define and build the GreenHR journey.

By demoing the standard GreenHR journey template, IBM used regular working forums to re-brand and tailor the solution specifically for the University. With GreenHR being rolled out to all employees, the University has made this initiative a mandatory requirement for all staff.

Looking to the future, GreenHR has the potential for tracking sustainability goals and KPIs through Oracle Analytics. IBM has worked closely with the University to both enhance its internal Oracle capabilities, ensure the solution is sustainable and that it can be driven by an internal team.

Universities are going green

The University of Greenwich is committed to its net zero 2030 goal, and wherever possible, the institution is aiming to reduce its environmental footprint. As well as GreenHR, the university has introduced its Greenwich Foundation Course as part of its 12-month campaign, Green Greenwich, which also comes with Big Blue support.

The course, which takes an hour for users to complete, will provide staff with a clear path to build green knowledge such as carbon reduction, protecting nature and valuing resources. The course also enables staff to understand sustainability and why it is important, as well as providing guidance for staff with decision-making and which actions to take in order to make an impact.

> ## GreenHR provides a place to learn about sustainability efforts

IBM

Simon Goldsmith, head of sustainability at the University of Greenwich, said, "The university is proud of its contributions in delivering sustainability. We know to make the transformation required all staff will need to be engaged, on board and acting to help us on our journey."

"Our Green Greenwich Foundation course does this and is a project developed through brilliant collaboration not only within the university but also with IBM and Oracle. We're looking forward to our staff helping us protect our planet."

Laleh Williams, organization development and employee engagement manager at University of Greenwich, spoke of the feedback from users who have leveraged the sustainability course, highlighting: "We wanted it all in one place and that was really important because our sign posting can be in lots of places and I think it was very useful to just have [an] area where everything links seamlessly."

IBM has worked closely with the University to enhance its internal Oracle capabilities

Driving sustainability through collaboration

The University of Greenwich's collaboration with IBM displays the company's commitment to sustainability and innovative ways of reducing carbon emissions. With the combination of IBM's ESG expertise and Oracle's HCM capabilities, GreenHR represents a tangible step towards fostering sustainability initiatives and empowering businesses to take impactful steps towards net zero.

Through tailored solutions such as GreenHR, the University of Greenwich demonstrates forward-thinking in embedding sustainability into the organizational culture and also serves as a model for how technology can drive change. This collaboration emphasizes the potential for organizations around the globe to integrate green initiatives into their business operations, paving the way for a more sustainable future. ■

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

As the race to address climate change accelerates, organizations are embracing innovative solutions to meet their sustainability goals. IBM's collaboration with the University of Greenwich exemplifies how technology can empower businesses to foster sustainability and engage employees in meaningful change. Their GreenHR initiative highlights the power of combining ESG goals with enterprise technology to create a greener future.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
1. GreenHR: A Technology-Driven Approach to Sustainability
 Developed by IBM in partnership with Oracle Cloud HCM, GreenHR provides employees with an integrated platform to learn about sustainability initiatives and track organizational goals. At the University of Greenwich, this award-winning tool consolidates information on events, networks, and schemes, enabling employees to align their actions with the university's sustainability objectives. By fostering awareness and engagement, GreenHR serves as a model for leveraging enterprise technology to drive impactful change.

2. Collaboration Fuels Innovation and Behavioral Change
 The development of GreenHR involved workshops and regular sessions between IBM, Oracle, and the University of Greenwich. Tailored to the university's unique needs, the solution emphasizes the importance of collaboration in achieving sustainability outcomes. The mandatory rollout of GreenHR ensures all staff are engaged and equipped to contribute to the university's net-zero 2030 goal. Initiatives like the Greenwich Foundation Course further empower employees with actionable knowledge on reducing carbon footprints and valuing natural resources.

3. A Blueprint for Organizations Worldwide
GreenHR demonstrates how ESG-focused solutions can integrate seamlessly into organizational culture. With the potential for tracking sustainability KPIs using Oracle Analytics, the platform sets the stage for broader adoption in businesses and institutions globally. As IBM continues to support innovative tools like GreenHR, it paves the way for other organizations to implement technology that aligns with their environmental commitments.

The University of Greenwich's partnership with IBM is a testament to how collaboration and technology can inspire sustainable action. ERP professionals can look to this example as a blueprint for integrating ESG initiatives into their systems, fostering environmental stewardship while achieving organizational goals.

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THE 2025 TECH TRANSFORMATION PLAYBOOK: LESSONS FROM LEADING CIOS

BY RIZAL AHMED

2024 MARKED A PERIOD OF REMARKABLE TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION, SETTING THE STAGE FOR AN EVEN MORE DYNAMIC 2025. SAPINSIDER RECENTLY HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF ENGAGING WITH THREE PROMINENT TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSFORMATION EXECUTIVES TO REFLECT ON LESSONS LEARNED AND EXPLORE FUTURE TRENDS.

n a panel discussion, Steve Birgfeld, VP of IT at Blue Diamond Growers; Nuno Miller, Digital COO of N Brown Group; and Stijn Stabel, VP of Data at TVH (and former CTO of Carrefour), shared insights on key challenges, priorities, and innovations shaping their organizations.

As a backdrop for the discussion, we examined SAPinsider's latest executive research from the "CIO's 2024 Transformation Report Card." Key highlights include:

• **Business process automation, standardization, and redesign** remained the leading transformation project in 2024 for the second consecutive year.

• **More than half of the leaders in our survey** have implemented or are in the process of implementing SAP S/4HANA. 30% remain in the evaluation and pilot phase as the 2027 deadline fast approaches.

• **AI adoption is still nascent.** Nearly half (46%) of survey respondents in our study say that they are slightly or significantly behind the competition when it comes to AI experience. Only 6% of leaders asserted that they were significantly ahead of their peers.

• **Resistance to change remained the top challenge to transformation success.** For the second year in a row this response garnered the most attention, and even rose eight percentage points year-over-year. The disconnect between IT came in second while lack of budget and resources rounded out the top three challenges.

Our executive panelists concurred

"WE HAVE BUILT A GREAT FOUNDATION OF ERP WITH SAP S/4HANA. NOW IT'S A MATTER OF HOW TO BEST OPTIMIZE WHAT WE HAVE"

STEVE BIRGFELD
VP OF IT, BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS

with the survey results and brought their own stories and opinions on what's behind some of these trends and other challenges and priorities that are consuming both time and focus for them.

I'm on SAP S/4HANA. Now What?

According to Birgfeld, Blue Diamond Growers has been on SAP S/4HANA since 2021 and they are planning to go live on RISE with SAP this January. The reason for adding RISE is that Blue Diamond wants to position itself to take advantage of the AI and automation capabilities that are only available to RISE with SAP and Cloud customers.

"We have built a great foundation of ERP with SAP S/4HANA. Now it's a matter of how to best optimize what we have. There's a lot of data we now have access to, so we are looking to improve business decision making and give stakeholders better dashboards and analytics," comments Birgfeld.

Blue Diamond is piloting some AI use cases and has created some basic automation that is already having a significant impact. "We created a fairly simple Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to help our logistic team, and it has already reduced a process workload by 2,000 hours for the year. We'll continue to explore and replicate options like this and incorporate AI," reports Birgfeld.

Massive Change Requires Massive Cultural and Organizational Shift

Miller has had the opportunity to lead N Brown Group's massive digital transformation from a catalog company to an organization that relies more on e-commerce and digital experiences. This has required a wholesale shift in both internal and external processes, workflows, and reporting.

A basic change management program with meetings and regular communication would not suffice for this type of organizational transformation. According to Miller he needed to impose a completely different organization that broke down traditional silos and to create a new digital culture. He boldly scrapped the current organization and installed cross functional groups he labeled as "tribes."

"WE ORGANIZED OUR TRIBES BASED ON EXPERIENCES WE WANTED TO CREATE."

NUNO MILLER
DIGITAL COO OF N BROWN GROUP

"We organized our tribes based on experiences we wanted to create, and we have three different tribes. One for brand and our different businesses, one is for actual journeys. Examples of journeys might be customer journeys, employee journeys, or supplier journeys. The third are mission tribes focused on specific projects that have a beginning and end," describes Miller.

Every Company Needs to Be a Data Driven Organization

All leaders mentioned data at some point in the conversation and commented on how strong data management is the foundation for any transformation project. TVH's Stabel personifies this focus and emphasis moving from a CTO role to more of a Chief Data Officer role. Companies like TVH are seeing the importance of having dedicated leadership of data across the company.

"Many organizations want to go fast and they want to generate results, but they are hindered by a lack of data quality, and they have poor data governance processes in place. And as long as your data is crap your outcome is not going to be much better, and there are many prominent examples of that," comments Stabel.

Putting a data leader in place is only the first step. That leader needs to be empowered with processes, supporting technology, and the right skillsets. And that includes people that know the applications, the business. and how this data is and can be used by various stakeholders, process owners, employees, customers, and partners.

"I can find a gazillion data engineers to come work on my team, but if I don't have the governance right and have people that know where the data is coming from and how it needs to be interpreted, then my project will fail," asserts Stable. ∎

"MANY ORGANIZATIONS WANT TO GO FAST AND THEY WANT TO GENERATE RESULT, BUT THEY ARE HINDERED BY A LACK OF DATA QUALITY, AND THEY HAVE POOR DATA GOVERNANCE PROCESSES IN PLACE."

