Without a hybrid integration platform, digitalization projects are on unsteady foundation

Business Integration Suite: Ahead Of Its Time

Companies tackling digital transformation projects will have to establish a hybrid integration platform eventually. Business Integration Suite has an edge over competitors regarding integration success and digitalization efficiency.

By Martin Kuntz, Seeburger

Roughly five years ago, Gartner developed the hybrid integration platform (HIP) approach. What started as a simple idea now dominates the integration scene. As a sort of a reference model, Gartner's approach offers providers as well as customers some guidance in the nearly unmanageable confusion around integration requirements. The renowned research and advisory company expects that in two years' time, 65 percent of enterprises will have established some kind of hybrid integration platform (HIP).

Integration is closely connected with digitalization and digital transformation projects concerning the optimization of business processes for more speed, or concerning the implementation of completely new business models. One could even say that without comprehensive technological and organizational integration of systems, data and processes, and connected digitalization is impossible to achieve.

Hybrid integration platform

But what does hybrid mean in the context of a hybrid integration platform? In general, it is about covering a broad spectrum of integration requirements that could be completely different from one another. This includes cloud and API integration in real-time, business-to-business integration (B2B/EDI), IoT or Industry 4.0 integration, international e-invoicing, ERP and enterprise application integration, and secure managed file transfer (MFT). These integration patterns are also used for SCM topics like product data management, e-procurement, integration of production systems, e-commerce, inventory and logistics processes as well as more universal topics like HCM and CRM. Even in finance and banking, companies leverage – among more traditional integration technologies - lifecycle API management to optimize digital customer services.

Covering the aforementioned integration patterns is the most important buil-

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ding block of hybrid integration platforms according to Gartner. However, Gartner also demands that a hybrid integration platform has more than one building block. This can make integration seem more complex than it has to be – and there's a simple reason for that. Gartner defines the term of hybrid integration platform somewhat loosely. Gartner applies the term to almost all integration-oriented applications, technologies, processes and capabilities that a company needs or might need in the future.

Framework and platform

Gartner uses both framework and integration platform to describe HIP. In brief, the difference between framework and integration platform can be defined as follows: Framework means absolutely everything in connection with integration. A hybrid integration platform, however, is kind of a middleware system, a universal solution providing functionality for the integration of processes, technologies and business applications.

Gartner demands that a hybrid integration platform has four main building blocks: aside from the aforementioned integration patterns, they are user groups, endpoints and deployment models. User groups for example means professional users or integration specialists – the people in a company operating or working with a hybrid integration platform. Endpoints means on-premises or cloud systems, mobile devices or IoT technologies. And, of course, the deployment model of the integration platform (or part of it) can be on-premises, in the cloud, hybrid or embedded (in the device or system).

Integration platform as middleware

Seeburger provides an integration platform (middleware) that follows Gartner's approach. A general overview with functionality building blocks can be seen in the image titled 'Seeburger's Business Integration Suite is at the heart of digital transformation.' For both mid-sized and enterprise companies, Seeburger offers individually tailored solutions (functionality wise). Gartner's approach to the term hybrid integration platform (HIP), is applicable to many different functionalities and definitions. It adapts seamlessly to a company's individual integration requirements.

Mid-sized companies especially need preconfigured solution building blocks for integration to to quickly and efficiently satisfy their demand. Seeburger offers these building blocks with its Business Integration Suite (BIS) platform. Enterprise companies also often need an integration platform for organizational or governance purposes. If necessary, a hybrid integration platform can be developed based on multiple products.

With Business Integration Suite as a hybrid integration platform, Seeburger offers customers a complete package based on a one-platform strategy that co-

vers all essential integration requirements from a business and technology perspective in a single system. Please note: Seeburger's Business Integration Suite was developed long before the HIP approach.

One Platform Strategy

Companies benefit from a single platform approach – rather than patchwork solutions – for multiple reasons. For example, they can achieve synergies because staff have to learn and perfect handling and management of only one system. Furthermore, the modular structure of the platform offers the possibility to scale and expand on demand, whether it becomes necessary because of economic growth or technological reasons. It is also easier to protect the investment of one platform. The platform also supports flexible operating models, such as on-premises or cloud deployments as well as hybrid operating models.

SAP customers will find they are already familiar with Seeburger's modular structure, as they have been selecting which SAP Business Suite or S/4 Hana modules they require for years. Just as customers can use one complete SAP solution, they can leverage Seeburger's Business Integration Platform. And just as they can choose to only use the finance or logistics modules from SAP, they can choose to only use one BIS module from many. One customer might only want to use BIS for B2B/EDI integration; another might start

