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Upgrade Your Data, Not Just Your Software

Nothing stays the same. No one knows this better than the executive facing an upgrade of existing SAP R/3 systems to SAP ERP. As soon as you start considering the project, eager colleagues begin asking for enhancements, additional modules, the consolidation of several other systems into SAP ERP, and many additional changes to optimize the new system's use within the company.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking of the upgrade process purely as a software project, but it is important to remember that underlying all of these changes and enhancements is your data — one of your business's most critical assets. An upgrade is not just a software upgrade — it is a business process upgrade, which includes software, procedures, people, and most importantly, your data.

So for your next SAP upgrade, you need to consider the following very carefully: Are you performing a technical upgrade or are you re-implementing SAP software? If you're looking at a technical upgrade only, you may be missing an opportunity to resolve any ongoing issues with poor data quality that you have struggled with upon first implementing an integrated ERP system.

Note though, that it is not enough to recognize the importance of data quality — you must have a proven plan, robust tools, and experienced people to finally resolve the effects of poor data quality in your SAP system.

A re-implementation of SAP software is the right time to take advantage of your hard-earned knowledge about poor data quality and its impact on your ability to realize the full benefit of your SAP ERP system. Now that you have direct experience using SAP, it is also a good time to make the most of SAP solutions' continuing improvements and upgraded features.

Key Term: Data Migration Upgrade

A data migration upgrade is a process consisting of:

- Analyzing the existing data
- Reporting on and resolving current issues in the data
- Validating the prepared data
- Loading the data into the new SAP ERP system

If you are considering these types of improvements in your next upgrade, and if you want to learn how to provide more value to your business in the process, read on.

Why a Data Migration Upgrade Is the Right Way to Go

BackOffice Associates recommends implementing a data migration upgrade, instead of a software upgrade, in the following scenarios:

1. Your organization possesses a critical need for high-quality data.
2. You are adding new functionality to your system as part of the upgrade.
3. You are consolidating multiple SAP R/3 systems into one SAP ERP system.
4. You have significant custom tables and fields in your SAP R/3 system.

Ensure Data Quality

Many companies started out by filling their SAP R/3 systems with data that was only marginally better than the data in the legacy systems they replaced. Unfortunately, these organizations did not provide strong data governance and data stewardship for their SAP R/3 systems, resulting in gradually degraded data quality. This occurred because they often copied configuration data directly from legacy systems, without analyzing or cleansing it. Incomplete stewardship processes in legacy systems carried over into SAP R/3, which resulted in data that was obsolete or that lacked referential integrity.

In addition, organizations often postponed — or overlooked — archiving in SAP solutions. Over time, as noted previously, the overall quality of system data deteriorated, though users often couldn't understand or analyze why.

A data migration upgrade allows you to analyze and cleanse your data. Armed with a more complete under-

standing of your SAP systems, you should meet with your business process owners and revisit their requirements — remembering that these requirements will change over time. You can review data, make decisions, and implement corrections so that the data you load into SAP ERP is business-ready data¹ that is also business relevant.

You can also put stewardship procedures in place that introduce automation and create accountability and ownership at the user level. To do this, you will need to acquire a preconfigured toolset with workflow enablement, quality metrics reporting, and duplicate detection (see figure below). For global organizations, the tools should also be multilingual.

Most importantly — in addition to preconfigured content and functionality — business people (not IT teams) should be able to easily configure the toolset. Enabling the business to control the data is imperative in order to effectively manage your specific business process requirements; the tools *must* be user-friendly. Instituting this commitment to data governance at the business level will empower your organization to retain high quality, business-relevant data for years to come.

Add New Functionality

During the initial implementation of SAP solutions, project teams often cut back on the scope of the imple-

mentation in order to hit their target go-live date. An upgrade is your opportunity to add that scope — or newly available capabilities — back in.

In addition, many SAP R/3 users have learned a hard lesson by the time they begin considering an upgrade: Their attempt to replicate their legacy system in their new SAP solutions was a mistake — that they would have been better off having utilized the inherent SAP process designs from the start.

A software upgrade alone will not allow you to address these opportunities but a data migration upgrade does. New functionality, supported by business-ready data, can be introduced as part of the upgrade. Data can be retrieved from any remaining legacy systems or constructed to meet the specific needs of the SAP ERP features you are adding.

Consolidate SAP R/3 Systems

It's highly unlikely that your multiple SAP R/3 systems are absolute clones of one another — or that they contain entirely distinct data. This is just another reason we advocate upgrading to the SAP ERP system through a data migration upgrade.

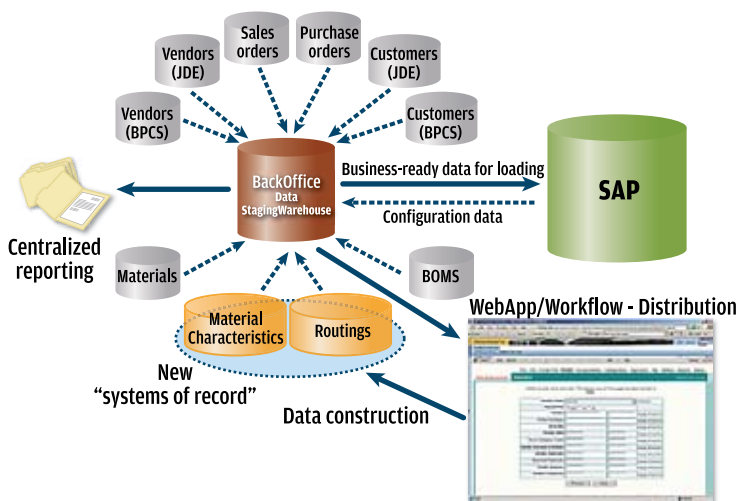
The migration process will allow you to merge data from multiple systems, identify and remove duplicate records, consolidate records from multiple systems into single SAP ERP records, and ensure that all required data has been captured from each and every SAP R/3 system.

