The Adoption Journey in SAP Activate –

How to Make your Digital Transformation work

SAPIT Corporation

Large Digital Transformation efforts, when it comes to deployment, often require a phased approach – mainly because the business risk and required downtime for a "big bang" are prohibitive. SAP Activate roadmaps provide a means to deploy an SAP solution, from Discover to Run, but they do not immediately address how to go about a complex, multi-wave implementation. The Adoption Journey, formerly known as "Adoption Plan," closes this gap; it provides the necessary framework to lay out the overarching program. You can think of it as a "meta roadmap" which follows the Activate framework to develop a set of roadmaps for the implementation program.

What is the Adoption Journey?
What does it do for a Digital Transformation?

The *purpose of the Adoption Journey* is to lay out the desired outcomes and to align business priorities of an SAP cloud journey in front of business partners and key stakeholders. Having one is key to a successful Digital Transformation.

Before we dive in, a few words on terminology: When we speak of "program," we mean a series of projects, not necessarily sequential. The term "wave" refers to a set of projects deployed ("going live") at the same time. Limiting the use of "phase" for the distinct stages in the Activate project lifecycle avoids using the term "phase" for the stages of the program and the potential for mix-ups. "Initial go-live" refers to SAP Cloud – pre-projects do not count.

The *Adoption Journey never ends, but is on-going and iterative*. It starts with adopting a *cloud mindset* as the guiding principle for strategy development and decision-making, with the ultimate purpose to have aligned business goals and outcomes from the initial go-live onward.

The initial go-live is your first milestone. The path to it will require a significant up-front-effort and while embarking on it can provide immediate benefits and potential "quick wins," the payback period starts with the initial go-live.

This sounds abstract. Assume you're on ECC and have a "historically grown" customer master; from a couple of acquisitions and merging systems over the years, your duplicate ratio is

currently 30% for sold-to and 60% for ship-to partners; further assume this is already disrupting operations. As you may know, you can implement CVI (the customer vendor integration with business partners) as a pre-project and run it on ECC. If you do de-duplication as part of the CVI pre-project, you will have measurable benefits prior to the initial go-live.

You can apply a cloud mindset in an on-premise scenario – nowhere does it say this is "prohibited." A cloud mindset stipulates: embracing fit-to-standard, a preference for standardization over customization, embracing continuous improvement, modernizing integration and extension approaches and collaboration – all of which can be applied to on-premise. Starting out with these is a good foundation to adopting the whole thing, i.e. to include relinquishing IT, prioritizing change management and keeping up with the pace of innovation – all of which is more difficult to accomplish in an on-premise setting as opposed to cloud. While going for cloud mindset, we'd warn of an "all-or-nothing" attitude which can arise from the "mind boggling" complexity and deviating stakeholder interests. In the end, however, the cloud mindset and its aspects should be fully adopted. This process may feel painful in the beginning, but will be rewarding in the end.

The Adoption Journey is synched up with the phases of the initial go-live project, as follows:

1. *Discover*
   Document adoption *opportunities* along with the *business goals and outcomes* defined in the sales cycle (when you talk to SAP and SI prospects). You start planning your adoption journey.
2. *Prepare*
   You officially start the implementation project. Based on the fit-to-standard paradigm, you focus on strategic and operational planning to prioritize functional, localization and business requirements. You define roles and responsibilities and establish a governance with the cloud mindset as a guiding principle. This will likely mark a culture change.
3. *Explore*
   In fit-to-standard analysis workshops, you validate the solution functionality within the project scope and confirm business alignment. The Adoption Plan is reviewed against the requirements. The scope and rollout will be determined by the number of localizations, user levels, functional scenarios and the bolt-on solutions (solutions integrated with the core ERP) required for initial and subsequent go-lives.
4. *Realize*
   You update the adoption backlog status and apply the adoption plan checklist.
5. *Deploy*
   Here, you have no adoption-related tasks and no such deliverables. The deploy phase is execution-centric.

6. *Run*

   With cloud operation framework and value management you go for continuous solution adoption. You check progress against the Adoption Plan.

As a *platform to maintain Adoption Journey related documentation and keep track* of deliverables, task and progress, we recommend SAP Cloud ALM. This avoids keeping tracking information in spreadsheets and having separate document repositories, presumably with duplication of content. If you have your Adoption Journey in Cloud ALM, you can immediately see how it ties into your on-going waves and have an immediate, reportable status. Since your actual roadmaps will most likely be in Cloud ALM, it makes sense to have the Adoption Journey there, too.

How to apply the Adoption Journey to a Digital Transformation?
## What does it do for a Digital Transformation?

The Adoption Journey for your Digital Transformation program (e.g. move to SAP Cloud ERP)

- lays out its desired outcomes and
- aligns its business priorities.

