

SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco

Introduction

On June 20, 2012, SAP AG and Cisco Systems announced a global reseller agreement allowing SAP to sell Cisco Intelligent Automation for SAP, branded as SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco. The central goal of this collaboration is to reduce the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of SAP business management solutions by standardizing and automating manual processes, such as incident responses, and complex operational processes, such as system readiness and validation checks after a critical SAP “system copy”¹ procedure.

SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco integrates with SAP Solution Manager, as well as HANA² and a planned integration with SAP NetWeaver Landscape Virtualization Management³, offering operations staff over 350 management workflows, all based on SAP best practices. The solution is built on Cisco’s popular Process Orchestrator platform, which in addition to automating SAP processes, can be used for enterprise-wide IT Process Automation (ITPA).

SAP Solution Manager

In today’s highly competitive business climate, requirements for business software solutions such as SAP’s are fluid. To effectively compete, organizations have to constantly adjust and refine their business models, together with the corresponding business processes. SAP business software, by definition, is mission-critical, which makes operational problems or even downtime extremely costly. Within most businesses, the SAP footprint is getting larger over time, as additional business modules are deployed. This expanding footprint leads to rapidly increasing complexity from a systems management perspective, as the underlying IT infrastructure has to be managed based on a set of strict service level agreements.

SAP Solution Manager can be described as a central point of command and control, from which to manage the deployment and operation of SAP business solutions. Solution Manager helps customers manage the underlying IT infrastructure in a way that is aware of SAP business process requirements. It also provides change management workflow capabilities to control the impact of configuration modifications through approvals and accountability. Testing, incident management, advanced monitoring, diagnostics, and service level agreements are all managed through Solution Manager, which also constitutes the central communication platform for SAP project teams, partners, consultants, and SAP global support.

Traditionally, SAP users configure built-in alerts that are tied to specific thresholds and events. However, alerts are only the first part of the solution, as they have to be interpreted by operations staff and then the according remediation actions have to be taken. While Solution Manager constitutes an excellent operations management platform for SAP environments, it does not eliminate the manual processes required to manage the SAP business software lifecycle. New releases, process changes, incident reports, and functional tests have to be completed in a mostly manual manner. Performing these tasks can be resource-intensive, often requiring collaboration among multiple IT groups.

¹ SAP’s “system copy” procedure is required when creating additional application environments or when upgrading to a different version of the SAP software.

² Visit the following link for more information on SAP HANA: <http://www.sap.com/hana>

³ For more information, please visit: <http://scn.sap.com/docs/DOC-25771>

Enter SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco

SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco constitutes a set of pre-packaged workflows and plug-ins for SAP Solution Manager 7.1 and SAP HANA, with plans to support SAP NetWeaver Landscape Virtualization Manager as well. The underlying software is based on Cisco Process Orchestrator, formerly Tidal Enterprise Orchestrator, which also constitutes the orchestration engine for Cisco's Intelligent Automation for Cloud solution.

SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco facilitates standardized and automated response to common alerts, as well as user requests and standard maintenance tasks. Some requests will entail complex interactive workflows, while others comprise a set of simple remediation actions. In the end, the initial request status is updated depending on the workflow outcome. The software automatically creates auditable records, ensuring accountability and detailed documentation of all process results. This reporting capability is essential for organizations faced with HIPAA and SOX compliance requirements.

The more than 350 included process automation workflows were designed by SAP experts, and based on SAP's recommended best practices. The software offers the ability to visually modify the pre-packaged workflows – for example, targeted at incident response, quality control, or operational readiness – based on customer-specific requirements.

As SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco was designed using the flexibility of Cisco's Process Orchestrator, customers can create workflows that go beyond their SAP business management software requirements, integrating with numerous third-party systems.

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EMA Perspective

SAP environments are typically mission-critical and complex. Manually managing incident and problem resolution or extensive tasks, such as the activities after a SAP “system copy,” can place a significant strain on IT operations. SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco offers a powerful toolkit of SAP-specific workflows to alleviate this operative burden, complementing SAP Solution Manager. As these workflows were designed directly with SAP, the end user can be assured that best practices were followed. Customers can also rely on the fact that there are no missed steps or other issues, which frequently occur with custom created workflows. Therefore, SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco offers a strong value proposition for SAP customers who are looking to decrease their operations cost and risk. These customers are provided with a solution that is often able to automatically resolve issues and accomplish tasks that otherwise would have required significant time and manpower. The fewer engineers involved in SAP operations tasks, the more the IT organization can focus on optimizing the business value of the SAP software.

By implementing SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco, customers receive a full ITPA solution that can be used to automate workflows far beyond the operations management of SAP business software. In fact, the Cisco ITPA suite can be leveraged for automation tasks across the data center and as the backbone of a corporate private cloud. This integrated ITPA approach entails a significant set of customer advantages, from reduced training requirements to process optimization through fewer integration points.

The SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco offering draws from both SAP's and Cisco's respective areas of excellence. Cisco provides its popular and easy-to-use ITPA platform, while SAP contributes a rich set of best practice workflows. This combination is a great addition to SAP Solution Manager, and it convincingly addresses the TCO challenge that often prevents organizations from adopting additional SAP business management modules.

Enterprise Management Associates* (EMA™) analysts believe that the proactive approach to systems management enabled by SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco is generally preferable to the traditional break-fix philosophy employed by many SAP customers. In today's service level driven IT organization, it is essential to respond to issues in a standardized and automated fashion. The higher the degree of standardization and automation, the less the organization will have to worry about passing IT audits, meeting service level agreements, and adjusting IT services to actual business workflows. Freeing up valuable staff time for improving IT services is an invaluable advantage offered through SAP IT Process Automation by Cisco.

From an overall business perspective, this collaboration between SAP and Cisco benefits both companies and their customers. SAP is now able to offer a convincing solution for lowering the operations cost of its business software and extending the value of SAP Solution Manager. Cisco gains access to over 40,000 SAP customers worldwide, while SAP customers benefit from a turn-key ITPA solution that was fine-tuned to the exact requirements of their business management software.

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About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or blogs.enterprisemanagement.com. You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

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