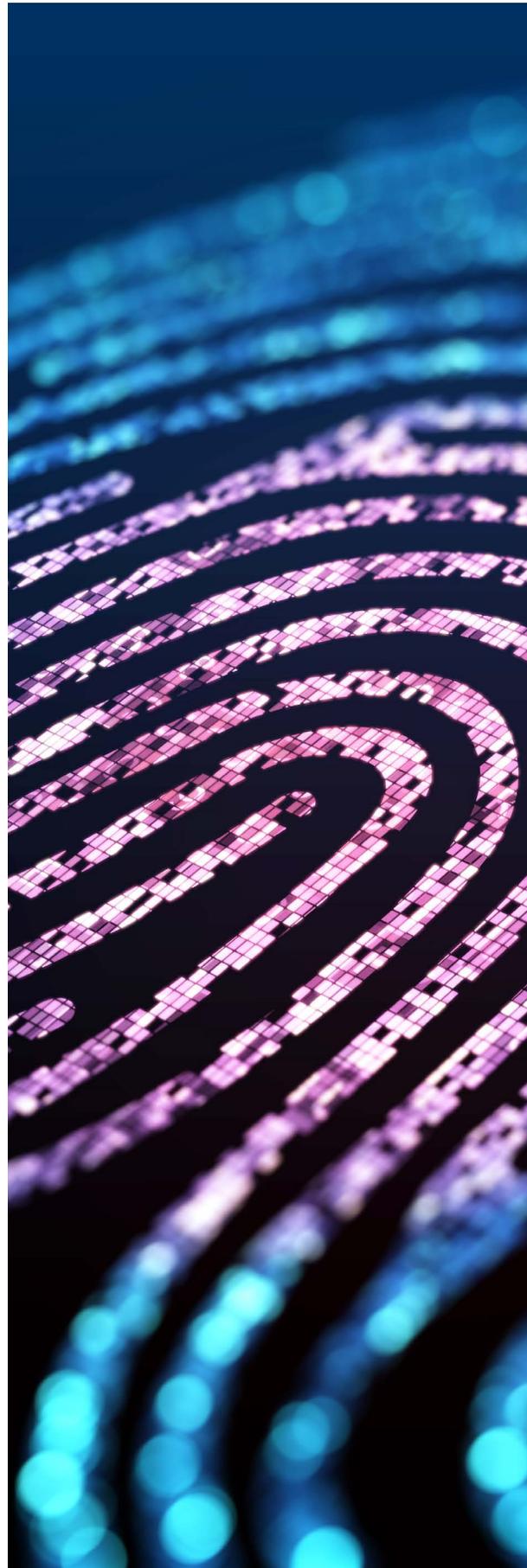


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# Integration Center of Excellence

A Strategic Imperative for the  
Agile, Innovative Organization

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# Evolution toward the integrated enterprise

Over the last decade, companies have experienced an explosion of new technologies and new applications, leading to complex and diverse IT landscapes. The result is a myriad of disconnected applications, processes, and data.

Against this backdrop is the advent of a digital economy, one that is rife with challenges and disruptors, as well as new opportunities. In this environment, adaptability and agility are essential to thrive. The organizations that can respond quickly, survive. How? By embracing integration as the cornerstone for achieving data insights and streamlined processes. A connected enterprise holistically understands not just what is happening in their business, but why—with full visibility into customer behavior, supply chains, financial performance, employee engagement and more.

The importance of unlocking the insights has never been more important. And, harnessing the power of data and processes to do so is propelling heightened visibility for a holistic approach to integration—one that can handle the integration challenges of both today and tomorrow.

Organizations have reached a point in their evolution that calls for a stake in the ground: in short, for a declaration of enterprise integration

as a strategic mandate. According to a recent [TBR](#) study on integration, the vast majority of responding organizations expressed belief that integration is strategically important in achieving their business goals.

True enterprise integration extends far beyond systems, applications and processes—it also encompasses organizational cultures, structures and workflows. Hierarchies must flatten to help business units and internal departments collaborate with the autonomy to experiment and develop products and services themselves. Diverse skills, knowledge, and expertise converge across internal and external boundaries to develop new digital offerings. This is the image of the organization of the future: distributed, dynamic, agile, and innovative.

For IT then, a new era has arrived. The slow-and-steady, top-down approach of the past now seems to have all the relevance of a rotary telephone and the efficiency of a floppy disk. IT needs to cast off its supporting role as a cost center and partner with business leaders to discover and apply technologies in new ways. Transformed into a strategic department, IT can enable the organization to respond, adapt and ultimately to achieve its vision.

