



Automation for Growth: Using Integration as a Competitive Advantage

eBook

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Introduction

There comes a point in your company's growth where the processes and infrastructure that worked before begin to break down. When your business processes fail to keep up with the rate of change, you actually risk holding your company back from further growth. Effectively scaling your processes is the key to remaining competitive in the market, while taking your company to the next level.

Even before the rush to digital transformation driven by COVID-19, high-growth businesses relied on the rapid implementation of SaaS applications to enable growth. The shift to SaaS solutions enabled companies to cherry-pick best-of-breed software – with faster evaluation and decision-making cycles generally led by business teams instead of IT - rather than using less-effective solutions bundled with a software suite.

While best-of-breed SaaS solutions allow business teams to choose the best solution to fit their needs, often this results in decision-making criteria defined by the business units funding those investments. The rapid shift to digital – and the circumstances that drove both the shift and the distributed decision-making around investment in cloud solutions – has often resulted in system and information silos. While these business groups represent the primary users and stakeholders, business processes generally span multiple business functions and systems and effective decision-making requires data from multiple systems.

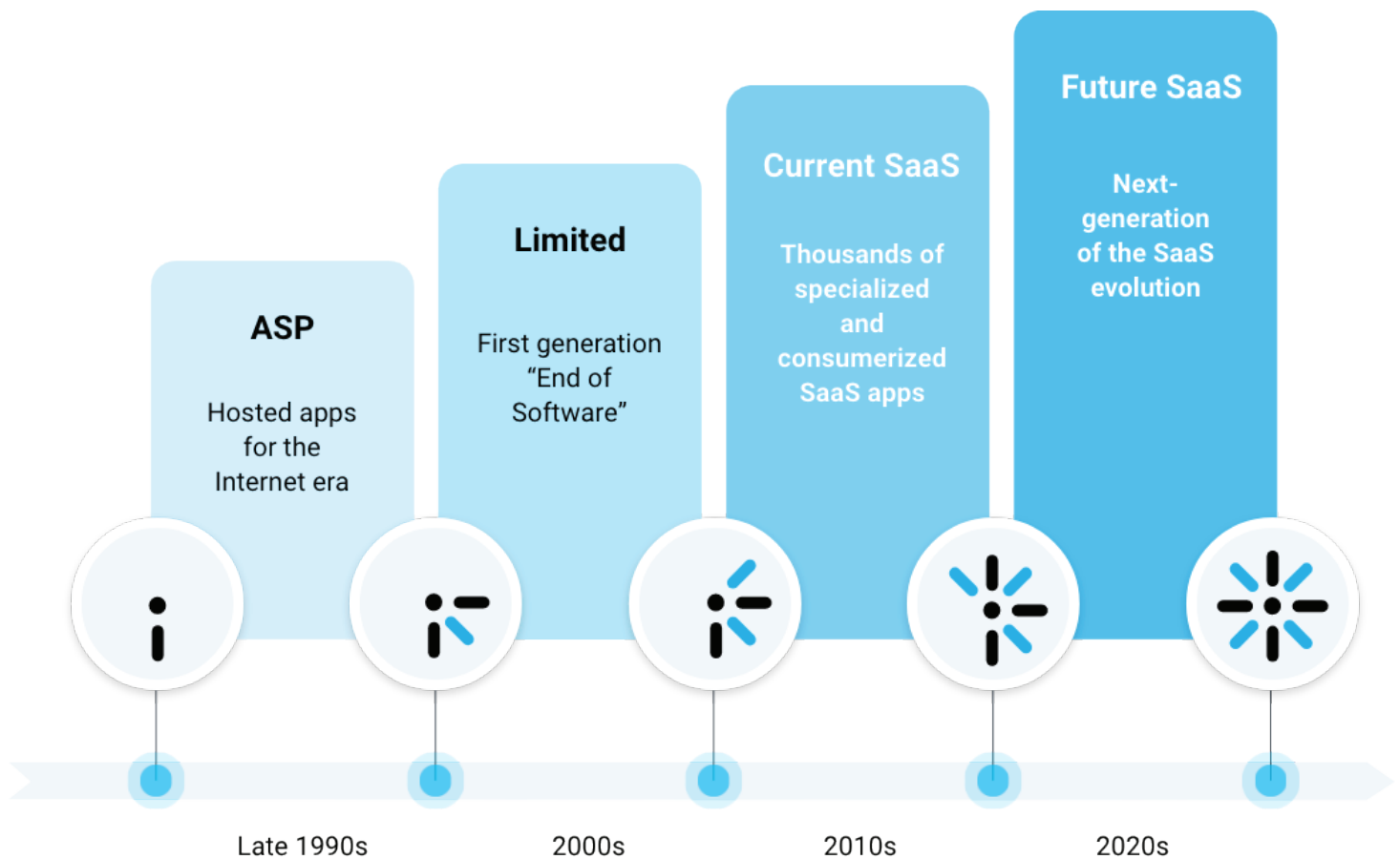
When considering ways to accelerate growth and gain a competitive advantage, developing an integration strategy might not come to mind at first.

