

White Paper

The Importance of a Technical Interface between your Modeling Tool and SAP Solution Manager

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Theo has an IT education to bachelor level, and has obtained a master's degree in Business Administration.

He has worked for over 25 years on IT projects carrying out various roles from programmer to project manager.

In the last 15 years he has participated in various large SAP implementations.

For the last 10 years he has been implementing SAP Solution Manager as a tool to support SAP Projects and SAP Application Management.

Creating a model of your company's business processes can lead to advantages such as:

- **Clear overview of the business, to be used e.g. to train people joining the company**
- **Easier assessment of business process improvements potential**

A business process modeling tool is used on the business side of a company.

SAP Solution Manager is a tool to be used on the IT side of a company, as part of Application Lifecycle Management. In several ways, the implementation and maintenance of your IT applications can be supported using the tool. See also *Figure 1*, which shows the variety of IT processes supported using this tool (Incident Management, Change Management, Project Management etcetera).

Why is it important to create a 'technical bridge' or technical interface between both tools? This paper will cover the benefits as shown below.

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SAP Solution Manager: Integrated IT Management

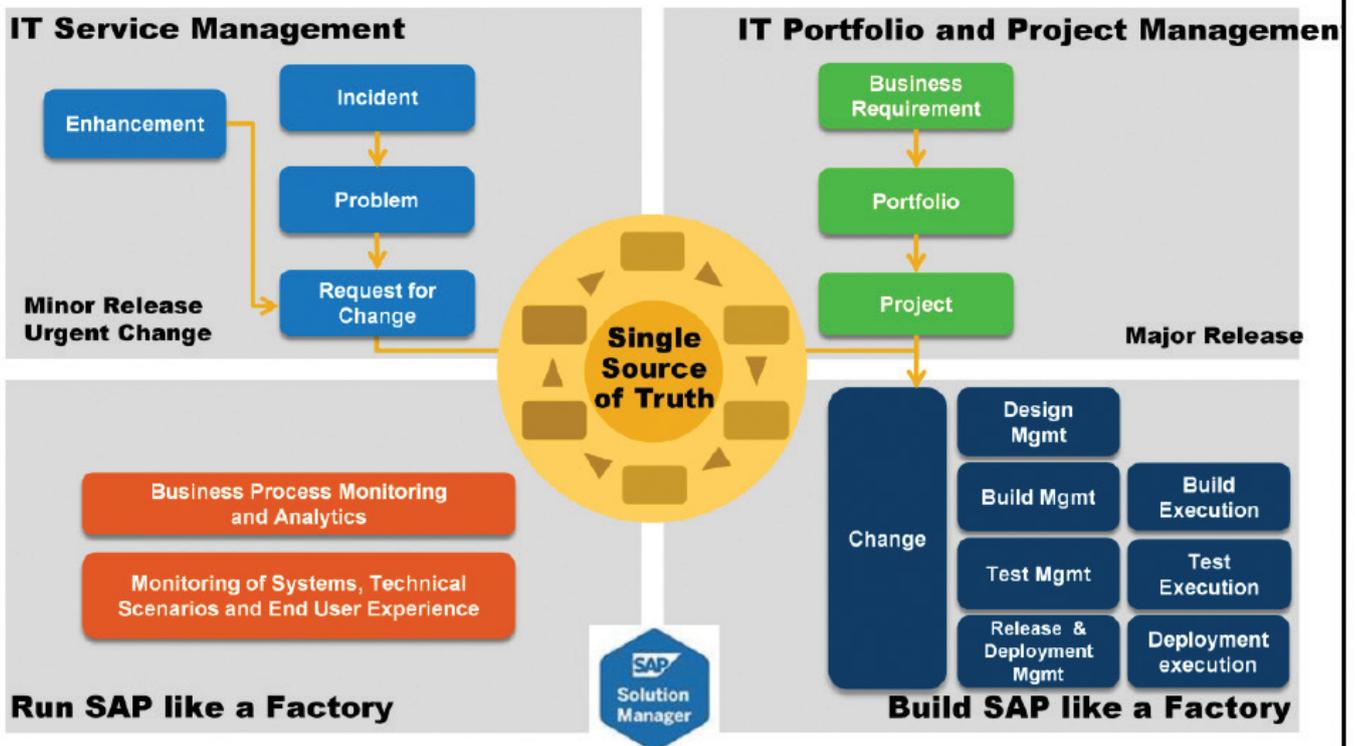


Figure 1

Benefits when using a 'bridge' between both tools:

- Easier communication
- Bridging the gap between business and IT
- Shorten IT Time to Market

Additional benefits when using a 'technical bridge':

- Increased efficiency
- Increased quality
- Less errors

Definition of a 'bridge' between a Process Modeling Tool and SAP Solution Manager.

