


The Intersection Between Simplicity and Business Value

Automating Your Migration
to SAP S/4HANA

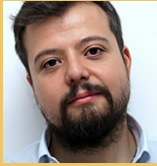


by **Brianna Shipley**, Senior Editor, SAPinsider

In a business environment that rewards speed and efficiency in the name of accelerated innovation, IT and line-of-business (LOB) teams face extreme pressure to quickly adapt to new technologies and processes, continually improve complex IT environments, and work seamlessly together. These pressures are often a result of the need to modernize IT infrastructures to stay relevant, remain agile, and become an intelligent enterprise — goals that SAP S/4HANA can help businesses achieve. The need to meet these goals combined with the end of mainstream maintenance in 2027 (2030 for extended maintenance) for systems based on SAP ERP Central Component (SAP ECC), such as SAP Business Suite, is driving additional pressure on SAP customers to migrate to SAP S/4HANA.

While the type of business being conducted by SAP customers varies greatly, those on the path to SAP S/4HANA share common objectives, according to the Red Hat Ansible team. These objectives include increasing the return on investment (ROI) and optimization, achieving consistency with reduced human error and improved auditability, and accelerating speed to market through faster remediation. To meet these needs, at least 37% of SAP customers who participated in [a recent survey conducted by SAPinsider](#) said they are currently automating steps of their SAP S/4HANA migration, such as testing and data migration.

Many questions remain around the concept of automation when it comes to supporting an SAP S/4HANA migration project. How do you implement automation



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(Ansible), Red Hat

to support processes that are shared across multiple teams or departments without creating complexity? “Maintaining enterprise applications such as SAP often involves several, diverse teams, and simplicity grows more important the more people it impacts,” says Marcos Entenza, Principal Product Marketing Manager (Portfolio Architecture) at Red Hat. How do you take full advantage of the benefits of automation — including what should teams do with their time once automation has replaced their daily manual tasks? The remainder of this article aims to answer these questions for SAP customers currently migrating or planning a migration to SAP S/4HANA.

Implement Automation at Your Own Speed

According to Massimo Ferrari, Consulting Product Manager (Ansible) at Red Hat, many businesses

think about automation as an “all-in” technology implementation project, which is an approach that could quickly become overwhelming in enterprise application landscapes, such as SAP, which could be highly stratified. “You have infrastructure components underneath, then you have the operating system and the actual application layer, and then any additional components that may be running in an extended perimeter such the public cloud,” he says. This results in diverse teams working across different levels of the organization and with different responsibilities across the IT stack. In this type of setup, where automation is often adopted in “pockets,” or silos — that is, within the different layers of the IT stack and across different teams — the adoption of automation can be approached as a journey rather than all at once with the goal of breaking silos with a unified strategy.

Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform enables a “staged” approach to automation and allows for collaboration across the IT organization’s different teams. It simplifies the adoption of automation through its agentless, modular architecture, including components such Red Hat Ansible Tower (for centralizing and controlling your IT automation processes), Automation Hub (a repository of Ansible-certified integrations, called “modules” and packaged in content collections), the Automation Services Catalog (to simplify business users’ access to their automation assets) and Automation Analytics (which provides a visual dashboard, health notifications, and organizational statistics across different teams using Ansible). These platform components allow IT organizations to implement and consume automation according to the organization’s own business processes, level of maturity, and goals. In this way, SAP customers can ease into their automation journey by starting with simple tasks that provide immediate benefits, and then evolve their approach to automate more sophisticated tasks as their confidence grows.

Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform simplifies not only the SAP S/4HANA migration process, but also the post-migration environment. It provides support for implementing SAP’s intelligent applications (specifically around data intelligence) and adapting the landscape to SAP technology enhancements. Adapting to enhancements — for example, adjusting business processes — can take

time away from employees' typical daily tasks and requires creative thinking and communication, which is why it is important to correct the misconception that automation replaces human operators.

Free Up Time to Add More Value

The goal of automation is to take care of repeatable and predictable tasks, such as enforcing desired configurations, maintaining a baseline that is compliant with corporate policies, and maintaining operations. However, its true value is not necessarily in what it replaces, but in what it creates—time for operators to do something that automation cannot, which is think. “Automation simplifies the lives of operators so they have more time to focus on higher-value tasks,” Ferrari says. Organizations' focus on freeing up employees' time so they can concentrate on optimizing processes, for example, is supported in [SAPinsider's recent research](#) — 42% of survey respondents said their top driver for implementing process automation was that their employees require increased capacity to focus on higher-value activities.