However, a robust [integration platform as a service \(iPaaS\)](#) gives organizations the foundation to build scalable, efficient, and resilient operations.

In this eBook, we'll discuss successfully reaching the next stage of your company's maturation by crafting the right integration solution for your needs.

The Growth of SaaS

Before discussing integrations, we need to take a step back in time to take a closer look at the intense surge of SaaS. Concur was one of the first commercially available cloud applications, and Salesforce with its “No software” slogan followed in its footsteps a few years later in 1999.





During the last two decades, the way many growing businesses use software has transformed, as the SaaS business model evolved in a few key areas:

Best-of-breed applications

SaaS vendors have moved away from creating all-in-one apps in order to appeal to a particular audience persona and carry out a business function at a hyper-focused level. Potential customers keep an eye out for which application will perform a specialized function the best for their needs, also known as best-of-breed.

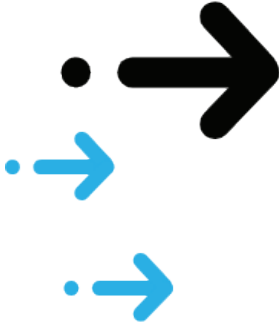


Better usability

The user experience in today's SaaS apps looks similar to consumer-based ones on personal devices. Compared with five years ago, it's a lot easier to acquire and start using SaaS applications without IT's involvement, even at the departmental level.

Speed and agility

SaaS applications are deployed and configured in a fraction of the time required for traditional on-premises applications with minimal up-front costs, allowing companies to rapidly add the capabilities they need to support growth



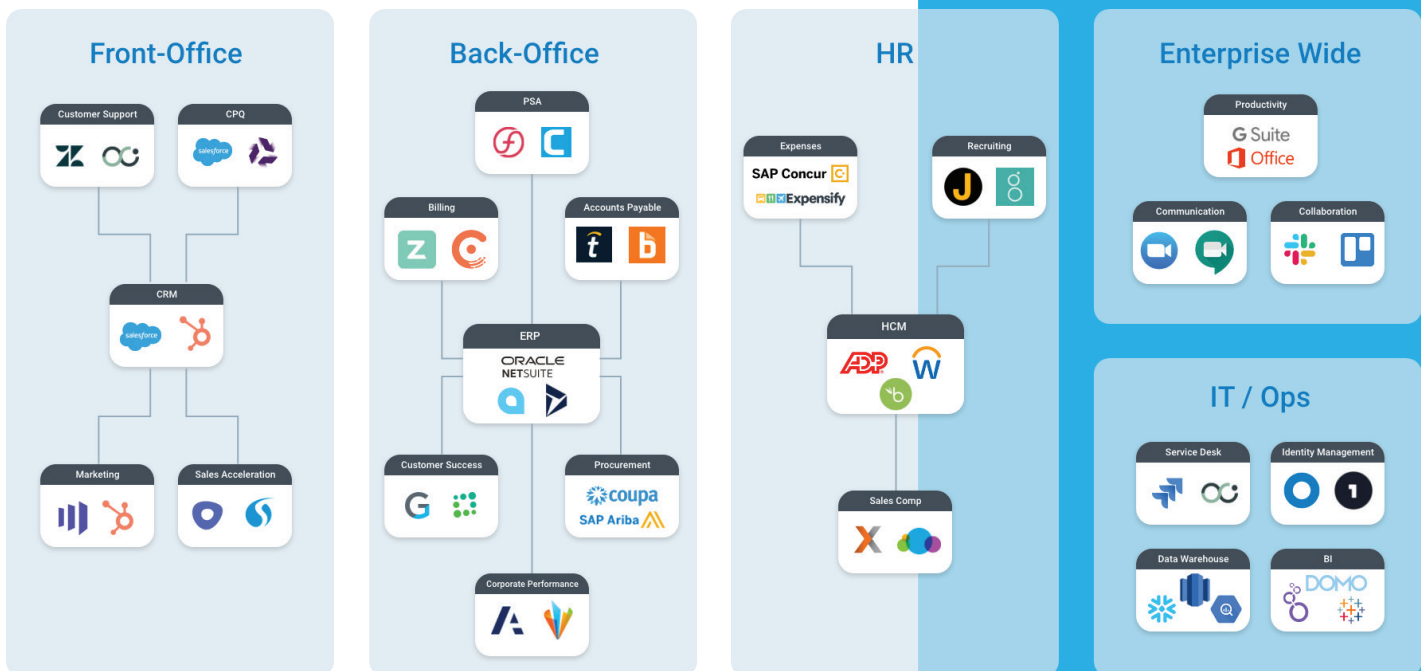
In the case of a developing company, it obtains **foundational SaaS apps** as its cloud-based systems of record. For example, customer relationship management (CRM) owns sales and prospect records, enterprise resource planning (ERP) owns accounting and customer records, and human capital management (HCM) owns employee and hiring records.