STIJN STABEL,
VP OF DATA AT TVH

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• **Investigate RISE with SAP but proceed with caution.** SAP is making RISE with SAP and Cloud a mandatory prerequisite for unlocking new innovations and features particularly focused on AI, automation, and analytics. RISE with SAP contracts also provide significant discounting on various SAP cloud solutions that will be hard to pass up for many. Our leaders advise that you investigate RISE with SAP but also realize that this may lock you into SAP as a cloud and innovation provider. Prepare for the ramp up of AI. All our leaders are exploring AI in one facet or another. Focus on taking AI from theory to practical application. Work with ERP vendors and partners to determine use cases that can impact business processes. Pilot test cases and prepare your organization to learn and scale quickly.

• **Embrace bold organizational change.** To derive the optimal business return on technological innovation and tackle the change management challenge, you may need to make drastic changes to your organization as Miller did. There are different ways to bring IT and business together whether you align around projects, objectives, or the customers you serve. Our leaders concur that technology skills are far easier to acquire than practical business knowledge. Look both within and outside your organization for tech-savvy professionals who deeply understand business processes, data flows, reporting, and analytics.

Become an ERP Today Pro Member for FREE

INFOR TARGETS BUSINESS VELOCITY WITH ESG & AI CAPABILITIES

BY MARK VIGOROSO

INSIDE INFOR'S MAJOR UPDATES TO ITS CLOUDSUITE PORTFOLIO.

Infor recently announced significant platform technology updates to its industry-specific CloudSuite portfolio. Each new innovation, including a GenAI Assistant, process mining capabilities, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Strategy Management, enhances Infor's suite of industry-specific products. Infor developed its multi-tenant CloudSuite tech stacks with out-of-the-box hyper-specific capabilities, redesigning the way organizations work and helping to reduce risk. Infor offers industry specific automations, leveraging AI and machine learning, which are pre-configured solutions that customers can easily deploy without disruption to core systems.

"I am excited about the immense value these solutions will drive for our customers," says Soma Somasundaram, President and CTO of Infor. "Infor's deep industry expertise is showcased through thousands of best-practice, micro-vertical processes built into the product. With each release, we increase the volume of pre-built experiences that harness the power of transformative technologies. For example, with embedded process mining capabilities, customers can

quickly examine process efficiencies, optimize, and automate with minimal disruption to business operations."

Aiming to help customers unleash hyper-productivity in their flow of work, Infor released its GenAI Assistant, which enhances the user experience of Infor CloudSuites. This conversational assistance offers a more dynamic, intuitive, and actionable approach to interacting with industry-centric data, addressing time-consuming tasks such as managing manufacturing projects, analyzing requisitions, and tracking products.

Infor GenAI Assistant is part of Infor's Industry AI portfolio, that also includes Infor GenAI. GenAI continues to be embedded deeply in the flow of industry-specific processes, enriching applications one experience at a time.

"With the assistance of Infor GenAI, we have significantly accelerated our project with greater accuracy and con-

GEN AI AND ENHANCED PROCESS MINING TOOLS ALLOW CUSTOMERS TO STREAMLINE WORKFLOWS

sistency. The initial plan to cleanse our item master data would have taken several years with a two-person team manually grouping and updating over 800,000 items," said Elisabetta Venezia, Group Director, ERP System & Data Management, GMM Pfaulder. "We now expect to complete the project within the next six months. By eliminating duplicates with a cleaner database, we anticipate at least a 5% reduction in inventory costs, which translates to €1-2M in savings."

Infor is also offering enhanced, accelerated visibility into business processes with Infor Process Mining. Users quickly

gain streamlined data definition, simplified export-import capabilities, efficient data loading, accelerated insights retrieval, and comprehensive insights analysis—all within a simple, easy-to-use, unified platform that enhances operational agility and decision-making effectiveness.

"This transformative tool [process mining] provides visibility into business process events within our daily order-to-cash operations, highlighting areas for improvement and actionable opportunities," says Steve Turner, Director of Information Systems for Oberg Industries. "We anticipate by addressing these process inefficiencies and bottlenecks we will be able to increase our business throughput with existing resources over time."

ESG ENHANCEMENTS UNDERSCORE INFOR'S COMMITMENT TO CLOUD-EMBEDDED CRITICAL BUSINESS GOALS AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES

Infor also announced new capabilities that allow organizations to develop a systematic approach to set, meet, and report on their organizational ESG goals. With this release, Infor is embedding ESG data and process improvements into day-to-day workflows for continuous improvement.

Finally, Infor introduced new Industry-specific supply chain management enhancements that aim to help improve supply chain accuracy, reduce manual intervention, and speed time to value. Using AI and embedding purpose-built capabilities within Infor CloudSuites, data can be unlocked and unified, which can reduce manual intervention, and accelerate time to value. For example, Infor has embedded procedure supply planning and distribution management capabilities targeting the healthcare industry. Other industry-specific supply chain enhancements include supply planning, warehouse management and demand forecasting. ∎

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

**Know the reasons and circumstances that make a vertical-specific ERP a good choice.** Certain industries benefit more from industry-specific ERP providers like Infor compared to horizontal ERP providers due to the tailored features and deep vertical expertise offered. The choice to go vertical can impact factors including customization and cost required, deployment time, scalability, and native embedded industry knowledge. A few of the industries that should consider vertical specialists include discrete and process manufacturing; healthcare; retail and fashion; hospitality; food and beverage; aerospace and defense; and energy and utilities. Manufacturing companies have complex supply chains and unique industry compliance obligations that vertical ERP providers can address head on. Retail and fashion companies have seasonal demand planning and inventory optimization across multiple locations, while food and beverage companies require lot traceability, shelf-life management and regulatory compliance. ERP providers that have chosen to specialize in these verticals have tailored features and pre-configurations that can meet more requirements out of the box and ultimately save time and expense during deployment and maintenance phases.

Do your due diligence if you're not already an Infor customer. The most helpful perspectives you're likely to hear when evaluating ERP providers will come from those providers' existing customers. In the case of Infor's GenAI Assistant, Elisabetta at GMM Pfaulder, a global provider of corrosion-resistant technologies, is the logical place to start. But companies would also be well-served to talk to other CloudSuite customers

in the same industry to get a sense for Infor's strong track record. For instance, Medallion Midstream in the oil and gas industry worked with Infor to streamline complex operations, reducing process complexity by up to 80%. Or Vallen in the distribution industry used CloudSuite Distribution Enterprise to increase customer satisfaction and reduce total cost of ownership by 30%. Or Miller Industries in the automotive manufacturing industry reduced reliance on multiple point solutions, achieving a unified system that improved data visibility and operational efficiency.