Upgrade Your Custom Tables and Fields

At the time of your upgrade, make it a point to also review the content of your custom tables and fields, while asking yourself:

- Why do these objects exist?
- Are they still necessary given the current functionality of your SAP solutions?
- Should we archive some of this data?
- Are there orphan records as a result of the archiving of standard SAP data?
- Will the new functionality aptly support the custom data objects?

This analysis — and the subsequent actions required to assure complete and accurate custom data in the new system — will not happen by simply performing a software upgrade. If you upgrade the software only, you have no opportunity to review your data and make these



Our holistic method for legacy extracts brings legacy data into the central repository for analyses and reporting. This data is then matched with SAP solution configuration data, which identifies key migration challenges. Loading early and often assures a continual improvement cycle is implemented, assuring business-ready data for SAP solutions at go-live.

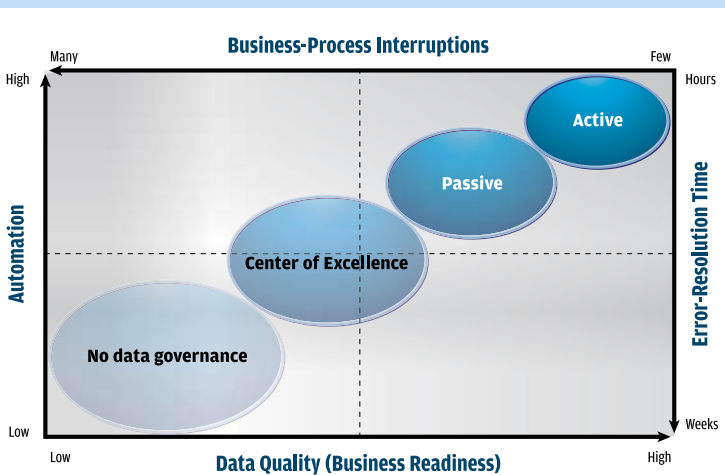
¹ Business-ready data is data that has been fully evaluated for duplicates, business relevance, and completeness.

guarantee that the quality of the data remains high. Use tools and metrics to test key data regularly — daily, weekly, monthly. Use software and procedures that prevent duplicate or incomplete data from entering the system, and ones that also expedite the creation of new data.

Consider this: What if there was a way to automate data governance and provide business process owners and business managers with automated reports and remediation plans for retaining data quality in SAP? BackOffice Associates recommends, at a minimum, that you institute a passive data governance model — an automated practice in your organization that holds the business accountable on a regular basis for its data and error remediation. Errors are automatically reported back to their authors for correction and quality metrics are delivered to management. This model enables a valuable, measurable process. If your business requires you take things a step further and institute active data governance (see figure), this will ensure data is deemed business ready prior to entry into the SAP system, eliminating the possibility of business process interruptions due to errors in omissions, consistency, content, duplicates, misuse of SAP, or lack of standards.

Conclusion

A data migration upgrade is nearly always the right choice when upgrading from SAP R/3 to SAP ERP. In today’s marketplace, the quality of your data is absolutely critical to your company’s long-term success. The software upgrade is important, but the data upgrade is *essential*.



The four models of data governance; as automation increases, error resolution time and business process interruptions decrease

For more information on how BackOffice Associates can help you with your data migration upgrade, please visit www.boaweb.com. ■

About BackOffice Associates

BackOffice Associates has been a thought leader in SAP data quality solutions since 1998 (see chart). With a staff of nearly 300 professionals throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, India, and Mexico, BackOffice Associates is considered one of the industry’s most experienced providers of SAP data quality solutions. BackOffice Associates’ innovative method of data preparation has been utilized in both training and assisting SAP customers for over a decade. The company has provided unparalleled “Boring Go Live” migrations by reducing risk through effectively cleansing, constructing, and validating data for SAP. BackOffice Associates’ data validation technology, methodology, and resources provide a complete set of tools to handle legacy migration to SAP in a fully validated and documented environment.

Data Quality Offerings from BackOffice Associates

Data Migration

- “Boring Go Live”² migrations with zero business process interruptions due to data
- Proven risk mitigation methodology meets testing and validation requirements
- Applications that incorporate codified best practices for SAP
- SAP data quality experts

Passive Data Governance

- “Business-Ready Data” for operational harmony in SAP
- Visibility into data quality metrics
- Workflow notification published directly to business data owners
- No change in normal user processes
- Solutions leveraged standalone or through your SAP portal

Active Data Governance

- “Business-Ready Data” firewall for SAP
- Six Sigma/TQM level master data governance
- Ability to turn master data management into a business process
- Sarbanes-Oxley compliance
- Collaborative data authorship that is easily audited
- Accelerated time-to-value for new object introduction

² A BackOffice Associates process that delivers a smooth and uneventful startup for any customer implementing SAP.