During its maturation, that same company's different teams – marketing, customer success, and recruiting, just to name a few – begin acquiring more specialized applications that will need to interact with the relevant systems of record.

While these individual SaaS applications can help automate manual processes, it becomes challenging to manage the overall accumulation – the **SaaS sprawl** – at once. Because business processes span across multiple applications, **SaaS silos** with their accompanying data fragmentation are major efficiency and productivity obstacles for successful automation.

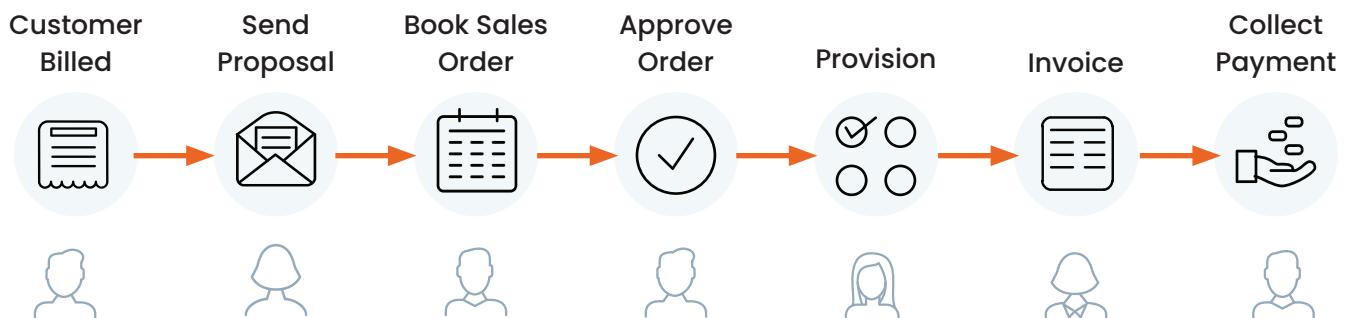
- 1 **Foundational SaaS apps**
These applications have a broad sense of responsibilities and footprints within the enterprise and own the system of records for key business objects: a lead, an account, an opportunity, a sales order, an employee onboarding, a purchase order, etc.
- 2 **SaaS sprawl**
An organization has numerous SaaS applications, often because employees are able to purchase applications in isolation. The sprawl can grow to become cumbersome, causing visibility issues across departments.
- 3 **SaaS silos**
Apps' data and processes are kept in separate servers or data centers and are unable to interact with other systems. Data centers grow with each app's deployment, minimizing resource utilization and reducing overall efficiency.