Explore every layer of potential value in Infor Process Mining. Companies should utilize Infor Process Mining's capability to load and extend ERP data with minimal effort and ensure that data is readily available for in-depth analysis and process optimization. Also, they should access the Industry Process Catalog within Infor CloudSuite, which includes detailed descriptions, best practices, and preconfigured processes for various business functions. This will reduce the need for custom development and manual setup, leading to cost savings and faster deployment times. And companies should look at integrating Infor Process Mining with Infor Value+ solutions to conduct thorough root cause analyses and uncover inefficiencies. This will likely enable proactive changes and drive continuous improvement and operational excellence. Finally, companies should utilize Infor Process Mining's capabilities tailored to specific industries, such as distribution, discrete manufacturing, and healthcare. This will provide detailed visibility into industry-specific processes, ensuring timely customer deliveries and optimized operations.
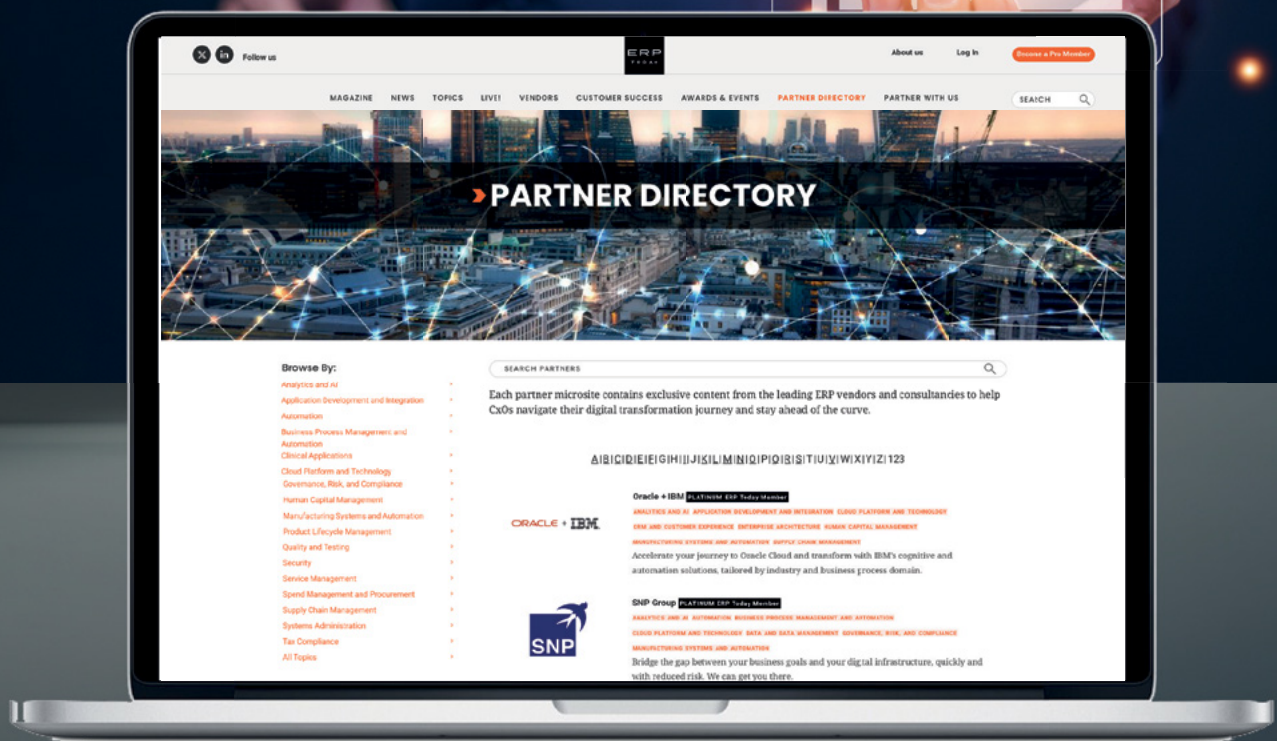
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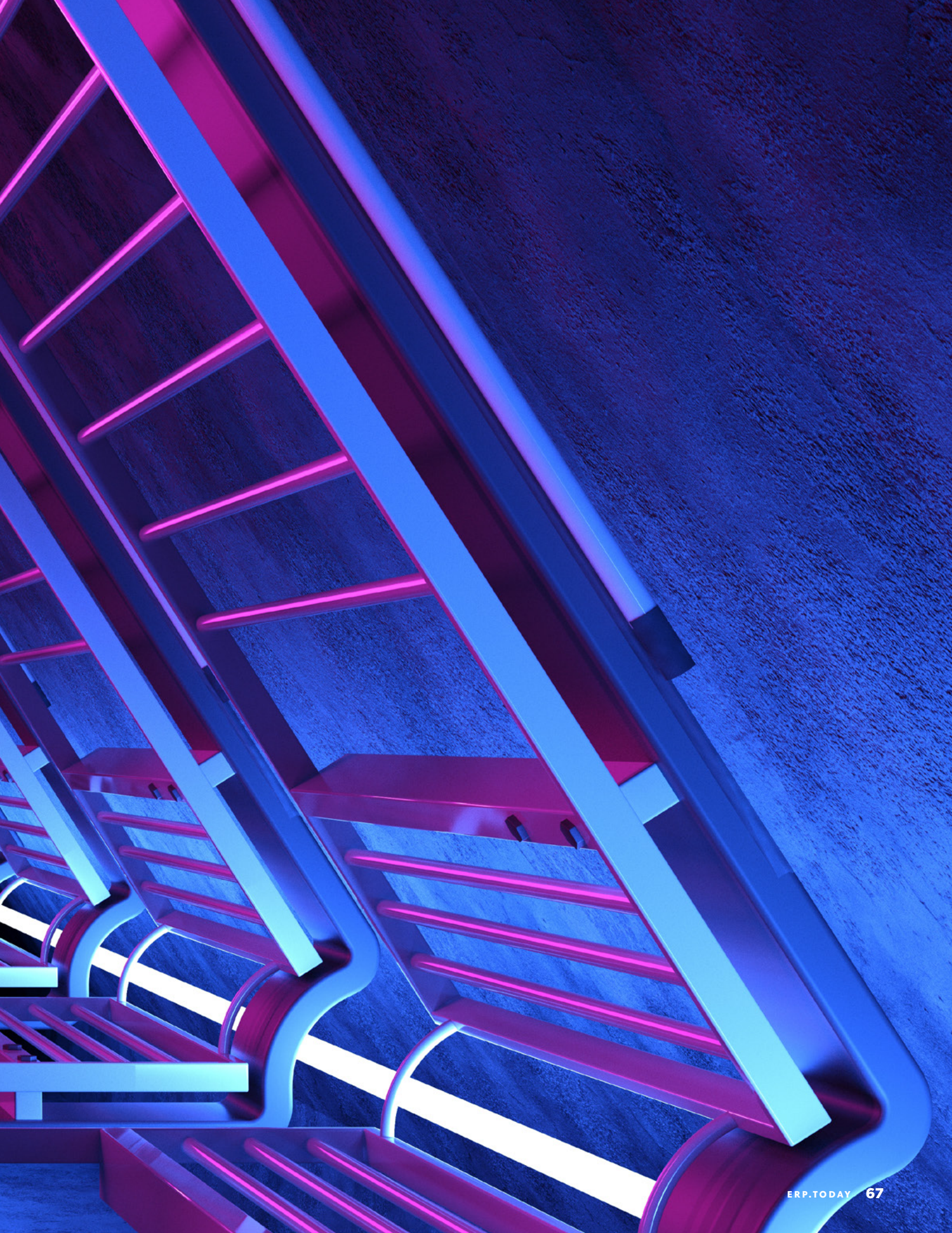
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INSIDE THE BIG 5?

INSIDE BOLD MOVES FROM ACCENTURE ACROSS SUPPLY CHAIN AND CRM

BY GIACOMO LEE

ACCENTURE

Accenture recently completed the acquisition of SAP-centric consultancy Camelot Management Consultants, seeing out a year of supply chain-centered deals that may see the services giant gain an edge against the so-called Big Four.

Announced in July and completed by November, Accenture's buyout of Camelot saw it absorb a leading SAP partner in supply chain, data and analytics. Last year saw Camelot once again being named a SAP Digital Supply Chain Focus Partner within the diamond initiative.

Established in 1996, the Mannheim-headquartered firm is focused on large and midsize companies in the chemicals, life sciences, consumer goods and industrial manufacturing industries in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. But while Camelot has offices in the United States, UAE, Poland and Spain, it's clear Accenture is bolstering its SAP supply chain credentials in the DACH region. This nicely complements its 2023 acquisition of Einr AS, a business consulting company headquartered in Oslo, Norway. Specialized in high volume logistics solutions using SAP to optimize the flow of products from manufacturers to consumers, Einr represents the Nordic footprint for Accenture, especially for Scandinavian retail and consumer electronics industries.

Not that Accenture is solely focusing on SAP for supply chain service dominion - March saw it acquire Flo Group, a leading European consultancy and Oracle business partner specializing in global supply chain logistics. The deal saw 280 people join the Accenture Oracle Business Group from the Dutch firm - although it should be noted the Camelot and Einr deals saw Accenture increase its headcount by almost 800, with 40 from Einr AS specifically joining the Accenture SAP Business Group in the Nordics.

2024 also saw Accenture snap up Boston, USA's OnProcess Technology, which boasts its own supply chain services platform, alongside Insight Sourcing, an Atlanta, US provider of strategic sourcing and procurement services. The latter, it's worth noting, provides IT renewals management for vendors including Microsoft, Oracle, Workday, SAP, Salesforce, VMWare, IBM, ServiceNow and Cisco.

Accenture Song: Singing A Different Tune?

When it comes to its marketing services, Accenture is singing a different tune these days. After all, it wasn't so long ago that one *ERP Today* staffer was talking to Accenture Interactive leadership about marketing campaigns, as encompassing the very visual and creative fields of advertising, websites and billboards. But Accenture Interactive's rebranding to Accenture Song in 2022 is more than just a rebrand job, and a clear pointer to Accenture's ambitions in CRM and customer data.

One only needs to take look at Accenture's acquisitions in the last few years as undertaken to complement the Song subsidiary. 2024 saw Accenture acquire Unlimited, a London integrated customer engagement agency which provides deep expertise in behavioral science, customer strategy and CRM activation. According to Accenture Song, the deal further bolsters its capabilities to drive marketing transformation, relevance, and growth for its clients as it continues to position itself as "the world's largest tech-powered creative group."

In February, Accenture assimilated into Song the German company Mind-curv, a cloud-native digital experience and data analytics company specializing in composable software, digital engineering and commerce services. Its clients span across several industries, including manufacturing, retail, consumer good, life sciences and chemicals. It is also a certified member of the MACH Alliance, meaning it adheres to set standards on delivering open and transformative technologies and solutions at scale.

The same month saw the acquisition of GemSeek, a leading customer experience analytics provider based in Bulgaria which helps global businesses understand customers through insights, analytics and AI-powered predictive models.

A month later Accenture bought The Lumery, a Melbourne-based marketing technology (martech) consultancy that helps leading organizations deliver seamless customer experiences and transform their marketing services.

Heading to Asia, and we find media and marketing technology company Jixie now part of Accenture Song. Jixie's intelligent digital marketing platform and team has been integrated into Accenture to strengthen its marketing transformation capabilities for APAC. Headquartered in Singapore, Jixie focuses on servicing clients in Indonesia with a comprehensive suite of monetization and marketing growth tools. Its platform, Accenture reports, is a robust advertising ecosystem that connects publishers and brand owners with the ability to co-create solutions through reliable customer insights. This transforms marketing from a fragmented process with limited control into a strategic priority, amplifying simplicity while safeguarding brand safety, consumer data and privacy for clients.

And finally, back over in ANZ, the end of 2022 saw Fiftyfive5 don an "Accent on

ACCENTURE IS POISED TO BE A MAJOR FORCE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SUPPLY CHAIN OPTIMIZATION

For ERP and supply chain management professionals, Accenture's supply chain adventures signal the consultancy's growing dominance in integrating supply chain management with advanced ERP systems, offering comprehensive solutions that span across both SAP and Oracle ecosystems. With a strengthened presence in key regions and a robust service portfolio, Accenture is poised to be a major force in shaping the future of supply chain optimization globally.

With its supply acquisitions, Accenture is becoming more of a key player in the competitive supply chain consulting space, as it gains an edge against the traditional Big Four consultancies in this crucial area of business transformation.

It may soon be time for the Big Four to become the Big Five as technology services match - or even supersede - the accounting foundations upon which EY, PwC, KPMG and Deloitte made their names. If it hasn't done so already, that is - and five can always remain four is one of those names doesn't respond appropriately enough to this decade's dominant business themes of AI, supply chain and ESG.