# IT leadership in advocating a reimagined approach to integration

How can IT set the course? To achieve a successful digital transformation, organizations must begin by understanding the shifting needs and real-time changes in the ongoing experiences of customers, employees, and suppliers. IT leaders can promote the value of next-generation enterprise integration that enables quick response to evolving business needs and extends to every corner of the organization without risk—a concept that is still largely undervalued.

Second, they can recognize the need for IT to reimagine its approach to managing

integration efforts, even if it may require a significant shift in its current paradigm. Today, integration projects are typically handled on a tactical project-by-project basis. Each involving the selection of integration software (or creating the integration through custom code); acquiring skilled resources; training and product education; establishing processes, procedures and standards; developing the integration application; and finally deploying it.

This is unsustainable. Reinventing the wheel every time is unnecessarily time consuming and duplicates work, leading to a gap between what the business needs and IT's ability to deliver.



# The next wave: The Integration Center of Excellence

There is a better way, and this is where IT can blaze the trail and cement its standing as a true strategic partner to the business. Gaining momentum in forward-thinking enterprises is the concept of an Integration Center of Excellence (ICoE): a cross-departmental team dedicated to applying best practices and standards to integration. While the concept is not revolutionary, its contemporary relevance is driven by a host of converging force—among them, the ever-increasing pressure on organizations to become more agile and responsive to changing market and customer needs.

The Integration Center of Excellence is intended to optimize scarce IT resources by combining integration skills, resources, and processes into one cross-departmental, dedicated team of experts. These are subject-matter experts from various disciplines with different perspectives—lines of business whose applications and data are directly affected by integration—as well as representatives from compliance and security. In essence, the charter of the Integration Center of Excellence is not just to engineer a new approach to technology integration, but to bolster talent optimization also.





# Driving strategic decisions through the Integration Center of Excellence

By disseminating knowledge and standardized processes across the organization, the Integration Center of Excellence team can mitigate unnecessary duplication of integration-related projects and boost speed, efficiency, and effectiveness. Project delivery time accelerates. Technology investments are better leveraged across multiple projects. Maintenance costs plummet. Return on investment (ROI) improves through creation and reuse of enterprise assets like source definitions, application interfaces, and codified business rules.

Inter-departmental communication is key to success and a successful Integration Center of Excellence can connect people who haven't previously been communicating. With incentives to cooperate across departments, organizational collaboration improves, with all the advantages of productivity gains and

employee satisfaction intrinsic to a culture of teamwork.

Integration Center of Excellence enable companies to integrate processes, data, and applications in a coherent, scalable and cost-effective way to deliver an enduring competitive advantage. When done well, integration benefits the whole company. A key goal of the Center of Excellence is to enable all employees to reap the value of data and streamline processes. Application and data integration helps to optimize business processes across the enterprise, and brings information residing in data silos into one place, making it accessible when people need it most. This drives strategic decision making for the business, ultimately resulting in operational efficiencies and improved ROI for integration expenditures.

**Not long ago, no one had ever heard of a Chief Data Officer.**

Now, CDOs are common in executive leadership. Could a Chief Integration Officer be next? The role could conceivably be one that creates a strategy for successful business and technology integration, and leverages opportunities to collaborate and share digital assets beyond the company's boundaries in an open and secure way.

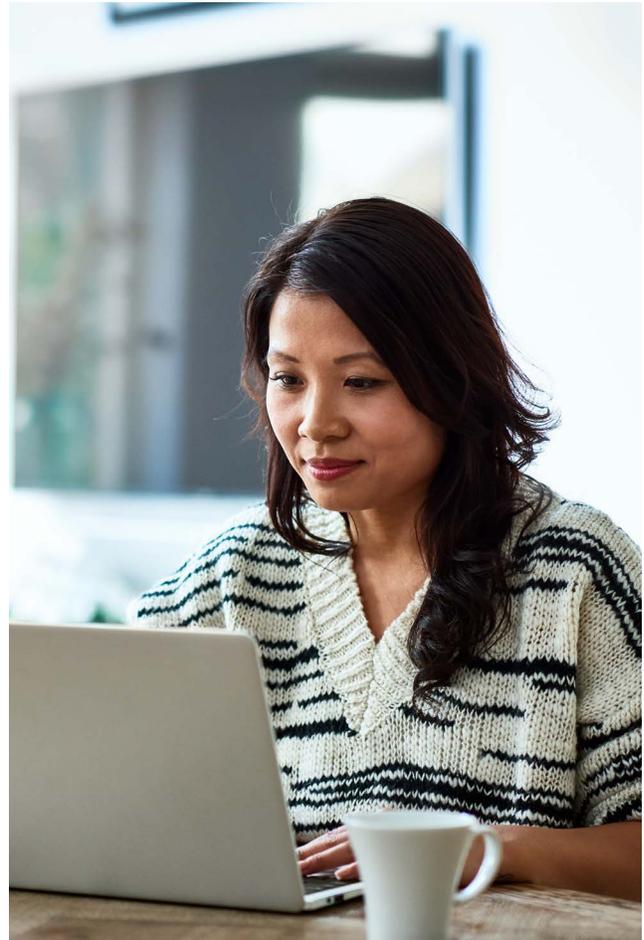
# The start of the journey: Establishing an Integration Center of Excellence

