

Scaling SaaS adoption in large enterprises

The challenges of evolved
distributed SaaS adoption

Intent

Demonstrate a common challenge with rapid adoption of SaaS across a large enterprise. Discuss the integration specific aspects of this issue. Note how IBM's hybrid integration portfolio can help.

Due to the simplicity and low-cost to get started with Software-as-a-Service, departments within an organization have often introduced online services with almost trivial ease. Use of software as a service applications like Salesforce may well begin under the radar of corporate IT governance, perhaps initially born from a need to rapidly adopt a customer relationship management (CRM) tool, but then quickly realizing the broader capabilities of the overall Salesforce platform. Due to the low entry cost SaaS can often be deployed without the need for centralized Capex funding and the cost model fits within a department's operating budget.

Of course, decentralization was and is one of the biggest benefits of SaaS, and we're not saying that's a bad thing. However, decentralization also leads to multiple sources and sites of data which are unconnected with each other and with the different business units using the software. In a CRM scenario, for example, sales, marketing and customer service could all be pulling data for the same customer from different databases. They don't get the unified customer-centric view they need, and the customer doesn't get the holistic experience they expect.

As a result, many organizations with multiple SaaS implementations can experience a reduction in agility, revenue and cost efficiencies.

Distributed SaaS adoption

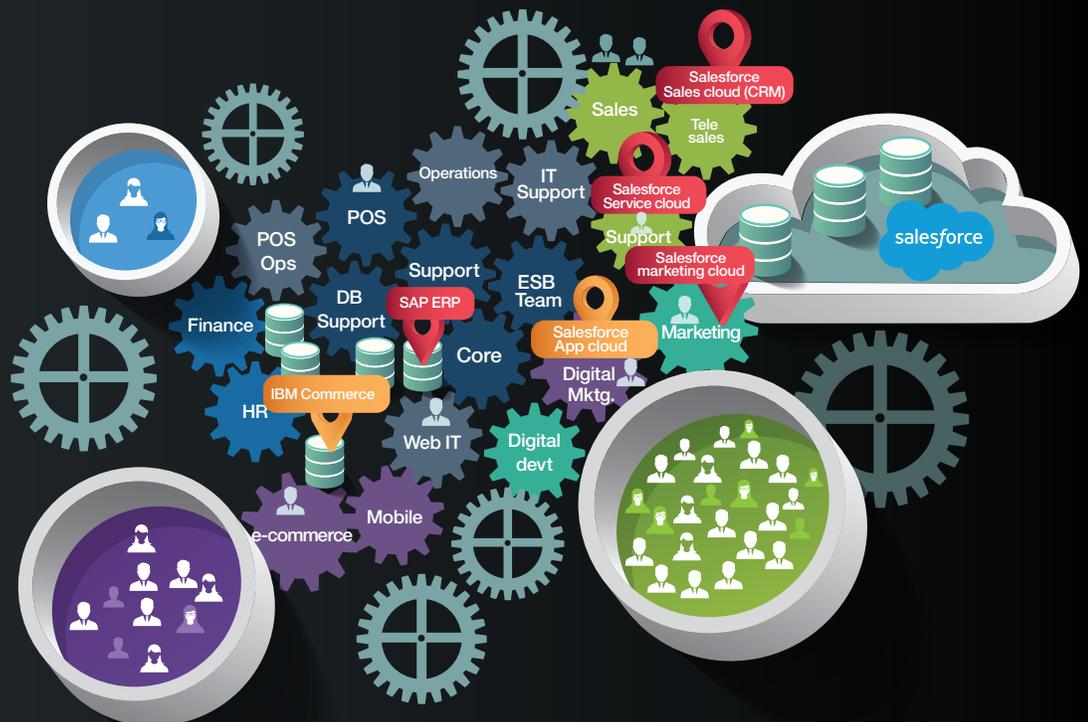
We often see this distributed adoption of the same SaaS applications seeded in several parts of an organization independently, each growing at a different pace of maturity, and each making different choices about what data is stored. There could easily be dozens of these "orphaned" implementations across an enterprise. In addition, each area will make different decisions about how to customize their implementation of SaaS to integrate with other sources of data.

Initially everything is good; SaaS applications provide each department with powerful web based platforms with minimal on-boarding friction. The software's use is quickly broadened well beyond traditional usage cases to capabilities in Service, Customer & Partner Communities, Analytics, IoT, Commerce, and more.

Let's look at one of the most powerful and versatile SaaS products on the market – Salesforce. The powerful underlying Force.com platform's simple customization and extension often become the technology of choice for new applications catering to the specific needs of the department, without the latency of expensive and sluggish full scale IT projects. But what happens when distributed data comes into play?

For example, data about the same customer is duplicated across the organization in each of the separate Salesforce implementations and it becomes hard to get a single view of all the interactions the customer has with the company. This makes it harder to demonstrate a personal relationship with the customer, and reduces the opportunity to upsell and cross-sell across the products the organization provides.

Large scale
Salesforce
adoption:
evolution of a
distributed
Salesforce org.