Through Accenture Song, meanwhile, Accenture is significantly enhancing its capabilities in customer data to better serve clients in an increasingly data-driven marketing landscape. By focusing on advanced technologies and integrated solutions, the company is positioning itself as a leader in customer relationship management (CRM) and marketing transformation. Here's how Accenture Song is building out its customer data capabilities on a global scale:

Data-Driven Customer Insights: Accenture Song is leveraging advanced analytics and AI to deliver deeper customer insights. By analyzing vast amounts of customer data, the company aims to better help clients understand behavior patterns, preferences, and trends, enabling more personalized and effective marketing strategies.

CRM and Data Activation: With a strong emphasis on CRM, Accenture Song is integrating data across multiple touchpoints to create a 360-degree view of the customer. This integration allows businesses to optimize customer engagement, drive loyalty, and improve retention through targeted, data-backed interactions.

Behavioral Science Integration: By combining data with behavioral science, Accenture Song is helping clients optimize their marketing strategies to align with how customers actually think, feel, and act. This approach allows for more meaningful and relevant customer experiences.

Advanced AI and Predictive Analytics: Accenture Song is incorporating AI-driven tools to predict customer needs and behaviors, allowing businesses to stay ahead of market trends. Predictive models help clients anticipate customer actions and deliver proactive, personalized marketing efforts.

Composability and Flexibility: The company is focusing on composable architecture that enables businesses to quickly adapt and scale their marketing and data solutions. This flexibility allows organizations to respond to changing market dynamics while maintaining control over their customer data strategies.

Cross-Channel Data Integration: Accenture Song is enhancing its ability to integrate customer data across various channels—online, offline, and in-store—creating a unified and seamless customer experience. This holistic view of the customer enables brands to tailor their marketing efforts more precisely and efficiently.

Privacy and Data Security: As data privacy regulations become more stringent, Accenture Song is prioritizing the secure handling of customer data. The company is committed to maintaining the highest standards of privacy and security to ensure compliance and build customer trust.

Through these initiatives, Accenture Song is not only transforming the way businesses approach marketing but also helping them leverage customer data as a strategic asset to drive growth and innovation.

In other words, Accenture's marketing services are moving more and more away from ads and branding. As is stands now, Accenture Song is a technology company, actually.

the Future" and join the purple services giant. The customer insights and advisory business was acquired to strengthen Accenture Song's ability to help clients tap data insights and performance marketing to accelerate growth and innovation across Australia and New Zealand. ∎

IT MAY SOON BE TIME FOR THE BIG FOUR TO BECOME THE BIG FIVE

ORACLE & IBM

IBM MAXIMO
AI MEETS ESG

The latest buzz around Enterprise Asset Management leader, IBM Maximo.

GIACOMO LEE

While IFS may have snagged a lot of headlines last quarter off the back of its Unleashed conference, it's worth exploring the latest buzz around its rival in the Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) space, IBM Maximo - as informed by the hard-to-miss business themes of AI and ESG.

The end of last year saw IBM acquire Prescinto, a leading software-as-a-service provider of asset performance management (APM) for renewables. Headquartered in Bengaluru, India, the company leverages AI to enable advanced monitoring, analytics, and automation, helping to streamline renewable energy operations and manage clean energy and storage assets.

These capabilities will enhance IBM Maximo Application Suite (MAS), Big Blue's solution for asset lifecycle management that uses AI, IoT, and analytics to optimize performance, extend the life of assets, and reduce operational downtime and costs.

The Prescinto deal will likely also further IBM's leadership in the energy and utility space, with water, natural gas, oil, nuclear, and other enterprises in the space utilizing IBM MAS worldwide.

With the news, IBM gave the example of how a solar power plant becomes less efficient over time due to accumulated debris and dirt on its panels. With an en-

hanced IBM MAS using renewable APM software, users can use AI-powered Optical Character Recognition (OCR) capabilities to help monitor these assets, identify root causes for performance issues; and recommend actions to optimize generation. It enables is the power to streamline required cleaning, and respond promptly before energy output decreases.

Maximo x watsonx

Let's delve further into the latest updates for IBM MAS, as powered by generative AI, or GenAI.

Maximo Work Order Intelligence, made available in MAS version 9.0, uses IBM watsonx GenAI capabilities to speed up work order approval, enhance data quality and provide "highly reliable" failure code recommendations.

MAS version 9.0 also saw Maximo Field Service Management, a new solution designed to help clients with their field service management (FSM) experiences. The tech allows maintenance and dispatching teams to access advanced scheduling and intelligent dispatching. Advanced algorithms enable the system to handle 10 times more work orders and improve the number of jobs completed, total re-

> "
>
> **IBM's acquisition of Prescinto enhances its Maximo Application Suite (MAS)**

sources used, and, IBM reports, job completion time by over 10%.

Maximo Reliability Strategies meanwhile provides organizations with the ability to analyze failure modes and access a comprehensive library of asset-specific failure details and mitigation activities. The new solution can make it easier to create and optimize highly customized maintenance reliability strategies, helping companies develop more reliable assets that are less likely to unexpectedly fail. For the new MAS version 9.0, watsonx generative AI was utilized to develop more failure mode and effects analysis (FMEAs) and expand the library.

Integrated IBM MAS tools such as Maximo Emissions Management can help balance operational efficiency with environmental responsibility. The solution allows enterprises to monitor continuous and fugitive emissions in near real time and manage compliance programs. It also supports operational emissions reporting and strengthens corporate sustainability tracking through an integration with the IBM Envizi ESG Suite.

On the ESG front, Big Blue hopes to empower organizations with the cloud-based data platform, Environmental Intelligence, which provides environmental data and insights that can help them mitigate the environmental impact on their assets and build more climate-resilient operations.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

Founded in 2016, Prescinto works with and services customers across 14 countries with 16 GigaWatts under management. Its APM capabilities help organizations simplify operations and maintenance to maximize ROI, including:

• **Data capture** – utilizing open-source protocols and a data governance layer.
• **Monitoring features** – for centralized visualization of assets with real-time monitoring, high-definition maps, and custom alerts.
• **Analysis** – using artificial intelligence to identify losses, visualize data trends, and offer actionable recommendations to stem underperformance.
• **Action prompts** – empowering efficient management and deployment of site teams to repair and maintain assets.

Also of note - the IBM MAS Maximo Application Suite was recognized in Q4 as a market leader in EAM by the independent research and advisory firm Verdantix, receiving top marks in the report "Green Quadrant: Enterprise Asset Management Software 2024." Earlier in 2024, Verdantix also named IBM MAS a leader in APM in the "Green Quadrant: Asset Performance Management Solutions 2024 report." Big Blue proudly reports it's the only vendor to be named a leader in both the APM and EAM reports.

The latest updates to IBM MAS bring significant advancements powered by generative AI, which offer key benefits for EAM leaders with a focus on ESG and AI implementation goals. The new capabilities streamline asset management processes by accelerating work order approvals, improving data quality, and providing highly reliable failure code recommendations.

On the environmental front, IBM has integrated solutions that support monitoring and management of operational emissions, helping companies balance operational efficiency with sustainability. These tools also assist with compliance tracking and bolster corporate sustainability reporting through integration with an ESG platform. They also offer EAM users enhanced tools for improving both asset performance and environmental responsibility.

THE END OF

WITH ORACLE SUNSETTING ITS GRC SOLUTIONS BY MAY 2025, ORGANIZATIONS MUST SWIFTLY TRANSITION.

ORACLE GRC

ARE YOU READY?

BY GIACOMO LEE

ORACLE

For many ERP Insiders, Oracle Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) solutions have been instrumental in helping organizations manage risk, enforce access controls, and maintain regulatory compliance. However, as Big Red officially sunsets its GRC suite by May 2025, businesses relying on these tools face a critical challenge: What comes next?

With Oracle ceasing active development and only offering Sustaining Support, organizations must act now to mitigate compliance risks and transition to alternative solutions. The end of Oracle GRC impacts multiple business functions, from finance and audit to IT security and enterprise risk management. If your company hasn't begun planning for this shift, you may soon find yourself exposed to compliance gaps, operational inefficiencies, and security vulnerabilities.

Who is Affected by the End of Oracle GRC?

The discontinuation of Oracle GRC will have widespread consequences across key business functions, particularly those responsible for governance, risk management, compliance, finance, and IT security. As such, organizations must be prepared for a fundamental shift in how they manage these critical areas.

Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) professionals will be among the most directly affected by Oracle GRC's sunset. These individuals rely heavily on the platform to enforce regulatory policies, automate risk detection, and manage internal controls. GRC managers and analysts will therefore need to evaluate alternative platforms to ensure continuity in risk monitoring and policy enforcement.

Internal auditors, who depend on Oracle GRC's automated tracking and reporting capabilities, will also have to reassess their audit workflows and find new tools that allow them to maintain efficiency and transparency in compliance reporting.

Compliance officers will also be impacted, as they will need to redefine their regulatory frameworks, ensuring that their organizations continue to meet industry and legal standards despite the absence of Oracle GRC's built-in compliance tools.

IT and security teams will face significant challenges as well. Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and security analysts must implement new security frameworks and policies to maintain the same level of access control and governance that Oracle GRC provided. Without a clear transition plan, organizations risk introducing security vulnerabilities and compliance gaps. ERP administrators, who oversee security configurations and user access rules, will play a crucial role in ensuring that alternative solutions are seamlessly integrated into existing enterprise systems. These teams must work swiftly to migrate identity and access management policies to a new platform, ensuring that critical security controls remain intact and business operations are not disrupted.

THE DISCONTINUATION OF ORACLE GRC WILL HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS

Financial and accounting leadership will also experience major disruptions. Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) and financial controllers have depended on Oracle GRC to oversee financial governance, fraud detection, and compliance with ever-evolving financial regulations. Without it, they must identify and implement new solutions that offer similar capabilities to prevent financial misstatements and ensure compliance. Meanwhile, accounts payable and receivable managers will need to integrate new fraud detection and transaction monitoring solutions to maintain visibility and control over financial transactions. Failing to do so could expose organizations to financial fraud risks and regulatory penalties.

