

## Reading Sample

*In this reading section, take a look at the three kinds of influence that an implementation project can have on your organization: major business process modifications, new skills in the project team, and SAP as a company asset. This chapter will outline the positive impact that a successful project can achieve as you begin to dedicate resources to it.*



**"How an SAP Implementation Changes Business"**



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**The Author**

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### **The SAP Project**

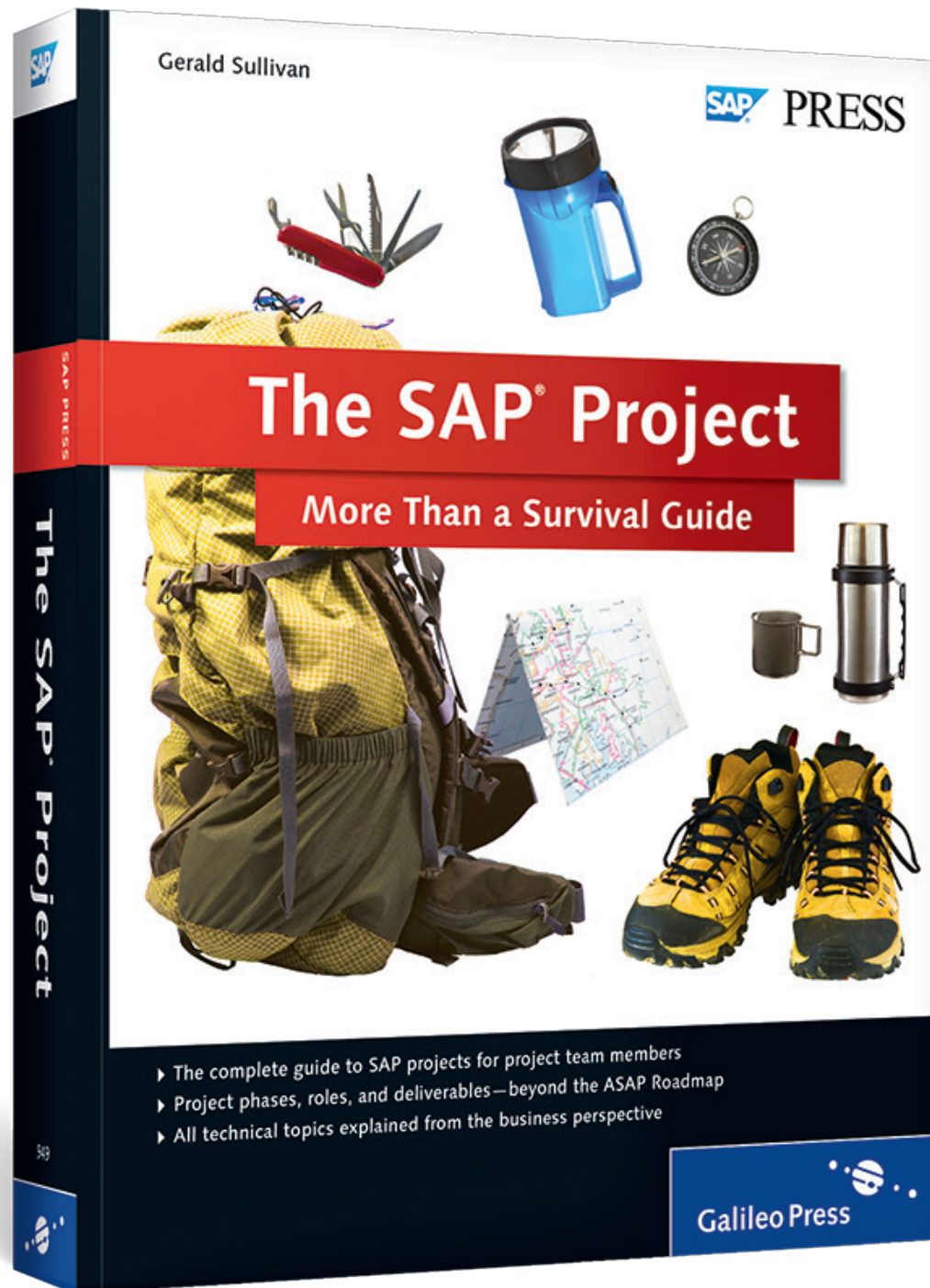
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*We'll first focus on the business impact of an SAP implementation. Almost all implementing companies put an SAP system in place to enhance their business processes. However, we will see that the project affects far more than company business processes. It will strengthen the skills of the project team and make SAP a long-term company asset.*

## **2 How an SAP Implementation Changes Business**

Everyone knows that an SAP implementation project changes a company. Less well known are the ways those changes take place and their long-term impacts on the implementing company. Through the process of deploying the SAP system, these changes *will* take place—sometimes in unforeseen ways. And unless the implementing company makes careful plans for these changes, the effects may be less than optimal. They may even create negative or undesirable effects.