Furthermore, departments using Salesforce create unique customizations to their implementation to mold Salesforce to fit their part of the business. The customizations involve implementing new custom business processes in Salesforce, over and above Salesforce's default Out-of-the-Box models. However, each department will make different choices about what data they bring in and in what form they will store it, further complicating the process of realizing a Single View of the Customer. This is compounded by the fact that the individuals who made those unique customizations may move on from the company, or retire, taking their intimate knowledge of how the data and processes are distributed with them.

This might be new data that the organization wants to capture, or it may be data that it already has in enterprise systems such as SAP, Siebel or custom Systems of Record. If those systems have no way to communicate with each other, and model their data differently, it leads to silos of information, with each department having access to only their small part of the overall customer picture.

Options for refactoring the distributed data of SaaS

Ultimately, the organization's aim is to bring all that siloed data into the place where the business users spend most of their time and can most easily interact with it – in this case, we'll continue to use Salesforce as an example. There are several ways an organization might choose to attempt integration internally, each of which will probably be present in multiple styles using different tools and techniques, each of which introduces a subsequent increase in backend complexity.

Internal Integration Scenarios



Data Migration

Migrating data from an existing system thus resulting in the need to add new tables and fields to the Salesforce data model. This might ultimately result in the decommissioning of an existing system, or at least simplification of its usage.



Data Synchronization

Setting up two-way synchronization of data between an existing system and Salesforce such that the data can be viewed in either place. This inevitably introduces complexity regarding which source of data is the primary trustworthy source.



Direct Connectivity

Providing a real-time connection to an existing system's data, so that it can be viewed from within Salesforce. This might be done by using Salesforce's Lightning Connect capability to introduce external data sources that talk to the OData protocol, or for more complex cases through custom Apex code to perform the connectivity.

None of these options are easy to implement, and the increasing permutations of integration patterns and technologies will require nurturing by a wide range of specialists and are at risk if those individuals move on or retire.

Due to the separately evolving implementations of SaaS applications like Salesforce, what often occurs is "integration by stealth." Business units have funded integration projects based on a near term business need using any tools and specialists available to them.

These diverse integrations become embedded in the increasingly complex evolving fabric of the enterprise, introducing the following challenges:

- **Reduced agility:** Resistance to innovation due to increasing complexity and fragility of the enterprise landscape.
- **Reduced revenue:** Inability to cross-sell due to lack of a single customer view.
- **Increased costs:** Maintaining these ever-diverging customization patterns becomes an inherent drain on operational costs.

SaaS consolidation and rationalization

Clearly, we want to retain the benefits of mature software as a service. It makes complete sense to use established cloud based capabilities for core business functions such as CRM and the many other services provided by companies such as Salesforce. The question is how to do that in a way that can be scaled across the enterprise, and retain the business agility needed to remain competitive.

- **Focus on consolidation:** Wherever possible, aim to merge implementations. Take advantage of experienced practitioners with knowledge of current techniques for progressive migration patterns, and data rationalization across implementations.
- **Empower business users to innovate:** Provide the business powerful but consistent tools for SaaS integration that are strongly cohesive with the tools used by specialists. Enable specialists to surface new tools for the business to innovate rather than becoming a bottleneck through complex integration projects. The business users will then feel more empowered to achieve their needs within a single platform rather than breaking off into separate domains.
- **Converge integration patterns and tools to enable agility:** Reduce the need to maintain and manage an increasingly diverging integration infrastructure by using tools with “burnt-in” common practice patterns. Use a consistent set of integration tools that are effective across the spectrum of users from citizen integrators through to integration specialists. The tools should enable new integrations can be rapidly explored, prototyped and progressively matured rather than implemented in waterfall projects.

An integrated Salesforce experience provides employees with a 360-degree customer view, enabling them to provide an optimized customer journey and an exemplary customer experience. It makes it possible to augment the interaction with the customer with intelligence based on the total customer interaction footprint. Only with this accurate, consistent, complete, and mastered data can we truly personalized the relationship, giving us the opportunity to upsell and cross-sell across the organization.

IBM integration portfolio

Our hybrid integration portfolio encapsulated in the IBM Application Integration Suite provides mature integration tools that cater to the organization’s needs at all levels. From business power users connecting SaaS capabilities such as Salesforce, through to the highly specialized technicians connecting to the deepest systems within the enterprise. The tooling simplifies core integration patterns such as APIs, events, and data synchronization, and focuses on open standards and industry best practices.

Users can start with simple integrations in a managed integration as a service capability. Their experience can then be enriched by integration specialists surfacing even the most complex systems within the enterprise, and further empowering the business users.

Optional centralized management enables a cross-organization view of the integration landscape enabling greater insight into data passing across the enterprise boundaries, and enabling a proactive approach to future integration needs. A CSR should be able to investigate issues down the supply chain to better serve customers, and sales should have a deeper understanding of clients’ past performance and issues. **For more information on the portfolio, take a look at the IBM Redbook on Hybrid Integration.**

An optimized SaaS or Salesforce implementation should require minimal effort for specialists to maintain, be seamless to users and create opportunities for agility and innovation as well as increased revenue from cross-selling and upselling. The IBM Application Integration Suite delivers that environment, providing one seamless view into the power of SaaS across departments.



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IBM Corporation
New Orchard Road
Armonk, NY 10504

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