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Eliminate the Support Gap with an End-to-End Solution Operations Approach

Why SAP Support Teams Must Go Beyond Classic IT Support

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Companies' SAP support organizations are experiencing a gap between the support they are expected to provide to their business and their ability to fulfill those expectations.

The following example outlines the problem: Consider an SAP customer that is running an SAP solution into which they've integrated third-party partner solutions. They've enhanced the solution with custom code and have included the SAP portal as the interface for business users. Their IT team recently pushed this solution live after an upgrade from SAP R/3 to SAP ERP 6.0 — but business users are starting to complain about constantly degrading performance.

Problems like this are a real challenge for the support organization. Why? Because they have not managed the transition from classical IT support to end-to-end (E2E) solution operations. Unlike a classical IT support approach that's vendor-oriented, reactive, and dependent on patches, E2E solution operations help customers isolate problems, establish a clear resolution process to fix them, and prevent them from ever occurring again. With an E2E approach, the support organization would have the knowledge, the processes, and the tools for mission-critical support of the complete solution — and they'd be able to address users' performance complaints quickly.

The State of Support

This begs the question: What exactly is E2E solution operations? It's the sum of activities, tools, and processes that support teams must manage successfully in order for a complete SAP solution to ensure business continuity, agility, and value.

To better understand the need for E2E solution operations, let's analyze four reasons why a classical IT support organization is typically not well equipped for the above-mentioned problem:

1. **Insufficient technology knowledge:** Companies' solutions today usually encompass multiple technologies, each with its own troubleshooting and monitoring mechanisms. It's rare that a support organization would have expert-level knowledge of all of these heterogeneous technologies.

2. **Insufficient quality control:** Customer solutions typically use myriad change and patch technologies. These present a challenge: They are not universal and must be copied from one technology's directory to the other. They also pose problems for functional, regression, and volume testing — how can you make sure that *everything* is tested adequately?

3. **Insufficient integration validation:** Today's solutions integrate components from a variety of vendors with SAP components, which are often enriched by custom-specific code. So how can you ensure that all your business processes will still work on a solution level? Can all required data successfully pass from one system to the next?

4. **Insufficient readiness for business needs:** IT support organizations are often so occupied with running their complex solution that they do not have the time to reap the benefits of enterprise service-oriented architecture (enterprise SOA) and provide quick, satisfactory answers to their business's demands.

What's more, companies may often find themselves inadequately supported by their partner ecosystem. If an IT organization wants to outsource or out-task certain parts of its solutions, for instance, it might have trouble assessing whether a given service provider will take care of its solution landscape according to SAP recommendations. And if a company wants to hire new support staff, it may struggle to assess whether the applicants truly have the skills and expertise to run its solutions in a state-of-the-art fashion.

Arm Your Support Organization with a Proven Methodology and Toolset

To help remedy this situation, SAP has introduced Run SAP — SAP's methodology to implement E2E solution operations.

> The nature of business software solutions today requires support teams to change their thinking. Solutions will not get any easier from an operations perspective, so support teams must reach a new level of maturity — SAP provides the knowledge, tools, best practices, services, certifications, and training to help you get there.

The New SAP Enterprise Support Offering at a Glance

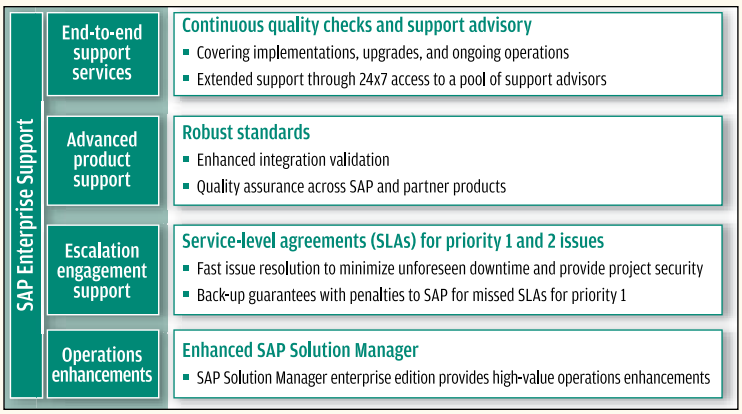
As IT landscapes grow and solutions become progressively more mission critical to enterprise business processes, companies require additional support to help drive competitive differentiation.

Following the successful SAP Premium Support offering, SAP Enterprise Support enables customers to set up integrated and standardized end-to-end solution operations. Based on the Run SAP methodology and focusing on holistic application lifecycle management, the offering provides one consistent and integrated quality management process across all technology stacks and the complete application landscape (see figure below).

The SAP Enterprise Support best-in-class support offering includes:

- **Industry-leading standards** – Tools, processes, and access to our highly skilled ecosystem
- **Built-in best practices** – Leading standards, industry-specific best practices, and SAP Solution Manager enterprise edition provide high-value operations enhancements
- **Risk management** – A combination of service-level agreements (SLAs), support advisory, and continuous quality checks help customers manage risk by establishing mission-critical operations support
- **Transparent quality management** – The SAP Global Support backbone allows continuous lifecycle management, on-demand support across both SAP's platform and partner offerings, and an integrated maintenance concept for both standard SAP and customer developments
- **Continuous value** – Standard methods for validating integration, reducing test efforts, and easing the adoption of the business process platform and enhancement packages

SAP Enterprise Support accelerates companies' ability to employ E2E solution operations. It's the right support option for customers looking for an integrated quality management process to help them master the complexity of an enterprise IT world. For more information, please visit **www.sap.com/services/bysubject/support**.



▲ An overview of SAP Enterprise Support, the newest offering in SAP's support portfolio

Run SAP provides:

- A set of robust E2E **operations standards**, which outline how core support activities should be handled optimally by the individual units in the customer support organization
- A set of **tools included in SAP Solution Manager**, along with the knowledge and information necessary to use them; this equips customers with essential root-cause analysis, quality control, and integration validation capabilities
- A **roadmap** that provides customers with the best practices, accelerators, and packaged knowledge required for implementing the E2E standards and tools in their support organization
- **Training, qualification, and certification programs** that, on one hand, allow customers to benefit from SAP's best-in-class support expertise; on the other hand, these programs also regulate the SAP ecosystem, thus making it easier for customers to pick the right service provider or hire the best support personnel
- E2E **service packages**, which provide customers with a hands-on learning opportunity to work on site with the best SAP support engineers; these packages provide a jump-start toward E2E solution operations

E2E Solution Operations in Practice

Assume that our example customer transitioned from traditional IT support to an E2E solution operations approach. How would this empower the support team to solve the performance problem?

First, the company would have all the required skills and support processes in place: Support employees would be E2E trained, and all operations processes would be set up as recommended by the SAP operations standards. In addition, the customer would have the required diagnostic tools it needed to find the root cause of a problem within – and even outside of – SAP components easily. If the problem required the installation of a patch, SAP's E2E change control and quality enhancements would allow customers to manage this change from both a technical and a quality perspective. And if the customer planned to outsource or out-task, the E2E operations standards would provide guidance on how to manage service providers, who in turn could prove their expertise through the E2E certifications.

In a nutshell, with E2E solution operations, customer support organizations can set up mission-critical support processes for complete SAP solutions – end to end. ■

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