Most implementing companies understand, at some level, the business changes that these process modifications will introduce. While companies may experience difficulties in handling the impact of these changes, they are not unforeseen. Usually they are planned and intended to be accomplished during the SAP deployment. But implementing companies are likely to be less clear about the changes their project team members will experience and the potential effect on the company. Additionally, many implementing companies find themselves unprepared for the overall impact of the SAP system itself.

This chapter is dedicated to educating the implementing company's senior executives. It will outline how those changes occur in Section 2.1 and the methods by which an implementing company can manage them to its advantage.

Figure 2.1 outlines the three types of changes that will impact a company facing an SAP implementation project. These three types of changes can be quite profound and generate long-term alterations in company operations. Each change carries its own set of management challenges.

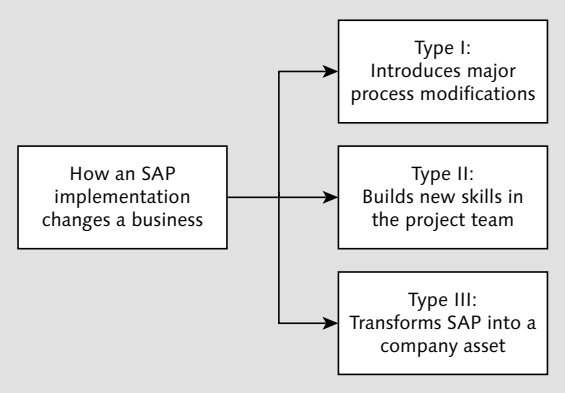


Figure 2.1 Changes Introduced as a Result of an SAP Implementation Project

This chapter will discuss each type of change and its impact on management:

► **Introducing major business process modifications**

The project will modify company business processes in at least two ways. Generally, as part of the requirements-setting process in blueprinting, the implementing company will choose to adopt key business process changes. These will be known and clearly outlined during design discussions. Many of these will make significant changes to existing company operations. These are the changes that are most commonly identified as process transformations.

A second type of business process modification results from the SAP system itself. Manual processes will now be automated, and process operations that were once limited to a regional purview will now have global implications. These often unintended results have far-reaching business consequences for the implementing company.

► **Building new skills in the project team**

The project is a testing ground for company staff. Every SAP implementation project team, at every type of company, faces major challenges and extremely rigorous time constraints. While these do lead to fatigue—and, sometimes, burnout—they also create a huge opportunity for growth and development among the team members.

Team members who complete the project will have been tested and will have expanded their limits as a result of participating in the SAP implementation project. From the most to the least skilled, each will have greatly enlarged his or her portfolio of accomplishments. Their values to the company will have

doubled or tripled. It will be up to the implementing company to find roles for these individuals commensurate with their recent accomplishments.

► **Transforming SAP into a company asset**

Once the SAP system has deployed, it will change many of the company's fundamental operations. Redesigned business processes operating on the SAP system necessarily produce an integrated company—one where all functional organizations clearly depend on the performance of one another. We'll spell out some of those potential changes using examples in this chapter.


Additionally, as with any other major company asset, the system will require long-term care and maintenance. SAP is not a plug-and-play system. Rather, it requires a combination of user skills, system updates, governance, and continual bug fixes to keep it current. Many implementing companies don't fully grasp this, and they expect the heavy lifting is complete when the system has been implemented.

Let's begin by examining specific changes that implementations produce.

2.1 **Modifying Major Business Processes**

Many people believe that company-initiated business process modifications define the heart of an SAP transformation project. After all, they think, the list of activities that will change and the benefits that these changes will create is often the primary justification for an SAP implementation project.

In many ways, they're right. Unless the implementing company already has world-class business processes, the SAP systems project not only allows it to consider significant process changes—it encourages that kind of innovative thinking. The project can generate leverage for the company to rethink its ways of doing business. The SAP implementation methodology encourages this broad-based evaluation. As well, the SAP system can itself provide the foundation for these modifications.

 **Tip**


Executives at the implementing company can provide valuable guidance to the project team by identifying needed business process improvement initiatives. The project team can use this input as a focus area. This ensures that executives and the project team are in alignment even in these early stages.

Let's review three types of business process changes: standardization, simplification, and automation. Each has the advantage of using the system to reduce delays and improve process performance.

2.1.1 Process Standardization

Standardization of business processes can provide a powerful tool for an implementing company. Whenever business processes vary depending on geographical region or between functional organizations, standardization can bring consistency and positively affect the bottom line.

