

CLOUD COMPUTING

Who Is Waiting Should Not Rest

Thorough preparation is everything when it comes to S/4 Hana migrations. Many companies are hesitant to switch to S/4 and Hana, waiting for the perfect moment to migrate - which will never truly come.

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Cloud Computing is the practice of flexibly and dynamically providing IT resources, like hardware and software, to external service providers through networks.

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The migration to S/4 Hana is not just a (hopefully) simple switch between two solutions. With S/4 and cloud applications, companies open up new possibilities of flexibly, quickly, and independently leveraging data and resources. Companies wanting to succeed in the digital age cannot just let this opportunity pass. However, they can only benefit from digital successes if they are brave enough and willing to accept complexity, unpredictability, and incompleteness as part of the journey.

Switching to S/4 or cloud applications is not a one-time event, or the result of a month's work. It is a process involving a lot of effort from everyone in the company. The good news: this process is a renewal, and it prepares companies for challenging tasks in the future. Why wait, then?

"Cloud First" is SAP CEO Bill McDermott's catchphrase. Naturally, he wants all of his products to move to the cloud. Many customers that are happy with how their systems work on-prem are suddenly supposed to switch. And that without any guarantee that the systems will work as well in the cloud as they did on-prem.

The announcement of SAP's restructuring program has made people wary and suspicious. In the past couple of weeks, thousands of experienced specialists had to leave the software company. Bill McDermott promises that a thousand others will replace them to help him realize his cloud vision, to build a new, better SAP realm. Shareholders are happy that SAP is looking towards the future and preparing for it. Customers, however, are worried that this announcement means that SAP is not yet ready for cloud computing and its consequences.

Bill McDermott's vision is clear. However, it is just that - a vision without a strict timeframe or a fixed date. That's why many IT managers have a hard time to define goals for S/4 and cloud migrations, or to set a deadline. SAP itself isn't really helping, either, with all of the confusion surrounding its HR decisions in the past couple of months. Especially worrying is that Robert Enslin left the company earlier this year. He's

not only the third SAP top manager to abandon ship, but also the one who was responsible for SAP's cloud business. Customers can therefore be forgiven for being suspicious of SAP's vision.

Customers' fear and hesitation are understandable. The migration is tedious and complex. It challenges a lot of traditional assumptions. Many companies invested a lot in building up their Hana environment, and many employees have perfected their knowledge of on-prem systems - should that all be for nothing?

But that's not all. Many companies are also shocked to discover that the migration effort is unlike any they had known before. Still, waiting and hesitating would be disastrous. Customers, suppliers, and partners already require companies to process massive data volumes in real time.

This means that companies have to question everything what they thought they knew about their ERP landscapes. They then often see that many systems and processes have grown over time. Their number can and should be reduced through thorough planning and reliable overviews. Already, companies will feel more flexible, lean, and agile. Better computing performance, additional cost savings because of less servers, and a consistent user experience also come with the migration - making it worth the effort after all.

Maybe the goal is not even as important as the journey itself. Switching to SAP Cloud Platform is not what makes a company truly agile and intelligent. It's the process that came before, with all its efforts and costs, that gives companies an opportunity to learn and grow.

Customers are hoping for some guidance on cloud and Hana at Sapphire 2019 in Orlando, Florida. They are hoping that somehow, one of SAP's announcements will show them the way, will show them a clear path towards Hana and cloud computing. However, customers hoping for SAP to make hard decisions for them are hoping in vain. What they truly need is courage and a desire to change.