Best-of-Breed = SaaS Sprawl = Silos



Fragmentation of Business Processes

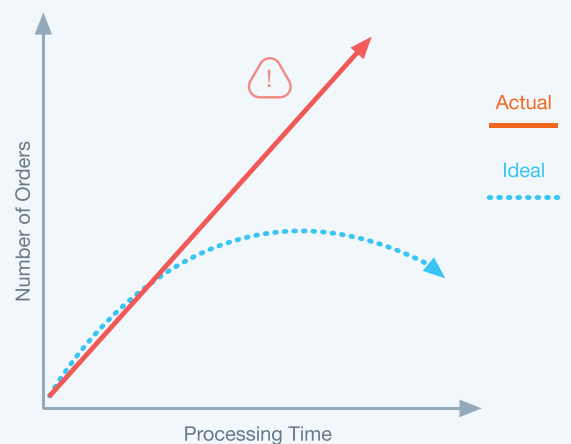
If your company was a computer, think of your business processes as the operating system – they interact with various components to support your basic functions and help everything run smoothly. For example, let's take a closer look at a quote-to-cash process, which is similar to what many B2B companies experience.



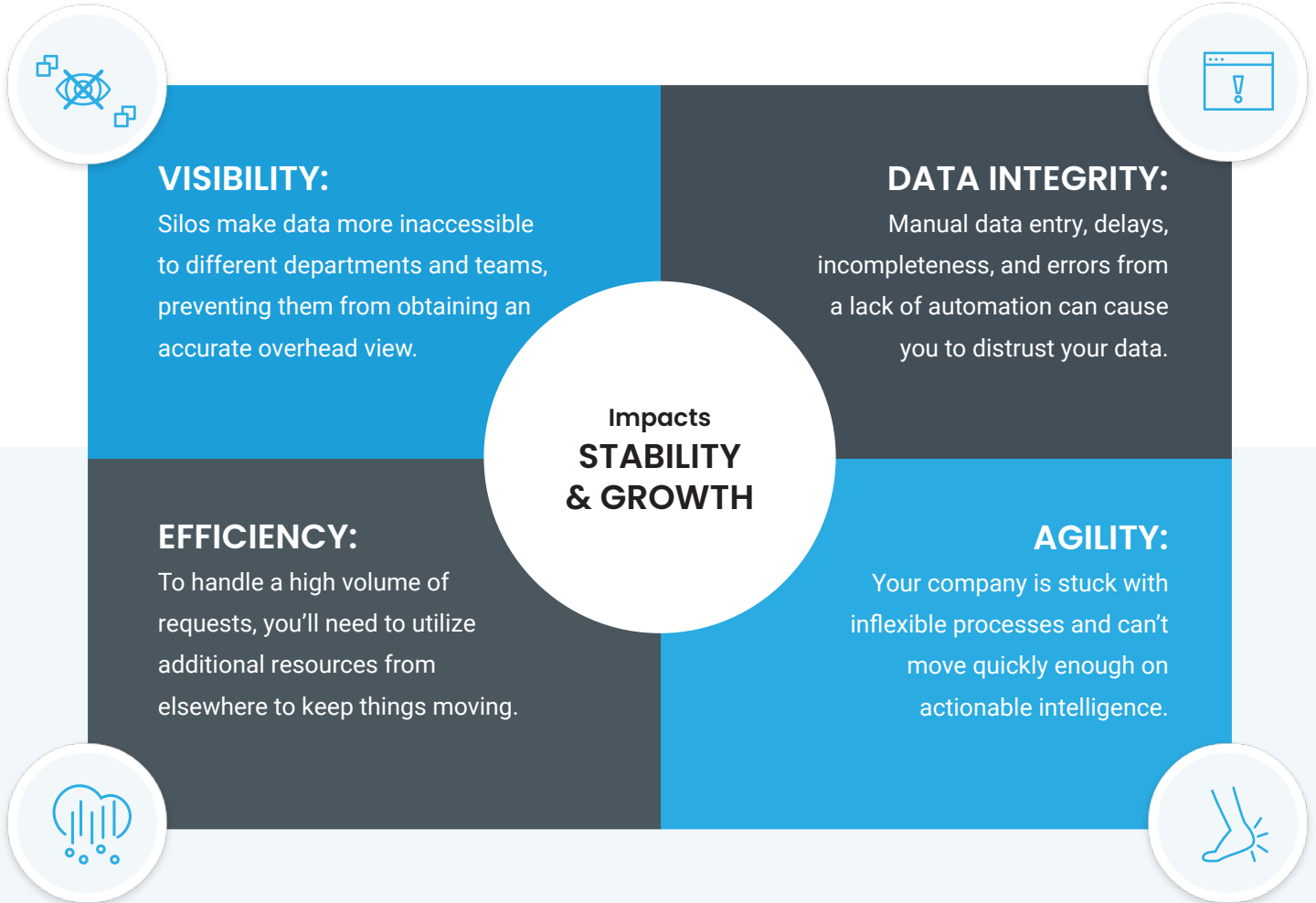
Multiple distinct roles – sales representative, deal desk, sales operations, finance, operations, billing analyst, and accounts receivable analyst – across different departments play key roles in this business process. On top of all these stakeholders involved, the process also encapsulates a number of business applications: CRM, configure price quote (CPQ), electronic signature, ERP, billing, and more.