First of all I would like to stress that a bridge between a business process modeling tool and SAP Solution Manager aims for the two tools to stay 'connected': the two tools use something in common, which needs to be maintained. The tools speak the same language, and this should also be the case in the future.

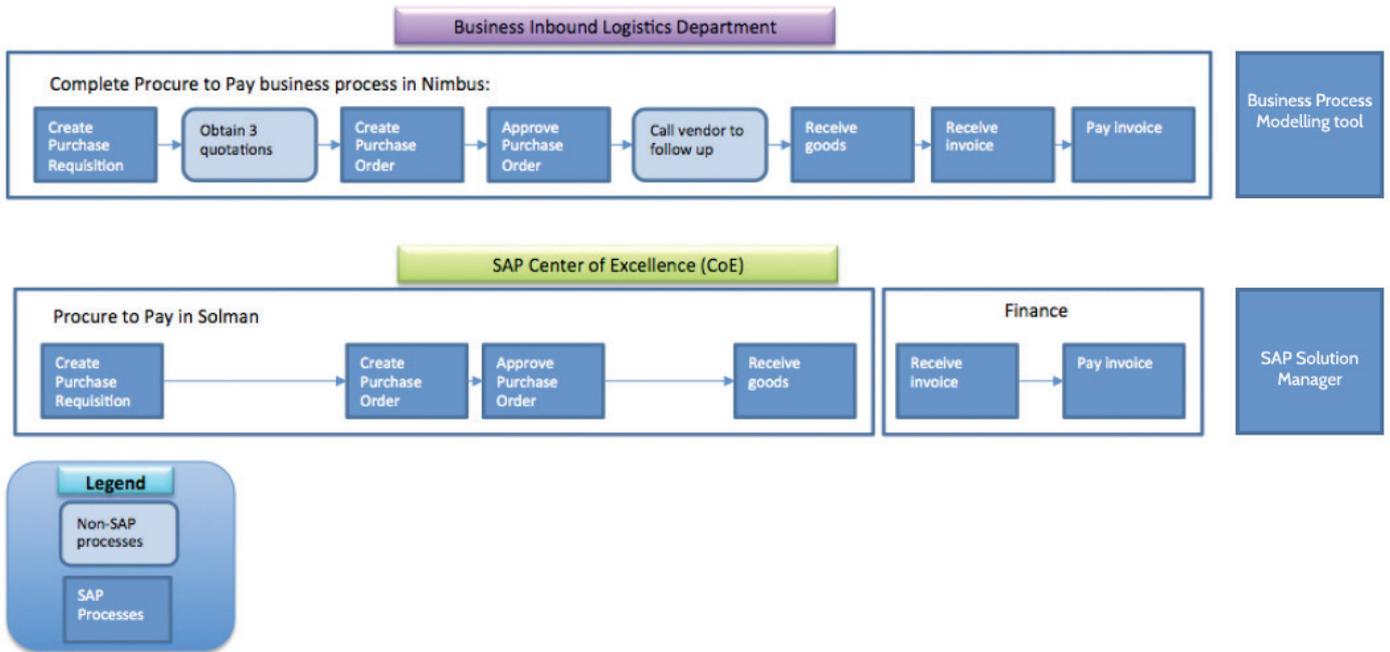


Figure 2

Many times this bridge is implemented by using the IT processes as modeled in SAP Solution Manager also in the business process modeling tool. By using this same process structure in both tools, a communications means is created. As SAP delivers package software, the processes are normally defined first in SAP Solution Manager using a copy from SAP.

Obviously this structure needs to stay aligned in both tools; any maintenance needs to be synchronized in both tools, to make sure they keep ‘speaking the same language’.

The processes in the business process modeling tool use the IT processes to support the business processes; the business processes are composed by using IT processes, and completed by using non-IT supported business processes.

Figure 2 shows an example: the top row concerns the business processes in the process modeling tool. The bottom row concerns the IT processes in SAP Solution Manager.

The dark blue boxes concern SAP IT processes, and are present in both the top and the bottom row. The business processes refer to or reuse SAP IT processes. Hence the same language is used, and the tools ‘are connected’. A ‘bridge’ (interface) needs to assure they ‘stay connected’.