Ferrari flips the “replacement” misconception on its head by explaining that many customers, once they've implemented it, have reported automation as a way to empower their workforce to do more in the same amount of time. They also see it as an opportunity for IT professionals to grow, and for companies to generate more business dealing with an unprecedented level of scale and complexity. During the deployment phase of an SAP S/4HANA migration, for example, SAP customers can use Ansible Automation Platform to make the process more reliable, as well as speed up the activities performed by the operator to implement the new environment, such as targeting host preparation following all the SAP Notes to run a certified deployment. “These activities are very time consuming, and the best part here is that we at Red Hat develop the automation and support customers with our solution [System Roles for SAP](#),” says Entenza. By automating these activities and creating a dependable process, the operator is free to take care of high-value activities and think of ways to further improve the environment, which in turn can support more business.

Following the deployment, the next phase of an SAP S/4HANA migration typically includes a



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period of optimizing the organization's processes to ensure the environment is ready for end users. “The tasks that need to be performed during this operational phase are not difficult, but they are time consuming, making them the perfect candidates for automation,” says Entenza. Removing the manual effort from these tasks provides another opportunity for staff to innovate, brainstorm, and strategize ways to improve processes and the IT landscape.

According to feedback received during customer focus groups conducted by the Red Hat Ansible team, IT teams aren't the only ones to seek support during an SAP S/4HANA migration — a lack of time, resources, and scarcity of professionals to be hired on the part of an organization's LOB teams can make it challenging to adapt to the change that results from the migration. When completing a project such as an SAP S/4HANA migration, establishing strong lines of communication across the board and replacing a culture of silos with one of collaboration is critical. As a result, it is not only

technical support that organizations need during the migration, but also support for change in the culture of the organization, as LOBs and IT operating teams work together to align on how SAP S/4HANA will impact business processes and how those processes can be improved.

Supporting a Culture of Collaboration

In Ferrari's experience, many businesses are adopting automation in disconnected pockets. "When SAP customers migrate to SAP S/4HANA, they may have different teams using automation to achieve different goals, they may not share a lot of common processes and often don't have a common ground to collaborate," he says.

According to SAPinsider's research, the most popular process automation strategies for solving these disconnects between different teams include integrating automation capabilities across functions and both SAP and non-SAP applications (reported by 58% of survey respondents) and reengineering or standardizing processes as part of the migration (cited by 41% of survey respondents). The Ansible language, YAML in the form of Ansible Playbooks, is human-readable and can help support these strategies by allowing customers to describe their automation jobs in natural language. "YAML allows for a common ground that can be shared across the different teams that exist in an IT organization," Ferrari says.

Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform further simplifies communication by engaging multiple audiences and creating various entry points to facilitate collaboration and increase visibility into how processes are implemented and executed. This allows businesses to automate in a more cohesive way, create and share content according to their own pace and policies, and, at the same time, grants access to an incredibly rich open-source community.

SAP customers migrating to SAP S/4HANA are not only migrating to a new technology, however — they are also moving to a new deployment model. In fact, according to [SAPinsider's research](#), most respondents (71%) plan to deploy SAP S/4HANA in some form of cloud infrastructure, meaning a shift away from an on-premise approach, even if they technically still use the on-premise version of SAP S/4HANA within that cloud infrastructure. Ansible not only helps these customers automate this process

to make it faster, reduce cost and complexity, and increase the speed to market, it also supports the shift in culture toward collaboration and makes it easier for organizations to get started with automation by lowering the barrier to entry. "For example, with Ansible, SAP customers have the opportunity to connect IT operations with the application team for a more efficient migration and maintenance project experience," Entenza says.

Jump-Start Your SAP S/4HANA Migration with Automation

SAP customers are under pressure to migrate to SAP S/4HANA not only because of mainstream maintenance for SAP ECC ending in 2027, but also because SAP S/4HANA helps pave the way to becoming an intelligent enterprise, which is critical in modern business landscapes. Both IT teams and LOB teams can struggle when navigating a migration to SAP S/4HANA and adapting to the ensuing change due to a lack of proper resources and time to consolidate the required skillsets. One way that organizations can help close these gaps is by using automation to simplify the migration, and SAPinsider's survey results show that among the respondents, testing for SAP S/4HANA is among the most popular targets for automation. This means that if you haven't yet started integrating test automation into your migration project, you're behind the curve.

While some companies that are unfamiliar with the adoption process for automation may be tempted to put it off, this would be a big mistake, according to Entenza. "Adopting the right tool set at the right time is always important, but it becomes critical in a situation where IT organizations are dealing with multiple moving parts. Customers who are not familiar with automation can use Ansible out-of-the-box, built-in automation assets supported by Red Hat engineers to save time when deploying," he says.

An automation solution such as Ansible Automation Platform can help an organization not only modernize its IT landscape and simplify processes based on today's needs, but continually simplify automation itself to scale and adapt over time. You don't have to take Red Hat's word for it — you can see for yourself how automation can help by signing up for a [60-day free trial](#) of Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform. ■