

Supercharging your SAP deployment



By Mark Paterson - VP Managed Services, at NTT Communications EMEA

When meeting with senior level business contacts, one question comes up repeatedly; “How do we make SAP more flexible for today’s digital economy”? Mission critical applications like SAP need to deliver on more than being just robust and trustworthy. Enterprises also need speed and agility to quickly react to changing markets more than ever before.

It is obvious to me that to gain a real competitive edge, enterprises need to enhance their business processes. Leveraging end-to-end, real-time insights gleaned from their enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems together with non-transactional data to gain valuable insights. Enabling fast and informed decision making is paramount to the business landscape we are all working in and IT is the main enabler for this.

Many SAP users I have spoken to are met with a brick wall when it comes to flexibility. On-premises SAP solutions are usually dependable and stable in terms of performance. However, they come with a “trade off” in terms of a very rigid and costly infrastructure. Additionally, SAP systems are often working in isolation from other business data, sitting in departmental silos, as integration is normally very complex. This, in my experience, makes it incredibly difficult to quickly and easily scale SAP environments, deploy innovative hardware platforms and expand into new territories. This is why, I have seen an increase in enterprises starting to pursue a new route with ‘cloud-first’ SAP strategies as a central part of their digital transformation plan.

Customers that I speak to are all too aware that it is impossible for REAL innovation to happen in an IT environment riddled with disparate systems, fragmented data and inadequate reporting systems. Innovation is now one of the most important concerns for the survival of any enterprise. And its role in the development and co-ordination of new markets is paramount.

Turning up the cloud volume

Small wonder then, that increasing numbers of SAP users are turning to the cloud to get the performance, scalability, elasticity and security they need from their SAP applications. It is little surprise to me, that more and more customers are coming to us to help migrate their mission critical SAP applications to Microsoft Azure, in order to provide a viable platform for driving future digital transformation initiatives.

SAP has collaborated closely with Microsoft for the past three decades. Both have recently invested heavily into scalable topologies, management and operations for SAP landscapes in the Azure cloud. Azure, for example, provides the enterprise-grade security and compliance needed by industries such as manufacturing and offers integrated high availability, backup, disaster recovery and a choice of monitoring, automation and management tools. In February this year Microsoft themselves finished moving its entire SAP landscape, estimated to be a colossal 50 terabytes, across to Azure cloud.

Moving from on-premises to Azure will cut your Microsoft/SAP budget by approximately 10 to 20 percent. The savings come from removing inefficient processes and adjusting usage. For example, Azure automation and policies has the handy ability to 'snooze' unused capacity, such as at weekends.

SAP is also putting the pressure on when it comes to cloud thinking. If you are using SAP right now, but have not yet switched to SAP S/4HANA, the 2025 deadline is looming. From then SAP's ERP suite will run exclusively on SAP's own database, HANA. Previously SAP systems have worked on other databases, so those of you migrating will need to migrate your entire database. Many enterprises have taken the leap to SAP S/4HANA in the public cloud now to get ahead of the curve.

The case for cloud

Enterprises have been fast to adopt cloud for non-critical applications but have been nervous of migrating mission critical SAP applications. That is up until now.

Security as always is a top concern when it comes to cloud. Azure, however, takes on any security challenges head on, with features running from strict physical data centre security to machine learning for threat detection and encrypting data.

For me it really is not a case of 'if', but when you move SAP to the cloud. Ignoring cloud capabilities will leave you struggling in the wake of more 'cloud-centric' competitors. Believe me I have seen it happen. Azure offers a smooth and seamless transition to the cloud by way of infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS), platform-as-a-service (PaaS) and hybrid cloud models that can tap into your on-premises ERP investments.

For more on this topic visit: www.Azure4SAP.com

About the author

Mark Paterson, as Vice President, Managed Services at NTT Communications EMEA, is responsible for NTT's portfolio of Hybrid IT and managed application & infrastructure services. Drawing on nearly 20 years' experience in the ICT sector, his remit includes the full Go-To-Market strategy, sales,

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