Oracle ERP and technology consultants will be instrumental in guiding businesses through this transition. As companies evaluate their next steps, ERP consultants and solution architects will need to identify the best alternatives to Oracle GRC, ensuring that any new solution integrates seamlessly with existing Oracle ERP systems. In particular, technology advisors should be tasked with assessing third-party risk management platforms, determining which options best align with an organization's unique compliance needs, and assisting in the technical implementation of new governance tools.

What Are Your Options?

With Oracle GRC being phased out, businesses must explore alternative solutions. While Oracle recommends transitioning to Oracle Risk Management Cloud, this solution does not fully replicate all functionalities of the legacy GRC suite—particularly Oracle Preventive Controls Governor (PCG). As a result, companies must carefully evaluate their options to maintain strong compliance and security frameworks.

1. Transition to Oracle Risk Management Cloud

Oracle's cloud-based Risk Management Cloud offers some access control and risk monitoring capabilities, particularly in areas such as audit management and transaction monitoring. However, it lacks certain key functionalities that Oracle GRC users may be accustomed to, particularly in preventive control enforcement. Organizations considering this route should conduct a detailed gap analysis to determine whether the Oracle Risk Management Cloud meets all their governance needs or if additional solutions are required.

2. Consider Third-Party GRC Solutions

Many enterprises may find that third-party GRC platforms provide a more comprehensive alternative to Oracle GRC. Several industry-leading solutions offer robust compliance, risk, and security management capabilities, including:

• **SAP GRC solutions** – A strong alternative for organizations that already operate within the SAP ecosystem. With tools such as SAP Risk Management and SAP Business Integrity, the ERP giant provides comprehensive risk, compliance, and audit management functionalities.

• **Microsoft Purview Compliance Manager** – An ideal option for organizations heavily invested in the Microsoft ecosystem, offering compliance tracking, data governance, and risk assessment.

• **IBM OpenPages** – A robust enterprise risk and compliance management platform that integrates AI-driven insights for governance and regulatory reporting.

• **ServiceNow GRC solutions** – ServiceNow's platform includes cloud-based risk and compliance management solutions that offer automation, workflow integration, and real-time monitoring to support enterprise-wide governance frameworks.

Each of these solutions offers different features and capabilities, so organizations should conduct thorough evaluations to determine which best fits their needs.

3. Evaluate Custom & Hybrid Approaches

Some organizations may opt for a custom or hybrid approach to governance and compliance management. This might involve integrating multiple tools to achieve the same functionality that Oracle GRC provided or developing in-house risk management frameworks tailored to specific business needs. While this approach offers greater flexibility, it also requires a strong commitment to ongoing maintenance and development.

Steps to Prepare for the Transition

To ensure a seamless transition away from Oracle GRC, organizations should take a structured approach:

• **Conduct an Impact Assessment** – Identify the specific GRC modules in use and assess the risks associated with their discontinuation.

• **Evaluate Alternative Solutions** – Compare Oracle Risk Management Cloud with third-party platforms and determine the best fit for your business needs.

• **Develop a Transition Roadmap** – Establish clear timelines, allocate resources, and define key milestones for migrating to a new GRC solution.

• **Engage ERP & Compliance Experts** – Work with consultants, compliance specialists, and ERP advisors to facilitate a smooth transition.

• **Communicate with Stakeholders** – Keep all affected teams informed about the changes, and provide training to ensure smooth adoption of new tools and processes.

The Time to Act is Now

The retirement of Oracle GRC is more than just an IT concern — it is a business-critical issue that impacts compliance, security, and financial oversight. Organizations that fail to prepare adequately risk exposing themselves to regulatory violations, fraud, and operational inefficiencies. The window to make a proactive transition is closing quickly, and delaying action could lead to costly disruptions.

A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM ORACLE GRC REQUIRES CAREFUL PLANNING AND EXECUTION

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• **Act Now to Ensure Continuity:** The discontinuation of Oracle GRC will have far-reaching effects across governance, risk management, IT security, and finance functions. Organizations must act quickly to identify alternative solutions that ensure ongoing compliance, security, and efficient operational processes. The risk of falling behind in adapting to new systems could lead to vulnerabilities, regulatory gaps, and inefficiencies, all of which could expose businesses to significant risks. The time to prepare for this transition is now to safeguard critical business functions.

• **Assess and Implement New Solutions:** Organizations must thoroughly evaluate both Oracle Risk Management Cloud and third-party GRC platforms to identify the best alternative that meets their specific needs. It's crucial to conduct a detailed gap analysis to ensure the selected platform covers all necessary functions such as risk monitoring, audit automation, and compliance enforcement. Whether transitioning to an Oracle-based solution or adopting a third-party tool, the chosen platform must integrate seamlessly with existing enterprise systems to prevent disruptions in governance and security practices.

• **Plan and Execute a Transition Strategy:** A successful transition from Oracle GRC requires careful planning and execution. Businesses should develop a comprehensive roadmap that outlines clear timelines, resource allocation, and key milestones. Engaging ERP consultants, compliance experts, and other relevant stakeholders will be crucial in ensuring the transition is executed smoothly. Communication is key throughout this process—teams across the organization must be informed about the changes, receive appropriate training, and be supported in adapting to new tools and processes to maintain business continuity.

Businesses must take immediate steps to assess their options, implement alternative solutions, and ensure they remain compliant in a post-Oracle GRC landscape. Whether adopting Oracle Risk Management Cloud, migrating to third-party platforms, or implementing custom solutions, success will depend on proactive planning and a well-executed transition strategy.

Is your organization ready for the end of Oracle GRC? If not, the time to prepare is now. ∎

THE MELTING POT OF AI & ERP

HOW AFFECTIVE & AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE WILL TRANSFORM THE ENTERPRISE.

VENKAT RAMAMURTHY

For decades, ERP systems have been the workhorses of the enterprise, managing core business functions such as finance, HR, supply chain, and procurement. Yet, ERPs remain transactional, reactive, and often frustrating to use. Employees wrestle with clunky interfaces, decision-makers drown in endless reports, and organizations struggle with outdated, siloed information.

But what if ERP could be more than just a system? What if it could understand human emotion, anticipate business disruptions, and provide intelligent, proactive guidance?

Imagine an ERP that could sense an employee's frustration when navigating a complex approval process and automatically simplify the workflow. Or an AI-powered ERP that could predict supply chain disruptions weeks in advance and provide contingency plans. What if the financial planning systems simulated different economic scenarios and helped CFOs make strategic decisions and not just report numbers?

The next era of ERP goes beyond automation—it is about affective intelligence (emotion-aware AI) and augmented intelligence (AI-powered decision support). These advancements will transform ERPs from rigid, transactional systems into intuitive, strategic allies that will enhance decision-making, and bring human touch to business operations.

Venkat Ramamurthy

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BEYOND AFFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE, ERP'S TRUE POTENTIAL LIES IN AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

From Transactions to Emotional Intelligence: The Rise of Affective ERP

Traditional ERPs are designed for efficiency, not empathy. They rely on fixed workflows, predefined rules, and manual user inputs. The problem? Employees often feel like they are working for ERP systems rather than ERP systems working for them. The user experience is secondary, and frustration is inevitable.

Affective intelligence in ERP introduces context-awareness, adaptability, and responsiveness to how businesses operate. By analyzing behavioral signals, workflow complexity, and business patterns, AI can interpret intent, detect friction, and adjust dynamically.

How Affective Intelligence Strengthens Enterprise Resilience

Affective ERP ensures that businesses are not just process-

ing transactions but making intelligent, adaptive decisions through:

• **Context-Aware Interfaces:** ERP dynamically adjusts dashboards and workflows based on usage patterns—simplifying navigation and decision-making for finance, procurement, and operations teams.

• **Adaptive Business Process Optimization:** AI detects process inefficiencies and proactively suggests adjustments, ensuring that approvals, supply chain routing, and financial forecasting are streamlined without human bottlenecks.

• **Intelligent Guidance for Complex Decision-Making:** When teams face uncertainty—such as an unexpected supply chain disruption or cost overrun—AI can interpret financial, operational, and market conditions to recommend strategic actions.

Example, a procurement manager navigating volatile supplier pricing gets real-time AI insights that suggest optimized bulk purchasing, supplier contract renegotiation strategies, or alternate sourcing options based on historical trends.

What If ERP Could Predict the Future? Augmented Decision-Making for Business Stability

Beyond affective intelligence, ERP's potential lies in augmented intelligence—the ability to enhance human decision-making with AI by filling in analytical gaps, reducing errors, and providing a predictive edge.

The difference between traditional analytics and augmented ERP is profound:

• Traditional ERP tells 'what happened'.

• Augmented ERP tells 'what will happen' and 'what a user should do about it'.

How Augmented Intelligence Helps Businesses Adapt and Scale

• **Multi-Scenario Financial Modeling –** Instead of static financial reporting, AI allows CFOs to run different business scenarios, evaluating risks and returns before committing to a strategy.

• **Supply Chain Risk Forecasting –** ERP integrates real-time geopolitical, economic, and logistics data to predict potential risks in supply chain operations—proactively suggesting alternate suppliers or rerouting strategies.

• Proactive Fraud Detection & Compliance Monitoring – AI continuously analyzes transaction patterns to flag anomalies in procurement, invoicing, or payment processes—reducing financial risk.

Example: A global distributor using AI-powered ERP detects a potential logistics bottleneck in its supply chain three weeks in advance. AI not only provides an alert but also suggests alternate ports and optimized freight routes—ensuring minimal business disruption.

