SAP Development Meets Open Source Freedom

SAP developers often wait with bated breath for technologies already available in the non-SAP world. However, it doesn't have to be that way: Thanks to modern platforms and open source, they already have a plethora of tools at their disposal.

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Linux is a platform for SAP ERP, from R/3 to ECC 6.0, and the sole operating system for Hana. Linux is at the fore-front of open source innovation at SAP. This opinion piece primarily focuses on Linux/Hana archi-tectures.

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SAP developers don't always have it easy. Ever faster implementation, a focus on innovation and the best possible use of cloud concepts are new corporate requirements. For this reason, this opinion piece addresses this guild of developers – not exclusively, but primarily – because there are good things to report.

Focus on open source

The IT landscape has changed radically in recent years, and open source technologies in particular have become more and more established as the standard in a variety of ways. Developers who have long worked in the supposed SAP silo are faced with a host of new frameworks and tools whose focus is not primarily on implementing vertical applications. However, what if the world of open source culture, with all its practical concepts and applications, enabled an optimized im-plementation of modernized and new SAP busi-ness processes – from development to operation and across all platforms? It would be a win-win situation for everyone. Technically, this is already possible today; but understandably, the only thing that has failed up to now is the selection of appro-priate approaches on the way to sustainable, cross-silo use.

To be able to assess the scope of this question, the focus should first and foremost be on open source. These principles and tools have already enabled modern development of flexible, scalable, and secure applications across all application areas and industries for several years. SAP developers are of course aware of all this, and the use of open source is no longer a rarity here, either. However, practical implementation is still sluggish, as a look at SAP's „Developer Insights" survey shows. Here, the in-house proprietary programming language Abap continues to dominate, while most non-SAP languages have yet to establish themselves. So, how can developers in the SAP area benefit from the large open source ecosystem – especially when it comes to non-SAP integration beyond the boundaries of BTP and the desire to collaborate with other departments? Modern platforms such as Red Hat OpenShift, for example, rely entirely on open source to solve the problem. They relieve the developers and operations team of the painstaking task of designing and maintaining a coordinated development environment and infrastructure from hundreds of components. They combine a cloud-native foundation based on Kubernetes directly with the necessary modules for an enter-prise-scale, mission-critical deployment: automa-ted provisioning, self-services, application lifecycle management, cluster management, security and governance, monitoring, and many more. This allows a BTP environment and hyperscaler plat-forms with their native services, on-premises and edge scenarios, AI and ML data and models to be combined into a single strategic development environment. Silos are broken down, and the focus remains on innovation and time-to-market rather than operations. With this bridge into the world of open source technology, the doors to CI/CD, Dev-SecOps or pipelining are also wide open for SAP developers.

Full range of tools

Developers also become more independent and can implement applications across departments without long waiting times and high costs. They can use new technologies such as cloud-native solutions as well as the full range of tools and frameworks for their own projects, and integrate with SAP much more easily.

SAP developers can make use of the new tech-nologies and find a lot of support in the open sour-ce community. The possibilities have long been there, not least thanks to enterprise solutions such as OpenShift. Building everything yourself is no longer necessary.