Establishing an Integration Center of Excellence must begin with an executive sponsor: the CIO, a senior IT director and quite possibly, a Chief Integration Officer (see p.6 sidebar). This leader begins with the presumption that integration is an enabler of the business strategy. There must be a firm commitment to instituting the Integration Center of Excellence as a permanent part of the organization, focused on integration as a discipline, and recognition that this is a critical success factor in achieving the organization's key business objectives.

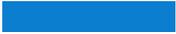
The Integration Center of Excellence begins with building a community of practice, establishing standards, and harnessing and advancing competency within the organization. The integration strategy should involve an iterative process, with the executive sponsor setting clear goals and driving the initiative from the top, and the team, once in place, building the bottom-up plan.

That's the theoretical part. Now let's step back and look at the practical realities.

Integration is about connecting processes, data, and applications. This will vary from one organization to the next along with the nature and composition of teams, technologies, processes, business goals, company culture, and so on.



Indeed, organizations differ in so many ways, how can anyone go about setting up an Integration Center of Excellence in an efficient, productive way? The answer is to capture what's common and what's unique about every organization and its integration goals, and borrow methodologies and best practices from organizations that have already started on the journey.



# Five essential steps to establish an Integration Center of Excellence

In working with a number of early adopters, we have applied proven methodologies while learning a great deal about the distinct challenges of establishing an Integration Center of Excellence. We have boiled that down into five essential steps.

## STEP 1: ASSESS INTEGRATION MATURITY

The objective of an integration maturity assessment is to identify gaps, capabilities and methodologies required to advance the organization. This assessment can be done internally, but bringing in a third-party to conduct interviews can prove more valuable. When looking at the overall maturity of an organization's integration landscape, consider the following attributes:

- **Current and past integration scenarios:** Are integrations ad hoc, point-to-point connections or applications designed to include a formal integration layer?
- **Integration models:** Is every integration a unique design or do they follow a larger model guide for integration development?
- **Methodology maturity:** Does the success of integrations depend on individuals or on processes and teams? Are there processes in place for continuous improvement?
- **Business processes:** Are business processes well documented? Are they stored in a central repository? Do they comprise a standard language?
- **Enterprise architecture:** Does architecture extend beyond specific initiatives? Is there an ambition for a formal architecture for the overall organization? Is the architecture designed in a way that can adapt to business changes?

## STEP 2: ESTABLISH A MISSION, CHARTER, SCOPE, AND TARGETS

This exercise involves working with stakeholders to assess the company's mission and goals for the Integration Center of Excellence and establish a charter. The targets for improvement in people, processes, and technology must be clear and well documented. While companies' objectives will vary, a few examples of achievable goals include:

- Boost productivity for IT and business units
- Standardize on an enterprise architecture
- Establish a single source of truth from a data governance point of view



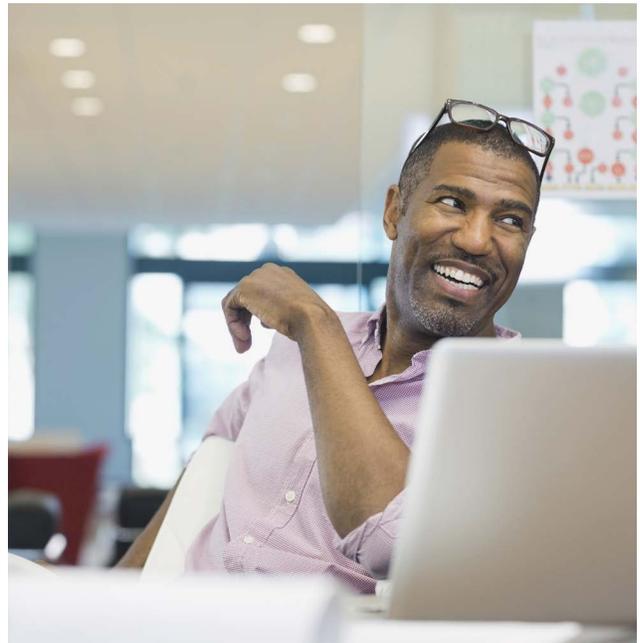
## STEP 3: PERFORM GAP ANALYSIS AND DEVELOP A LIST OF IMPROVEMENTS

Once the organization's integration capabilities are assessed and the goals of the ICoE are identified, it's time to connect the dots between the current state of integration and the desired state. The gap analysis identifies the improvements the organization needs to achieve, and documents and articulates them clearly. This is key. The team must ensure that the improvements are well understood, and that expectations are aligned within the Integration Center of Excellence, the organization, and its stakeholders.