By enhancing business foresight, augmented ERP ensures organizations mitigate risk and maximize operational continuity.

What If ERP Became Invisible? The Future of Embedded and Frictionless Intelligence

ERP systems have traditionally required users to actively interact with complex dashboards, reports, and workflows. The next evolution of AI-driven ERP will be invisible—delivering insights at the right time, in the right context, without users having to search for them.

How AI-Embedded ERP Creates Operational Efficiency

• Conversational ERP – Executives and managers can query business performance data using voice or chat assistants integrated into Microsoft Teams, Slack, or mobile devices.

• Proactive Insights & Alerts – AI pushes relevant financial, procurement, and sales insights directly to decision-makers—before they even ask for them.

• Automated Process Optimization – ERP learns from business activity and automatically refines workflows, approvals, and compliance rules to reduce inefficiencies.

Example: Instead of logging into an ERP to check financial health, a CFO receives an AI-driven alert: "Projected cash reserves will fall below optimal levels in 60 days due to increased supplier costs. Would you like to adjust payment terms or explore financing options?"

The AI-First ERP: A Blueprint for the Future

The next phase of ERP is not an application—it is an intelligent, autonomous ecosystem. The AI-first ERP will:

Be Predictive, Not Reactive – AI will forecast supply chain risks, financial fluctuations, and operational inefficiencies before they impact the business.

Be Adaptive, Not Rigid – AI will tailor ERP workflows, interfaces, and automation dynamically, ensuring businesses operate with maximum efficiency.

Be Invisible, Yet Indispensable – AI-powered ERP will embed itself seamlessly into business workflows, surfacing insights and automating decisions at the moment they are needed.

The convergence of AI and ERP is not just an evolution—it is a reinvention of enterprise intelligence. AI is no longer a peripheral add-on to ERP; it is the new foundation upon which modern enterprises will compete, adapt, and scale.

Venkat Ramamurthy is the Chief AI Officer at SplashBI,

THE POW

HOW BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS SOLVED SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES AND ESG METRICS.

BY RIZAL AHMED AND RADHIKA OJHA

In late 2022, Blue Diamond improved its processes by implementing SAP Transportation Management (TM) systems for global transportation. Although the issue of getting available containers was resolved with SAP TM, the company continued to incur a high cost of transportation as vendors would give their estimated costs and Blue Diamond would accrue them until containers became available, due to a lack of a proper forecasting and accrual system.

But that changed in 2023, when the company upgraded its integrated planning with the SAP Integrated Business Planning (IBP) system.

The four pillars of technology

"Like most companies, our ocean freight supply chain suffered immensely during the pandemic and that was our primary driver to embed SAP TM on our SAP S4 system," says Steven Birgfeld, Vice President, Information Technology and Services at Blue Diamond Growers. "After that it was only a matter of leveraging the Business Network for logistics in this integration."

It helped that around 80% of Blue Diamond's carriers were already in the Business Network making the update to SAP IBP easier for the company. Blue Diamond went live with these integrations for its export market in late 2022 and by July 2023, they went live for their domestic logistics.

These updates helped the company with better visibility planning and making sure they got a carrier on time.

According to Birgfeld, a faster turnaround time for the company's customer service team was also achieved due to the integration, as they now only had to refer to one system to get all the answers instead of different ones, leading to better accruals, flexibility, and supply chain resilience.

"We also have better insights into the information going into the system. If there is a discrepancy we get alerted immediately, so that helps us understand the issue swiftly and work with the carrier accordingly," he explains.

Birgfeld gives an example of a typical order that the integrated system generates today. "Suppose we have a shipment that is ready to be sent out. The system will provide us answers like who will be able to ship overseas or deliver domestically, which carrier has the best rate and best timing so that we can pick that carrier accordingly. The system provides these answers along with an estimated delivery date."

Additionally, there's Project 44, a visibility extension that works with SAP IBP, SAP TM, and SAP Business Logistics Network (BLN).

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ER OF 4

BLUE DIAMOND
EXPERIMENTS WITH
AI TO HELP WITH
CROP FORECASTING
AND TASTE TRENDS.

"Project 44 is an SAP partner that captures data from hundreds of thousands of carriers in almost real time," says Birgfeld, adding that this system also uses a degree of artificial intelligence (AI). "For example, it will let you know that though the carrier might be predicting a Thursday delivery, there's a risk of the delivery being delayed to Saturday," he says.

A lesson in integration

The biggest change from this integration was felt by Blue Diamond's logistics team, though it took some time to adjust from the manual processing they were using. The key was trusting the data. Birgfeld notes, "Change management and data management were a big part of our learning."

"In 2022-2023, when we were implementing these systems, the data being sent back to our team was not complete as carriers were not giving them accurate or timely information. So, we had to work with SAP and Project 44 to let them know we were seeing gaps in their data and checking on what we could do to close that gap," he says.

Understanding the process flow after the integration was also a challenge. "We sometimes sent the wrong code to the system resulting in gaps for data and time accuracy," he says, adding that training, especially for the company's logistics representatives, made a big difference in overcoming these issues.

Additionally, the company ensured that the right elements or data were input into the standard integrations between the four systems to reduce these gaps, by communicating more with the carriers.

It helped that Blue Diamond had strong partners in SAP and Project 44, who helped the team get trained on the integrated system and tweak the process to make it work more accurately for them. It was also about encouraging the team to embrace the system through reports and case studies that showed the system would make their lives easier. The continuous learning process also gave better insights to Blue Diamond's technology partners on what the company needed.

Steven Birgfeld

BLUE DIAMOND IS FOCUSING KEENLY ON ESG METRICS

Next steps

Today, the four systems, which have an on-premises license running in a hyperscale environment and hosted on Google Cloud, are running seamlessly.

The company is now evaluating an upgrade to RISE with SAP. Birgfeld believes that this is a natural progression in his team's quest to ensure they have a seamless logistics and supply chain network.

"The question is not if we upgrade to RISE but when we do it, especially since sustainability and AI are the way forward. Both these features are available on RISE Private Cloud."

With the logistics part of the company's digital transformation sorted, Birgfeld and his team now aim for a digital transformation of the company's production and plant maintenance processes.

"We have a basic third-party maintenance system now, but we want to implement a new system from the SAP ecosystem such as production planning and detailed scheduling (PPDS). "We see it really closing the whole extended planning and analytics capability gap," he says.

He is also planning for some updates on the visibility aspect of shipments. "Project 44 has got some additional capabilities like a world map or dashboard to show exactly where the cargo is and that is an interesting addition to the system," Birgfeld says.

The team is also focusing on continuous optimization to build flexibility and resiliency in their supply chain. Giving the example of the Baltimore Harbor accident in 2024, Birgfeld says, "The incident did not impact us directly, but it was an event that could not be predicted. It led us to look for alternatives like trucking and rail to ensure we did not fall back on our delivery schedules."

Blue Diamond, like many other companies, is also focusing keenly on its environment, sustainability and governance (ESG) metrics and has upgraded to the 2023 version of SAP S4, which has sustainability metrics built into it. "We can now get metrics like carbon footprint from our freight shipments through this upgrade," Birgfeld notes, "We want to leverage that aspect and make sure we are lowering our carbon footprint."

Blue Diamond is a California-based company and the state's recent strict ESG mandates have made the company even more focused on ensuring that they remain a responsible almond grower and supplier. "We want to plan our logistics just-so, to save gasoline, resulting not only in lower costs but reduced environmental impact as well," Birgfeld says.

To ensure these projects meet the company's needs, Blue Diamond is investing in upskilling its SAP talent. "We want to further strengthen our backend, see how we can leverage low code/no code and get away from the standard work," says

ITS SYSTEMS RUN ON A HYPERSCALE ENVIRONMENT HOSTED ON GOOGLE CLOUD

Birgfeld. He adds that to achieve this the company is strengthening its data and analytics team to come up with better ways to model and shape their AI initiatives. "It eliminates the need for heavy-duty data scientists but boosts the need for AI experts," he says.

Betting on AI

Beyond 2025, Birgfeld hopes to have a complete ERP or Analytics suite in place at Blue Diamond. "We are focusing on the data and analytics part and also trying to figure out the true business value of using AI and going beyond using features like Co-pilot or Chat GPT."

He believes that it is only a matter of time before a solid business case can be made for AI. "We are already seeing its impact in areas like marketing, where the team has realized six-figure savings by using AI in their operations," he says, adding that his own team is experimenting with the technology and has developed a chatbot for the IT Helpdesk in the company to reduce the load on the team.

His team has also developed an AI tool for the services unit called Sprinkler, which takes customer calls and helps service agents gauge customer mood during and at the end of the call to help them provide better service and answers.

Blue Diamond is now experimenting with AI to help with crop forecasting and taste trends. For the former, it seeks to layer aspects like weather patterns to predict the crop yield going forward, while for the latter it is working with a vendor to see if AI can predict taste trends and project the next cool flavor for almonds or even new product simulations to see if consumers will like it or not.

Still, Birgfeld believes that they are just getting started on AI. "There are many opportunities, but we need to figure out how best to use those, how we can take advantage of Gen AI. Although it seems like a light lift, we must consider a lot of aspects like data and governance before we build a clear path to using the power of AI," he concludes. ∎

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

In the ever-evolving landscape of supply chain management, Blue Diamond Growers—a leading almond producer and exporter—has emerged as a shining example of how modern ERP systems can transform logistics and operations. Between 2022 and 2023, the company embarked on a digital transformation journey, tackling challenges ranging from container shortages to sustainability metrics.

For ERP professionals, their story offers valuable insights into leveraging technology for resilience, efficiency, and innovation.

