

SAP Go-Live is the beginning, not the end.

7 ways you can increase value from your SAP investment with an effective Centre of Excellence.

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Dr. Derek Prior



Eureka...

When was the last time you had one of those Eureka moments?

I remember my first Eureka moment after joining Gartner back in the last century.

I used to talk to Gartner clients in countless countries around the world. Those who had SAP in the year 2000 all had the same problem - R/3 was so hot that as soon as they went live all of their very best people left to cash in on their new skills.

It was a disaster and a very expensive one. Without these clever people, these businesses simply couldn't solve their inevitable SAP problems quickly enough.

They'd allowed the baby to be thrown out with the bath water.



So, what was the answer?

After speaking to many worried SAP customers, I did some detailed research.

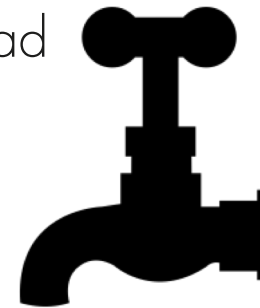
Before long I'd tracked down 3 smart companies in the UK who had cleverly spotted that there's no such thing as an **SAP project**.

They figured out instead that you have to have an **SAP life cycle**.

That was profound.

It means that SAP keeps changing, being rolled out, being extended, being improved.

One such company was a water utility, and they managed their SAP asset in the same way as every other asset in their business.



SAP needs feeding and watering throughout its life cycle.

Expert Asset Management

To achieve this you need a team of business and Information Technology experts who know how your SAP solution has been configured.

You can call this team an SAP Centre of Excellence (CoE) or an SAP Customer Competence Centre.

But, whatever you call them, they have to do the initial obvious stuff of first line support and managing small changes. Asset maintenance.

Then, as they evolve, they can become more business driven, share best practices and help measure business value. Sweat the asset.



From 1999 to 2004 I presented at 6 SAP conferences, from Strasbourg to Sun City on this new best practice of building an SAP Centre of Excellence.

And, guess what – an SAP CoE is even more valuable today than it was back in 1999.



Dr. Derek Prior

Former Gartner SAP
Research Director

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1

Self Sufficiency

Your business end users, business process owners and super users will inevitably run into issues and problems about how to use their SAP systems.

Business managers will want new and modified reports from these systems.

Your SAP COE, with expert staffing, can solve all of these expected issues on their own and quickly if they can become self-sufficient in SAP application management, which requires knowledge of how the current applications have been configured.

2

Save money

After you go live, if you don't have an effective SAP CoE you will have no choice but to pay for expert help from an outsourcer, System Integrator, or contractors.

But that's expensive.

A consequence of proper Centre of Excellence planning is cost avoidance vs. the alternative of paying for expert help to solve expected issues.

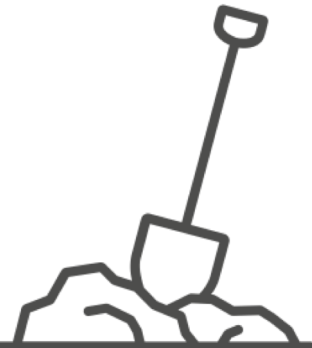
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Greater agility

Another direct benefit of the self-sufficiency that an effective SAP CoE brings is the ability to handle small changes and system enhancements much more quickly.

An expert SAP CoE equipped with the right automation tools, is far more agile at handling these life cycle changes.

Plus, by having your own knowledge on hand, you don't have to explain everything, every time to external people if you retain knowledge in-house.



If your SAP COE is struggling with these basic benefits, why not dig deeper for the underlying reasons, see [5 Big Mistakes people make when creating an SAP CoE](#)

4

Retain and motivate your best SAP people

If you can articulate a powerful vision that your SAP CoE will be a highly rewarding and challenging place to work which is highly valued by the business, then research shows that some of your best people, both from the business and IT, will want to be part of your SAP CoE.

You'll also need to ensure that high performers in the CoE gain the recognition that they deserve. And define meaningful career paths that ensure staff rotation where needed.

The real challenge here is that all parts of the business will want to retain the best people, but if your SAP CoE can retain your best people then the following three major benefits become achievable.

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Track the on-going business benefits in your SAP business case

The first major benefit is the ability to understand and track the KPIs that characterise the business benefits that were originally quantified in your original SAP business case

But SAP applications experts who know the organisation's business processes (and how your SAP modules have been configured and adapted over time to enable these vital processes) can track these KPI's.

They will need to be equipped with the right software tools (and which ones to use is another story).

But ultimately, if you're not tracking the KPIs that underpin your business case via your Centre of Excellence you'll never achieve 'excellence'.



Do you remember that ?

Or is it quietly gathering dust somewhere ?

6

Set up ongoing business process improvement

The second big benefit, applications experts in the SAP CoE can use exactly the same approach to collaborate with business process owners to proactively identify opportunities for business process improvement.

KPI tracking tools can be used with basic measurement and improvement techniques from 6 Sigma or Total Quality Control type methodologies to achieve this business process improvement.

Doing this isn't rocket science. But, it's amazing how few SAP customers get off the ground.

7

Tackle future SAP challenges.

Throughout your SAP life cycle, all sorts of unexpected SAP challenges may rear their head.

For example, a sudden company acquisition or a divestiture?

An urgent new Internet of Things (IoT) business initiative?

And, putting together a convincing business case to upgrade from SAP ECC to S/4 HANA certainly fits this future SAP challenge category.

Formulating such a business case really does need the sort of creative insight that can only come from the most talented and experienced SAP people.

Do they exist today in your SAP Centre of Excellence?



About Dr Derek Prior

Dr Derek Prior spent 19 years as an analyst specialising in SAP at Gartner and AMR Research, advising organisations all around the world on SAP strategy and best practices.



About Resulting

Resulting are a UK Headquartered SAP consultancy providing business side SAP services.

Their leadership team are global authorities on SAP Centres of Excellence and have helped hundreds of SAP customers become more self-sufficient.



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