While there is a centralized system of record associated with the quote-to-cash process – typically a CRM – each department works out of different applications, and they might not all have visibility outside of their own specialized system. And, chances are that these apps were created by different vendors, so they exist in different ecosystems and data becomes fragmented.

Order Processing Efficiency



For organizations trying to scale and grow, fragmentation can harm them in four key areas



As the volume of data and complexity of an organization expands, establishing a robust automation strategy that also solves fragmentation is mission critical. The key component of this approach involves connecting disparate applications through integration. Without a sound solution for integrating applications, your efforts to successfully scale and automate your business processes might not come to fruition.

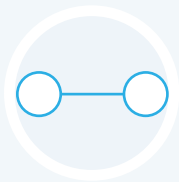
Integration Options for a Connected Enterprise

When developing your integration approach, you should select the right solution for long-term sustainability and avoid methods that would cause problems down the road as your company continues to grow. Potential integration methods can be classified into four main categories:



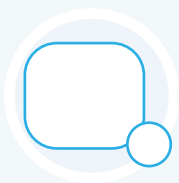
Application programming interface (API)-based custom coding:

Building your own integrations to automate key pieces of the business sounds tempting. By leveraging code and APIs, custom integrations can be very powerful and are often the preferred path taken by many operational teams. However, because they require trained technical resources and are very time-consuming, it is hard to implement them in a scalable, robust way.



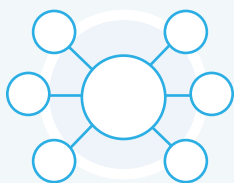
Point-to-point (P2P) integrations or consulting ware:

These purpose-built solutions tend to focus on a fairly narrow problem. While this might work great under certain circumstances, there are long-term deficiencies such as a lack of customization. Also, with thousands of cloud apps available today, it's difficult to develop individual point-to-point connectors for every possible situation.



Vendor-built:

Most software includes out-of-the-box or vendor-built native integrations, allowing users to quickly connect with specific applications for certain use cases. They serve some of the basic requirements, especially when your company is at an early stage, but they are typically static and not designed with enough flexibility or customization capabilities as your organization grows.



Integration platform as a service (iPaaS):

This platform standardizes the way that integrations can be built and managed. Building a particular integration is just one part of the problem: The next part is being able to monitor the integration, manage any errors, recover, and resolve issues. An iPaaS provides a centralized view to see how all the integrations in the enterprise are running in a holistic fashion.

Compared with other options, leveraging an integration platform makes the most sense for growing companies because it standardizes the monitoring, maintenance, and updates of processes across ever-changing applications.

Utilizing an iPaaS has become the industry-standard approach for quickly integrating applications, thanks to pre-built connectors and templates, while allowing room for building custom integrations. With the right iPaaS, both line-of-business users and technical users can build, manage, and maintain integrations.