1. Strategic Integration of ERP Systems Enhances Supply Chain Efficiency

Blue Diamond integrated SAP Transportation Management (TM) with SAP Integrated Business Planning (IBP) to streamline its global logistics. These systems, coupled with tools like SAP Business Logistics Network and Project 44, allowed the company to automate carrier selection, improve visibility, and forecast transportation costs. The result was a unified platform that reduced manual errors, accelerated service timelines, and enhanced accrual accuracy.

2. Data Management and Change Adoption are Crucial for Success

Implementing new systems revealed challenges in data accuracy and team adaptation. Blue Diamond tackled these issues by collaborating with partners like SAP and Project 44, improving data flow, and upskilling its logistics team. Comprehensive training and a focus on change management were pivotal in building trust in the system and ensuring seamless operations.
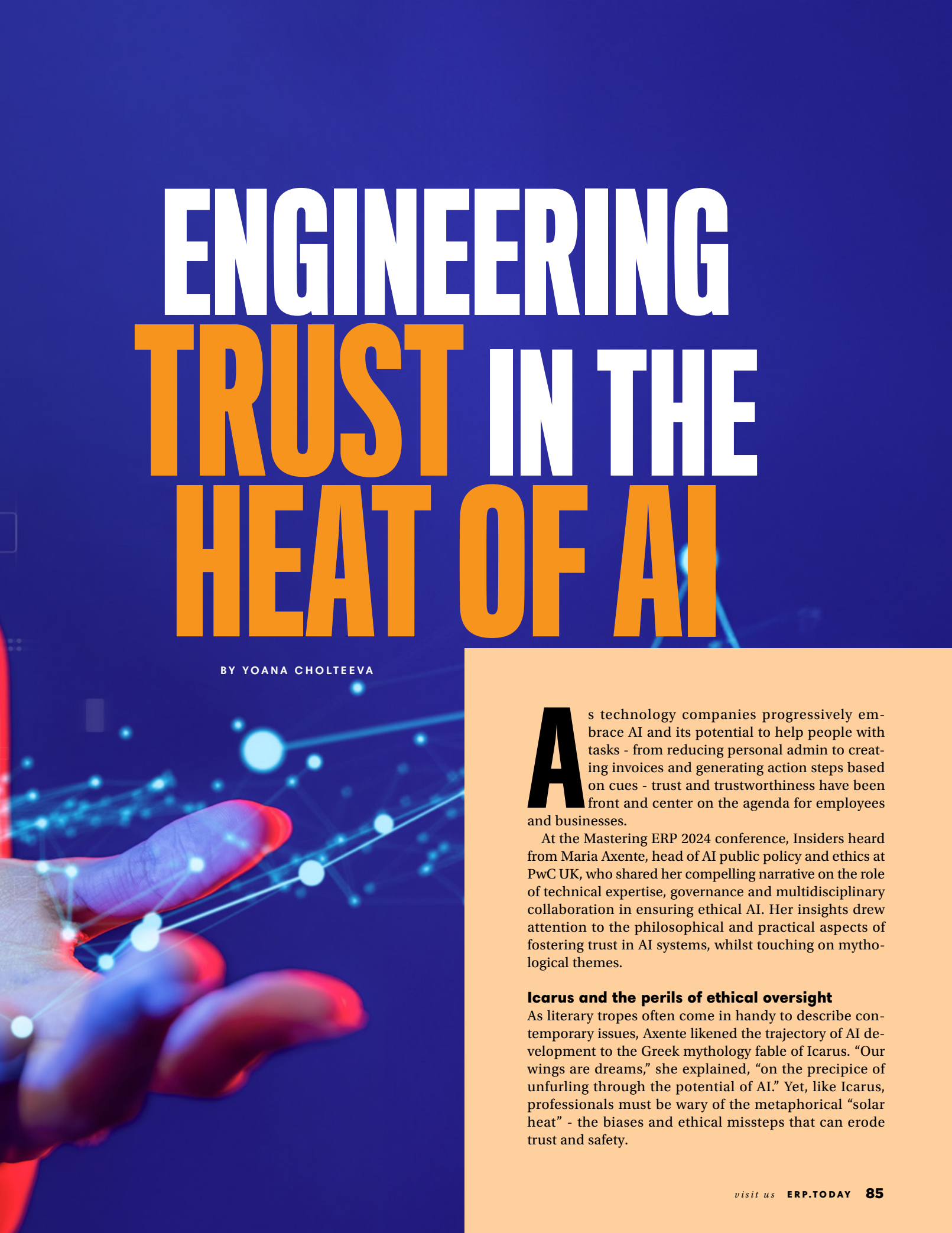
3. Leveraging AI for Sustainability and Innovation

Blue Diamond is exploring AI-powered tools for crop forecasting, taste trend prediction, and customer service optimization. By integrating AI with its ERP ecosystem, the company not only enhances operational capabilities but also aligns with ESG (environmental, social, and governance) goals. For instance, the updated SAP S4 system helps track carbon footprints, enabling more sustainable logistics planning.

Blue Diamond Growers' journey underscores the transformative potential of ERP systems in navigating supply chain complexities, driving innovation, and meeting sustainability goals. ERP professionals can draw from their example to optimize systems, prioritize change management, and embrace emerging technologies

INSIGHTS FROM PWC'S UK HEAD OF AI PUBLIC POLICY AND ETHICS.

ENGINEERING TRUST IN THE HEAT OF AI

BY YOANA CHOLTEEVA

As technology companies progressively embrace AI and its potential to help people with tasks - from reducing personal admin to creating invoices and generating action steps based on cues - trust and trustworthiness have been front and center on the agenda for employees and businesses.

At the Mastering ERP 2024 conference, Insiders heard from Maria Axente, head of AI public policy and ethics at PwC UK, who shared her compelling narrative on the role of technical expertise, governance and multidisciplinary collaboration in ensuring ethical AI. Her insights drew attention to the philosophical and practical aspects of fostering trust in AI systems, whilst touching on mythological themes.

Icarus and the perils of ethical oversight

As literary tropes often come in handy to describe contemporary issues, Axente likened the trajectory of AI development to the Greek mythology fable of Icarus. "Our wings are dreams," she explained, "on the precipice of unfurling through the potential of AI." Yet, like Icarus, professionals must be wary of the metaphorical "solar heat" - the biases and ethical missteps that can erode trust and safety.

Her rhetorical question, "Who are we to decide when it comes to ethical AI?" also highlights a critical challenge - while engineers are essential for technical execution, organizations must define ethical boundaries and mitigate biases. This separation is necessary because, as Axente points out, "Engineers can inadvertently bring their own biases to the table" due to human nature.

Defining trust and trustworthiness

Examining trust, Axente draws a distinction between trust and trustworthiness as trust is a belief in another party's ethical and reliable behavior over time - something relational, shaped by perception and potentially fragile. However, trustworthiness involves objective qualities - consistency, transparency and accountability that support trust.

"For all the excitement around AI, we've not always been honest with ourselves about its strings," Axente remarked. Drawing parallels to the aviation industry's ecosystem of safety and trust, she emphasizes the need for robust governance frameworks and proactive risk management in AI deployment. "Building trustworthiness is not just about technical excellence, it's about demonstrating it."

Three-layer framework for responsible AI

Building on this knowledge, Axente introduced a three-layer framework for fostering trustworthiness in AI including Technical Tools, Institutional Processes and Stakeholder Engagement.

For Technical Tools, robust testing, monitoring and validation are essential. "Technical experts play a critical role," she notes, "but they must also communicate their decisions transparently." Collaboration across disciplines ensures that technical safeguards align with broader organizational and societal goals.

Regarding Institutional Processes, standardized procedures and clear accountability structures are vital. Axente shared that many organizations lack visibility into the AI systems they deploy, leading to fragmented and inconsistent governance. "Engineers need to work closely with compliance and business leaders to enforce standardized processes and ensure accountability," she says.

Finally, for Stakeholder Engagement, Axente pointed out the importance of involving diverse voices in AI development. "No other technology has required such complex stakeholder engagement." Social scientists, policymakers

and end-users must contribute to the decision-making process to address AI's socio-technical implications effectively.

The role of engineers in ethical AI

With engineers being pivotal to building trustworthy AI systems, their role often extends beyond the technical domain. She shared a striking anecdote about Microsoft engineers who hesitated to choose a fairness definition for AI, saying, "Who are we to decide?" This illustrates the complex ethical terrain engineers navigate.

At the same time, "It's not just about coding," Axente asserted. Engineers must be prepared to address ethical considerations and collaborate with non-technical stakeholders to understand the broader impact of their work.

The need for improved communication is also a recurring theme in this field. Engineers, business leaders and policymakers often speak "different languages," creating barriers to effective collaboration. Axente highlighted the importance of plain language and active listening: "We need to support engineers in finding their voice and ensure they are part of the dialogue."

Trustworthiness before trust

Emphasizing the importance of establishing trustworthiness as the foundation for trust, Axente concluded that "trustworthiness is the best and most solid foundation we can have". Organizations must lead by example, integrating responsible AI practices at a micro level while awaiting broader regulatory frameworks.

Citing efforts by the Turing Institute and Tech UK, she noted promising initiatives like citizen juries, which engage the public in discussions about AI use in sensitive domains such as recruitment and medical diagnostics.

The path to trustworthy AI may require a collective effort and Axente's insights emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration, clear governance and open communication to make this possible. By focusing on trustworthiness, organizations can build AI systems that inspire confidence and deliver long-term value.

As she says, "It's not rocket science to build AI solutions that demonstrate reliability and ethical integrity. It's common sense - but common sense must be implemented systematically."