out with Seeburger's API/EAI integration and then choose to also leverage SAP ERP, e-invoicing or IoT integration as well as managed file transfer. For countless use cases, BIS offers predefined templates, preconfigured mappings or API libraries, e.g. for SAP or B2B/EDI integration, and integrating web services via REST APIs. This for example reduces the time it takes to integrate different business partners via EDI down to just a few hours.
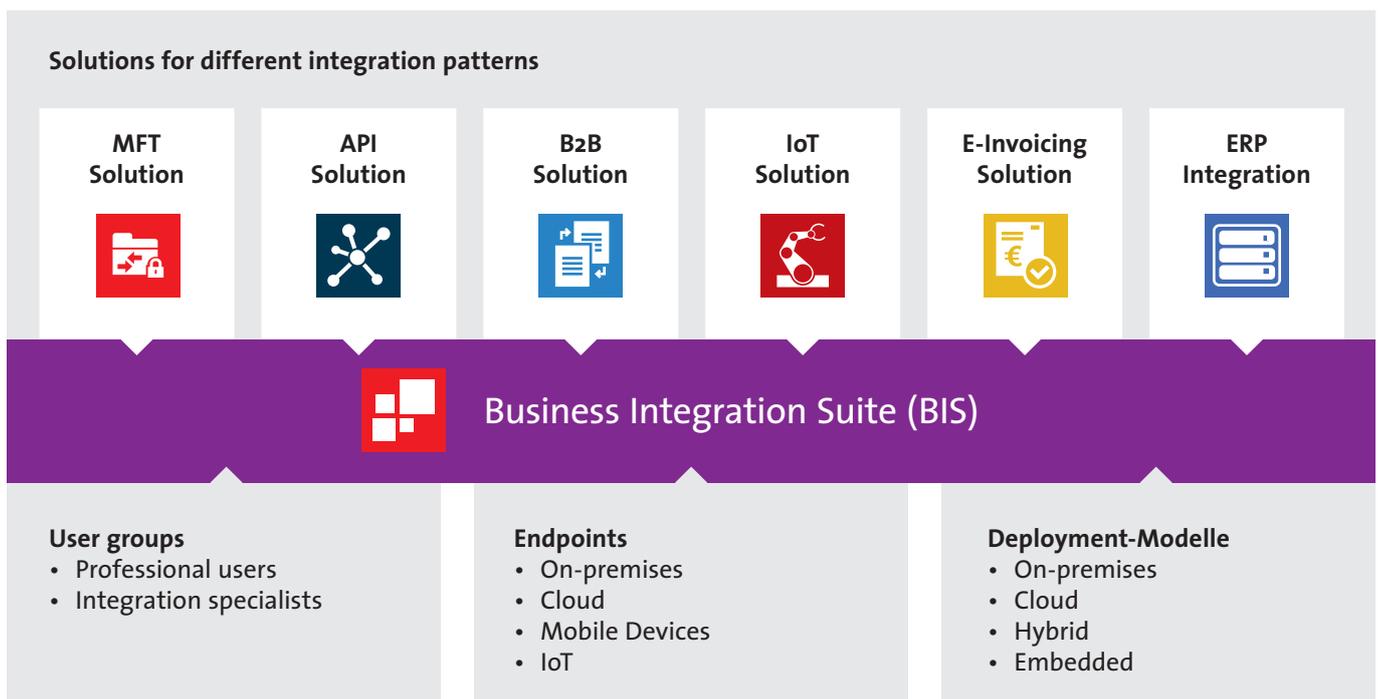
Governance and operations

In enterprise companies, governance (controlling/monitoring) and operations play an important role when it comes to integration platforms. BIS has been comprehensively covering these special requirements for decades – which is one of the reasons that over 10,000 companies of all sizes worldwide have chosen BIS. Seeburger serves mid-sized companies with few integration requirements as well as global enterprises with highly complex operational requirements. Seeburger has successfully positioned itself as single-source integration provider. Business Integration Suite is its flagship product. The company also offers comprehensive integration consulting services, and is available to answer integration and technology questions customers have, like: How can I accelerate digitalization, business optimization and flexibility? What do I have to consider for integration projects? How can I establish sustainable API management and leverage it effectively? How can I ta-

ckle integration between SAP and non-SAP systems like Salesforce? How can I tackle SAP and SAP integration? What do I have to consider from a technological or organizational perspective when it comes to implementing an integration platform?

Focus on specific industries

Seeburger BIS also focuses on specific industries. Industry-specific versions of Business Integration Suite have predefined functionality and business content available. Industries include the automotive sector, CPG and retail, and energy and utilities.

The most recent BIS version is Major Release 6.7 and can be used as a hybrid integration platform for all integration scenarios. This will enable existing and new customers to choose from all integration patterns and to combine and mix them freely. API based integration and API Management is an important part of it and a unique ability to combine it with the other integration patterns is the key differentiator for Seeburger. With the release of BIS 6.7, Seeburger continues to deliver a single, agile and scalable business integration platform, with focus on enhancing the user experience and specific industries. Furthermore, customers can leverage the solution to implement new business cases, in connection with artificial intelligence (AI), big data, blockchain, real-time API integration and IoT use cases.

Solutions for different integration patterns

MFT Solution	API Solution	B2B Solution	IoT Solution	E-Invoicing Solution	ERP Integration

Business Integration Suite (BIS)

User groups	Endpoints	Deployment-Modelle
• Professional users • Integration specialists	• On-premises • Cloud • Mobile Devices • IoT	• On-premises • Cloud • Hybrid • Embedded

Seeburger's Business Integration Suite is at the heart of digital transformation.