Benefits when using a ‘bridge’

In this section the benefits are shown when using a ‘bridge’ between your business process modeling tool and SAP Solution Manager as your IT Application Management tool.

Easier Communication

When two different structures use a common part obviously they ‘communicate’ easier: a link is created, which provides information. Same applies when business processes re-use or refer to IT processes.

The business people can see what IT elements are provided to support the business, and can ask questions to IT people based on that information. In the same way IT people can analyze impact on business processes, and discuss this with business people.

Clearly, bi-directional communication benefits apply when creating a ‘bridge’ as this makes sure that the common parts stay aligned, from both the business side and the IT side. The bridge assures the two tools speak the same language, and this will stay the same in the future.

Bridging the gap between business and IT

The above paragraph also implies that business and IT are moving nearer towards each other. Better communication means improved communication, resulting in improved mutual understanding. The gap between business and IT gets a little more closed.

Also there will be fewer misunderstandings as communication improves.

The two tools use the same IT process structure, meaning business and IT people are on the same page more easily,

Shorten IT Time to Market

It is more and more important that IT applications can swiftly adapt to business needs. By having a bridge between business and IT, assessment can be carried out faster to show the impact of a business change on IT and vice versa. As the relationship between business and IT is clearer, the impact assessment can also be more easily carried out and to a higher quality. This decreases the chances on possible rework, or adding missed elements later on.

All together, the bridge between the business process modeling tool and SAP Solution Manager will result in faster implementation of IT changes and thus the IT Time to Market.

Benefits when using a technical ‘bridge’

The previous section shows the benefits when using a bridge between the business process modeling tool and SAP Solution Manager. Implementation of a bridge can be done by using a manual process: people need to make sure that IT processes stay aligned in the two tools.

Obviously, automation of such a bridge leads to further benefits which are discussed in this section. Several well-known business process modeling tools have implemented such a ‘technical bridge’ with SAP Solution Manager.

The additional benefits when using a ‘technical bridge’ discussed below, are:

- Increased efficiency
- Increased quality
- Reduction of errors

Increase in Efficiency

Most organizations, but certainly the larger ones, use many and complex business processes. Additionally, many of these processes are supported by IT processes. And a large volume of complex processes also implies a large volume of changes to be carried out over time.

When using a common structure in the business process modeling tool and SAP Solution Manager, software can help in reducing the efforts to make sure the structure stays aligned in both tools. Software can automatically detect differences, and synchronize where needed (e.g. a new process added in SAP Solution Manager, is automatically added in the business process modeling tool).

This ‘technical bridge’ results in efficiency gains as less people are needed to keep the structure aligned in both tools.

Quality gains

When the common structure in two tools is not kept aligned the quality of the information will obviously be reduced. Data will be missing, or incorrect, and any decisions taken might be (partly) incorrect.

There are several reasons why people are not so good in carrying out data synchronization:

- They forget to update data (don’t think about it)
- They miss parts that need to be updated (human error)
- They make an error while updating the data

A software interface will certainly result in improved quality, as software can be scheduled to run at a specific time and intervals. Also, software can make consistent updates (does not overlook certain cases, nor will be distracted from making the updates).

Software helps not only in automating data synchronization, to make sure a common structure stays aligned in two tools. Also software can help in doing checks, for example to see if all IT processes are used in business processes. This will lead to additional quality gains.

Reduction of errors

The reduction of errors is already mentioned in above paragraph on Quality Gains. Reduction of errors leads to improved quality.

But it is important here to stress the importance of data quality for the whole process of IT change implementation. Not having the correct data can result in the situations below:

- Not all software being changed
- Not all changes being tested
- Not all changes being tested in all applicable business variances
- Training documents are not adapted

Hence the importance of assuring the common structure in two tools is always aligned, without any errors in it.

Conclusion

A business process modeling tool is used on the business side where SAP Solution Manager is used on the IT side.

Why is it important to create a 'technical bridge' or interface between both tools?

Benefits when using a 'bridge' between both tools:

- Easier communication
- Bridging the gap between business and IT
- Shorten IT Time to Market

Additional benefits when using a 'technical bridge':

- Increased efficiency
- Increased quality
- Reduction of errors

Implementing a software interface, or 'technical bridge', between a business process modeling tool and SAP Solution Manager leads to one or more of above listed benefits.

As a result, the whole process of IT change implementation gets improved. This shows the huge importance of a 'technical bridge' between a business process modeling tool and SAP Solution Manager. The data is used in the beginning of the IT change process. Any error prevented in the beginning of the IT change cycle leads to incremental savings further downstream.

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