## STEP 4: DEVELOP A MULTIPHASE DEPLOYMENT ROADMAP

The roadmap considers people, processes, and technology. Although each area deserves individual attention, the three are interrelated. For example, if an organization decides to change its technology, there might be a strong impact on business processes due to optimized efficiencies. The new processes need to be documented in detail, people trained accordingly, and so on. Following are specific considerations.

- People: Training on new tools and processes, hiring for specific roles, building capabilities in-house, instituting governance models
- Process: Establishing a formal process for integration projects and standards
- Technology: Making decisions on moving to a new platform, or using a public, private, or managed integration service



## STEP 5: DELIVER A FINAL ENGAGEMENT REPORT TO BUSINESS AND IT LEADERS

A report summing up the findings is necessary for stakeholders to understand the gaps and next steps, and creates an easy way to follow up on the goals, actions, and deliverables of the Integration Center of Excellence. The engagement report will also provide leadership with a roadmap, including short-term and long-term projects and initiatives, enabling the organization to track the integration progress. Tracking activities provide visibility to the budget execution and the contribution of each team involved.

# Measuring the success of an Integration Center of Excellence

As with any successful endeavor, the Integration Center of Excellence must develop the ability to track, measure, and report on the performance of the team's initiatives across all of its efforts, as well as specific metrics within the organization itself. This is critical to the growth and evolution of the Center of Excellence—demonstrating success will be a major factor in buy-in and support from stakeholders throughout the organization, particularly upper management.

All measuring relies on having an established baseline against which to compare performance. At the start of an initiative, the team must immediately identify and establish baselines for the work efforts being performed or to be performed. These baselines can be developed

from internal organizational experiences, industry-accepted and published standards, or both.

For deliverables to internal stakeholders, the Integration Center of Excellence should establish Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to clearly and concisely define the targets and thresholds that determine a successful endeavor. Measuring performance also allows the Integration Center of Excellence to reengineer weaker or deficient areas through training and research or through solicitation of expertise from subject matter experts.

Measuring success serves to increase the overall quality of the Integration Center of Excellence and helps secure further funding and internal support while driving organizational efficiencies that lead to strong competitive advantage.



# A clear path forward

An optimal integration landscape doesn't have to be an impossible ideal, something for which we are always striving but never quite achieving. Too often, organizations fall into integration rabbit holes that actually land them farther away from where they need to be. Treating integration as a strategic imperative represents a fundamental paradigm shift for most organizations. Moving forward on a successful integration path requires a clear-eyed assessment of your organization's readiness and internal capabilities to bring a connected ecosystem to life in the most seamless possible way.

Going the extra mile to establish an Integration Center of Excellence—following the 5 steps outlined in this paper—is instrumental in upholding a cohesive and adaptable integration strategy that keeps the organization streamlined, efficient, and moving ever-forward. An agile, scalable integration strategy driven by an Integration Center of Excellence helps organizations meet the ultimate goals of getting the right information to the right person in real time. This integrated connectedness leads to new business ideas and outcomes that will keep the organization primed for success in this increasingly volatile digital economy.



# Why Capgemini and SAP

As more and more leaders recognize the importance of integration as a strategic imperative in achieving business goals, the need to establish an Integration Center of Excellence is becoming more essential and urgent than ever before.

Trying to establish and run a connected enterprise can, however, be fraught with challenges. While some organizations possess the requisite internal integration expertise, most must seek external trusted partner resources for help. Capgemini is one such trusted SAP integration partner.

Capgemini brings together a diverse and knowledgeable group of experts alongside SAP to develop integration best practices. The depth and breadth of Capgemini's integration experience, coupled with their objective and valuable outside perspective, is especially advantageous for organizations seeking a smooth journey toward an Integration Center of Excellence.

Together, SAP and Capgemini can increase productivity throughout an organization by maintaining a consistent and secure integration framework and platform. This leads to accelerated innovation and migration, increased business agility and a reduction in the overall costs of change.

When combined with the breadth of SAP's process, data and application integration offerings, Capgemini and SAP are well positioned to help organizations tackle integration more strategically and successfully across the enterprise.

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*Evaluate your organization's integration maturity stage with the SAP [Integration Maturity Assessment tool](#) for helpful tips on how to improve your integration initiatives.*

*Read more about SAP integration offerings [here](#).*

*Read more about Capgemini integration services [here](#).*



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