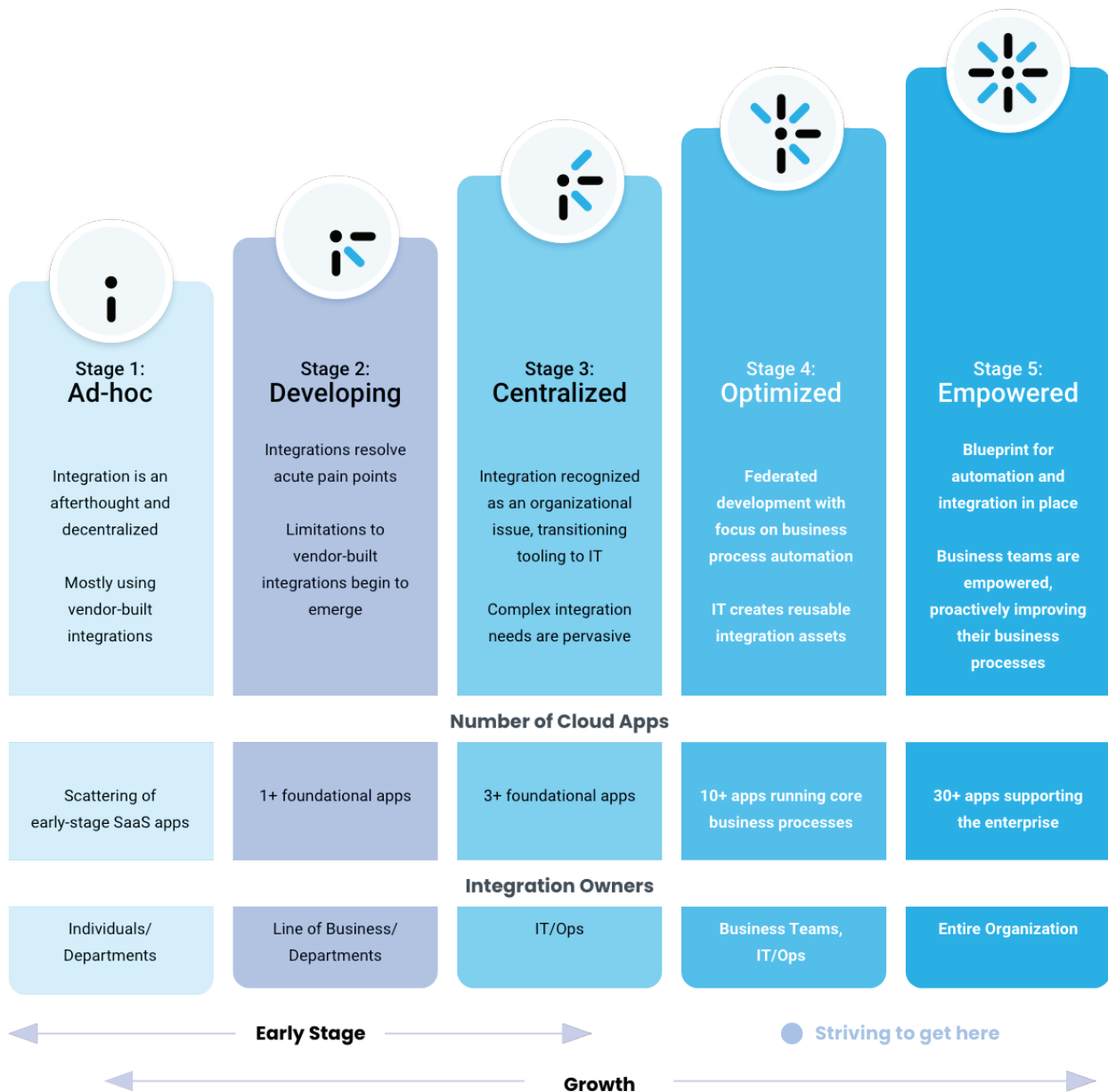


iPaaS Advantages

- Faster to build an integration with prebuilt connectors and templates
- Guaranteed data delivery
- Data governance and compliance
- Lower cost of maintenance
- Built-in monitoring and management
- Easily understandable errors and recovery processes

The Integration Maturity Model

Every organization looks at the integration of their SaaS applications in a different way, based on the maturity of their company, their business processes, and whether they want to automate them. A framework for measuring an organization’s ability to continuously improve in this area is through an Integration Maturity Model:



The Approaches to Integration by Stage

The integration approaches vary significantly depending on the stage of the company's lifecycle.

Stage 1:

Ad-hoc

An early-stage company's first order of business is to find product-market fit and by definition haven't settled on long-term business processes yet. At this stage, while manual processes abound, there might be a scattering of SaaS apps in the enterprise. Integrations are pain-point based and reactive, driven by individuals solving their own issues on an as-needed basis.