In any given scenario, the Adoption Journey

- is on-going and iterative,
- starts with a cloud mindset and never ends.

You can find the Adoption Journey on SAP for Me: `https://me.sap.com/roadmapviewer`, then under "All Roadmaps" go to "General/Cross Topics."
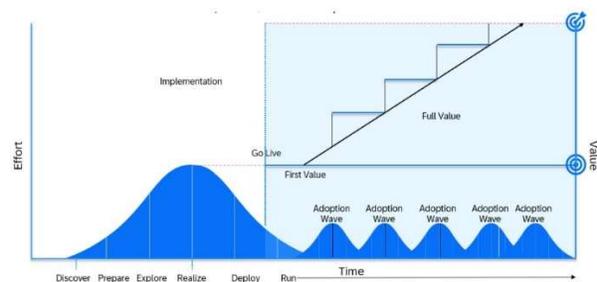
Source: Overview section, "Adoption Journey" road map in SAP Road Map Viewer (Jan 2026)

The graphic plots effort and value, which go hand in hand, against time. Over time, the *initial rollout project* (big blue curve on the left) and the subsequent *adoption waves* (smaller blue curves following) keep adding value. The "earning" starts with the initial go-live. Subsequent go-lives keep adding value until reaching a target. While shown as linear, the value growth in a given scenario could be steepening or flattening. In any case, the increments in value will come much faster than the initial business value. While, in theory, they do not have to be equally spaced, you will achieve value only with a go-live, and since you're restricted w. r. t. the timing of a go-live within a fiscal year, the result will likely be that they end up being equally spaced. The importance of "cloud mindset" cannot be over-emphasized, since it is the idea behind Clean Core, Fiori-First, Fit-to-Standard, RISE and Side-by-Side Extensibility – to name a few concepts.

Tools and accelerators for the Adoption Journey

Now, when it comes to running a program: how do you go about this? I pointed out the main phases for the Adoption Journey and what to do. One of the key benefits of SAP Activate is the abundance of accelerators. These are not academic materials, but real-life-tested concepts, draft deliverables and templates for work products. As far as the Adoption Journey phases are concerned, you find will find accelerators in Discover, Prepare and (to a lesser extent) Run.

Discover

- *Build your Customer Center of Expertise (COE)* is a guide to defining strategy, governance and organization. The COE is required to *build a future-proof architecture*. Pick one of three "patterns" (i.e. concepts of IT organizations with SAP allocation) and define the *relationship between IT and LOB* (lines of business). DevOps and (the lesser common) BizDevOps concepts should be championed by the COE, because your core ERP needs to be *stable, process-oriented and balanced*. When handed over to LOB, your enterprise architecture will be slanted towards the part of your organization "adding the most value" and making improvements in other areas may be akin to "replacing a noodle in a pile of pasta," because integration aspects yield to the call for local optimizations.
- *The WalkMe Strategy & Value Framework* is a four-step approach, with the "4 Ps" of digital adoption strategy and value: *Problem, Possible, Probable and Provable*. In the last step, you have KPI dashboards showing values. What you want to see here depends on industry, but e.g. you can have client support cost decrease, MTBF extension (longer life time), clinical trial cost decreases or whatever metrics make most sense for your organization.

Prepare

- The *SAP Business Transformation Center* (aka. BTC) is included with *SAP Cloud ALM* and the latter is needed to use it. The readiness check tool is part of SAP BTC.
- *LeanIX* is a SaaS application to manage your enterprise architecture, the purpose of which is to align IT infrastructure and applications with business strategy and goals. IT enables business capabilities which ultimately create competitive advantages. LeanIX comes with pre-built integrations and (among other things) provides visualizations to assist with identifying cost-saving opportunities, mitigate security and compliance risks, reduce technical debt and improve decision-making and increase operational efficiency.

Run

- As a tool to monitor usage and adoption, SAP offers the *Customer Usage Dashboard* for the S/4 Cloud Public Edition. It provides insights into what apps end-users actually use,

what features are used ("Scope Item Usage") and so on. With that, you can focus resources on areas where you have "the best bang for the buck." User and system monitoring have been around since R/3, but here you get a process view – which is unprecedented. Herein may lie an incentive to choose S/4 Cloud Public over Private.

In summary, the Adoption Journey is available for public use and the road map is available to the general public. You can use it as a guide to set up your Digital Transformation program in SAP Cloud ALM, along with the individual projects it is comprised of. Once you do that, you have a "single source of truth" and a central toolset to manage your project holistically. And you can ensure your PMO status reporting is in sync with reality – which it often is not.

We hope this added a clarity about how to apply the Adoption Journey and measure its outcomes.

For more details or a discussion, feel free to get in touch. You can reach us

- *on LinkedIn* `https://www.linkedin.com/company/sapitcorp` *or*
- *via the contact form* `https://sapitcorp.com/contact/`