For businesses and policymakers navigating the AI landscape, Axente's call to action is clear - prioritize trustworthiness, foster collaboration and ensure that AI serves as a force for good. ∎

> **"** FOR ALL THE EXCITEMENT AROUND AI, WE'VE NOT ALWAYS BEEN HONEST WITH OURSELVES ABOUT ITS STRINGS"

Maria Axente, head of AI public policy and ethics at PwC UK

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ERP INSIDERS

• **Trustworthiness vs. Trust:** PwC's Maria Axente distinguished between trust (a belief shaped by perception) and trustworthiness (measurable qualities like consistency, transparency and accountability). Trustworthiness must precede trust to ensure AI reliability.

• **The Icarus Metaphor:** Axente likened AI's potential to Icarus's wings, cautioning that unchecked biases and ethical oversights could erode confidence and safety in AI systems.

• **Three-Layer Framework for Responsible AI:**
> Technical Tools: Emphasize robust testing, monitoring and transparency in decision-making.
> Institutional Processes: Standardized governance frameworks and clear accountability are critical.
> Stakeholder Engagement: Foster interdisciplinary collaboration with diverse voices, including policymakers, social scientists and end-users.

• **Engineers' Ethical Role:** Beyond coding, engineers must grapple with ethical dilemmas and work closely with business and compliance leaders to ensure AI's societal alignment.

• **Communication Across Disciplines:** Clear, jargon-free dialogue among engineers, business leaders and policymakers is essential for effective collaboration.

Axente's insights highlight that achieving trustworthy AI is not a technical challenge alone but a collective endeavor requiring ethical foresight, rigorous governance and inclusive collaboration. By prioritizing trustworthiness, organizations can inspire confidence and deliver lasting value in AI systems. As Axente put it: "Common sense must be implemented systematically."

THE LATEST
IN ORACLE JD EDWARDS

WATCH FOR JDE ENTERPRISEONE RELEASE 25 CUSTOMER GO-LIVES IN H1

BY MARK VIGOROSO

Oracle JD Edwards (JDE) announced the availability of EnterpriseOne Release 25 in Q4 2024, bringing to market enhancements that automate, optimize, and transform business processes across areas such as finance, sales and warehouse management and represents Oracle's continued investment in the JDE solution portfolio. So we will see the first wave of customers deploying Release 25 in the first half of 2025.

Oracle acquired JD Edwards as part of its acquisition of PeopleSoft in January 2005, and the JDE suite serves a diverse customer base of over 17,000 companies across various industries and regions. The customer base includes organizations of varying sizes, from mid-sized enterprises to large corporations. Notable companies using JD Edwards include Chevron, Charter Communications, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation. Industries such as manufacturing, distribution, construction, and consumer goods frequently adopt JD Edwards to manage complex operational needs. The software's modular architecture and comprehensive functionalities make it a preferred choice for organizations seeking integrated solutions for finance, human resources, supply chain, and customer relationship management.

Key feature updates in Release 25 include the following:

• **Ability to Assign Delinquency Fees to the Business Unit of Invoice**: The Credit Analysis Refresh program has been enhanced with a new processing option. This enhancement enables users to choose a business unit (BU) either invoice BU or the BU specified in the customer's Address Book record for accounting delinquency fees.

• **Increased Range of Account IDs:** This feature increases the range of Account IDs by allowing alphanumeric account IDs. This feature enables large businesses to maintain longer history and accounts from acquisitions and mergers can be included with ease.

• **Enterprise Automation:** Order to Cash Integrated with Warehouse (EnterpriseOne Page): This new functionality enables you to create a process flow that uses your organization's real-time data to provide guidance for controlling and coordinating the flow and sequence of tasks that help to achieve overall goals and objectives as efficiently as possible. This enhancement also enables visibility to orders at key stages of the order to cash process to help you maximize on-time and accurate order fulfillment and make better use of data to help reveal trouble spots that adversely impact your key performance indicators (KPIs).

• **Enterprise Automation:** Order to Cash Process Model Template: This new functionality enables you to generate a process flow that uses your organization's real-time data to provide guidance for controlling and coordinating the flow and sequence of tasks that help to achieve overall goals and objectives as efficiently as possible. This enhancement also enables visibility to orders at key stages of the order to cash process to help customers maximize on-time and accurate inventory, and make better use of data to help reveal trouble spots that adversely impact your KPIs.

• **Enterprise Automation:** Procure to Pay Integrated with Warehouse (EnterpriseOne Page): This functionality helps customers to improve procure to pay operations through integrated automation and data it generates. This enhancement provides visibility to warehouse putaway process integrated with the procure to pay process to help customers maximize efficiency and maintain accurate inventory.

Three critical KPIs - Putaway cycle time, putaway accuracy and location utilization are provided as new charts.

• **License Plate Workbench Usability Enhancements:** The current updates are aimed at improving the overall user experience and enriching functionality for the License Plate Workbench. New usability capabilities include visibility to date and time information along with the ability to search and filter records by date. The License Plate Workbench application is enhanced by providing access to new applications that enable you to efficiently manage license plate information for loose items.

• **Sustainability Foundation and Scope 1 Stationary Emissions:** The JD Edwards Sustainability Framework simplifies and streamlines the collection of environmental data. This feature provides the ability to collect the fuel usage from stationary combustion sources (Scope 1), directly from JD Edwards transactions, including Voucher Match and Standard Voucher applications. Additionally, this framework enables customers to directly input the stationary combustion data into a centralized repository known as the Sustainability Activity Ledger. The JD Edwards Sustainability Framework, by offering an optimized solution to collect the data and with the option of leveraging external carbon calculation and reporting tools, helps organizations with their environmental goals and provides a roadmap for more sustainable business practices. ∎

JD EDWARDS CUSTOMERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ADOPT RELEASE 25 AS IT OFFERS LONG-TERM SUPPORT THROUGH AT LEAST 2035

KEY FEATURES IN RELEASE 25 INCLUDE ENHANCED ORCHESTRATOR CAPABILITIES, TAILORED INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC FUNCTIONALITIES, AND IMPROVED UX

Why should JDE customers move to Release 25? As of January 2025, the majority of JD Edwards customers are utilizing EnterpriseOne Release 9.2, which was initially launched in October 2015. Oracle has continued to enhance this release with subsequent updates, including Release 23, Release 24, and the most recent Release 25. Approximately 86% of the JD Edwards customer base has adopted version 9.2, and Oracle has announced support for JD Edwards products through at least 2035, providing customers with a clear roadmap for future planning and upgrades. JDE customers stand to gain the following from Release 25:

• **Enhanced Orchestrator Capabilities:** The Orchestrator tool has been improved to automate complex business processes more effectively, featuring better error handling and data validation to reduce manual intervention.

• **Industry-Specific Functionality:** Release 25 offers tailored features for sectors such as manufacturing, construction, and distribution, addressing unique industry challenges. For example, the new Project Status Inquiry (PSI) feature aids construction project managers in tracking progress and improving delivery timelines.
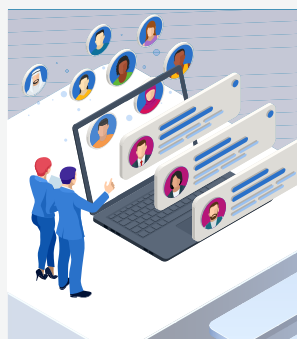
• **User Experience (UX) Enhancements:** The update provides a more intuitive and efficient interface, simplifying daily tasks for users.

• **Integration with Hybrid Cloud:** Release 25 strengthens integration with Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) and other cloud services, facilitating hybrid deployment models that combine on-premise stability with cloud flexibility and scalability.

• **Enterprise Process Modeler:** This new tool offers a graphical representation of business processes, enabling organizations to visualize and optimize workflows effectively.

• **Optimized Full Package Build Performance:** Enhancements in this area reduce build times by identifying and compiling only necessary components, improving efficiency during system updates.

Learn from other JDE customers that have taken recent releases. A leading manufacturing firm collaborated with IT Convergence to upgrade to the latest JD Edwards EnterpriseOne release. The project involved eliminating outdated customizations, implementing a disaster recovery plan with a 24-hour turnaround, and enhancing the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) order process. Post-upgrade, 50% of EDI orders were processed without manual intervention, significantly improving operational efficiency. Granite Properties, a real estate investment and management company, upgraded to JD Edwards EnterpriseOne Release 23/24 to streamline and automate business processes using Orchestrator and other tools. The upgrade facilitated improved efficiency and better results, aligning with their business growth objectives. And Koos Manufacturing, a denim apparel manufacturer, undertook an upgrade to JD Edwards EnterpriseOne Release 23/24 to enhance their business processes. The implementation of Orchestrator and other features enabled them to automate workflows, resulting in increased operational efficiency and a move towards continuous innovation.
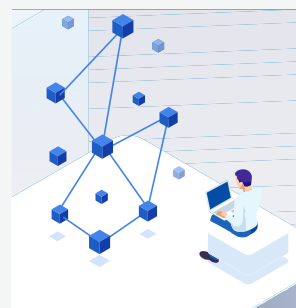
When to choose JD Edwards vs. other Oracle ERP offerings

CRITERIA	JD EDWARDS	ORACLE CLOUD ERP	NETSUITE
Target Industry	Manufacturing, Distribution	Broad (Finance, Service-Oriented)	SMBs, Startups, SaaS Companies
Deployment Model	On-Premise, Hybrid, Cloud	Primarily Cloud	Cloud-Only
Customization Needs	High	Medium	Low to Medium
Company Size	Mid-Market, Large Enterprises	Large Enterprises	SMBs, Mid-Market
Budget Sensitivity	Medium	High	Low to Medium
Process Complexity	High	High	Medium

2 billion

people a day use elevators
and walkways maintained
and serviced with **IFS.ai**

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