Stage 2:

Developing

Gradually, companies start to grow and adopt a few foundational SaaS apps. While there is more attention paid to operational issues, integrations tend to be reactive: An app is acquired, a particular pain is felt, and there is an immediate need that requires being solved right then and there. The typical first response is to rely on out-of-the-box native integrations, vendor-built integrations, and, in some critical cases, building a direct API integration with technical resources. However, developing companies are beginning to notice and understand some of the limitations of these integration methods:



There might be dozens of applications integrated via a hodgepodge of native integrations, multiple vendor-built, point-to-point integrations, and direct API integrations. This quickly becomes a maintenance and compliance nightmare to track and update.



This integration approach is very limiting, handling only specific use cases that were built out of the box for two specific applications. If business processes become more sophisticated, or if they span three or more applications, this may require customizations that are largely unsupported.

Stage 3:

Centralized

At this point, companies start dedicating resources toward IT and operations for centralizing resources. IT and operations holistically build and own enterprise-wide integrations, collaborating with different teams to design solutions for automating business processes across departments. Additional key foundational SaaS apps have been implemented, and more and more specialized SaaS apps are regularly adopted. As a result, the need for integration has increased exponentially.

However, because processes are better defined, companies at this stage are better at proactively identifying operational issues and the requirements to address them. This is the point to consider or even adopt an [integration platform, or iPaaS](#), to accelerate the time needed to build and reduce the cost to maintain these integrations. An iPaaS enables the IT function to address integration problems across the enterprise in a way that maximizes the productivity of their technical resources and enables automation of key business processes and integration of data across the enterprise, providing scalability and insights to support growth

Stage 4:

Optimized

This is the stage that most companies should be striving for to find the right balance. At this point in their integration journey, many companies have an iPaaS and have federated it for both IT and business users to build and maintain the integrations that suit their needs. The IT team handles mission-critical integrations because they touch multiple departments, resources, and business applications. Meanwhile, business users from other teams and departments can handle certain processes, automations, or integrations on their own. With the help of an iPaaS, integration is seen as a strategic advantage to proactively get ahead and drive the business forward. With a modern iPaaS that supports technical and business users, the organization can improve the speed, efficiency, and accuracy of key business processes across the enterprise providing not just scalability to support growth but to also drive competitive advantage.

Stage 5:

Empowered

This is the Holy Grail of the integration maturity model that's generally meant for larger companies, but companies with an integration-first mentality can receive this designation. They have a blueprint for automation and integration in place, and their iPaaS helps them manage more than 30 apps that support the enterprise. Everyone in the organization can proactively address integration problems across the enterprise and drive continual business performance improvement in a way that maximizes organizational agility and fosters innovation



The Bottom Line

Regardless of their maturation stage, companies need to think about their automation strategy and the way integration plays into that. Everyone's circumstances are going to be different, so these five key takeaways can help you craft and adapt to a strategy that makes sense for you and your team:

1

Map the app landscape

The amount of applications that a typical SaaS organization uses changes all the time, so take a moment to create an itemized list of apps and what business functions they accomplish.

2

Understand the cost of fragmentation.

Ask yourself where the breakdowns are occurring, why, and what they're costing you, in order to fix these issues.

3

Build an integration roadmap

Think about the most important pieces, including where the gaps and the friction are greatest, and put a plan together with a priority list for addressing them.

4

Leverage out-of-the-box integrations

Vendor-built integrations are a great starting point by serving most basic requirements, but at the same time, be aware that they can only take you so far. They're not built for customization and scale.

5

Use an integration platform

An iPaaS provides common visibility and reporting to ultimately build competency into your organization as it matures. That way you can more easily address fragmentation in your business processes.

Want to learn more about how automating processes and integrating applications can help your company's growth and agility?

Watch this on-demand webinar [here](#).

About Celigo

At Celigo, we enable breakaway growth, controlled cost management, and superior customer experiences by ensuring that every process – at any level of the organization – can be automated in the most optimal way. The Celigo platform is a complete integration platform as a service that allows business users and developers alike to automate both common and custom business processes and move the management of them into the teams that own that process, enabling business teams to innovate faster and become more agile while providing IT with the capabilities they need to ensure unified best practices, data security and scalability to meet the needs of the business today and in the future.

Find out more by visiting our website at www.celigo.com, or email us at info@celigo.com.





**Hundreds of applications.
Thousands of business processes.
Millions of combinations.
ONE iPaaS.**

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