Figure 2.2 illustrates how significant standardization can be. It depicts the implementing company's order-to-cash processes with universally applied standardization across geographical regions. Prior to the SAP implementation project, these processes would have been performed in varying ways across regional operations. Ranging from customer identification, pricing, and shipping, the example shows where the benefits of standardization can be applied.




Focus area	Changes
Customers	Develop global customer system and numbers
Pricing	Adopt global pricing template for use in all markets
Sales orders	Standardize sales order types among all regions
Cash	Standardize global cash and collections processes
Rebates	Standardize global processes for trade promotions, rebates, and chargebacks
Exports	Standardize export processes and documents in all regions

Figure 2.2 OTC Standardization as a Process Transformation in an SAP Implementation Project

Prior to implementing a global SAP system, it is quite common for companies to operate in a very diverse fashion at the regional level. However, as the company supply chain begins to integrate globally, these regional variances will begin to cause problems in both efficiency and effectiveness.

For example, regions may utilize different numbering systems and formats for customer identification. In many cases, a single customer might have a different identifier in each region. For example, the same global company may have one customer number in North America and a slightly different name and totally unrelated customer number in Asia. The two customer instances will not reconcile. Simply collecting reliable sales information by customer means that the corporate headquarters will have to create and maintain translation tables to consolidate this data. If you multiply this situation several times by customer, vendor, or pricing, then the problem becomes a very substantial one.

 **Pitfall Alert**

Regional differences, such as in the customer number example, can be resolved through the use of master data. The project team should understand the implications of these naming variances and work to address them during data cleansing. Executives can play a key role by making this a priority for the project team.

The situation with exports is very similar but often even more diffuse. Export documentation may vary not only by region, but at the country level as well! This creates a need for dedicated staff at the regional and country level whose main purpose is to assure that the disparate processes work as intended.

The SAP implementation project can create the single best opportunity for a company to break free from the mix of non-standard processes and to remedy the process differences. The impetus of the project and the investment involved can lead an implementing company to carefully assess its process imbalances. Including these process changes in blueprinting will move an implementing company toward unifying its operations and taking a step toward becoming *one global enterprise*.

2.1.2 Process Simplification

Process standardization isn't the only transformation tool available.

Even the very best companies contain examples of multi-person document reviews and approvals. These slow down the normal flow of operations, create unnecessary delays, and for many staff show company culture as behind the progress curve. An implementing company may also choose to examine overly complex processes for the purposes of eliminating non-value-added steps. For



example, an implementing company could have large numbers of non-purchase-order invoices submitted for payment. Each of these is then handled as an exception item that must have managerial review and approval prior to payment, regardless of the amount involved. Handling these invoices through an approval process delays payment and uses company staff in a non-value-added manner.

The company could choose to simplify this process as part of the SAP implementation project. By conducting an analysis of the non-purchase-order invoices, their numbers and amounts can be determined. In most cases, the bulk of these invoices will have a small dollar value. The company can then shift to simplify the business process. This would include taking steps to reduce the number of non-purchase-order invoices and to require approval for those that represented larger dollar amounts.

By identifying those vendors that are approved to submit non-purchase-order invoices, the number of invoices can be dramatically reduced. By specifying a minimum dollar value that requires approval, the review process can also be curtailed. These process changes can then be configured into the SAP system and become standard practice across the company.


At one time or another, most companies have experienced large numbers of unpaid invoices in their accounts-payable backlog. Addressing these issues as examples of process deficiencies enables a solution to be developed. This solution results in better working relationships with suppliers and fewer staff members dedicated to these non-value-added activities.

So process simplification clearly applies in many situations. It will provide the most benefit in routine, large-volume transactions. When bottlenecks and delays occur, it's a sign that a process needs simplifying. The project team, whose members have considerable experience with the details of company processes, will be well equipped to generate solutions during the blueprint phase. Receiving encouragement from senior executives to conduct this type of work will serve to increase focus in these areas.

2.1.3 Process Automation

Automating processes is one of the most effective ways to create transformation. Automation uses the SAP system to build reliable and accurate processes. The development of custom objects that will be described in later chapters in this

book enables companies to replace manual steps with those that are entirely automated. An implementing company can make substantial changes to its operations by building workflows and forms.

Tip

Flag these automation opportunities for the project team. This will have two positive results. First, it helps them understand the important areas for transformation. Second, it builds a partnership between executives and the project team. Both will now work on the same page.

Figure 2.3 provides an illustration of the use of manual processing for company procurement processes. The steps from purchase order to invoice payment have all operated in a manual fashion. Purchase orders are created manually and sent to suppliers, who then send printed invoices to the company for products or services rendered. Once the company gets them, procurement staff and the holder of the purchase order physically review these invoices.

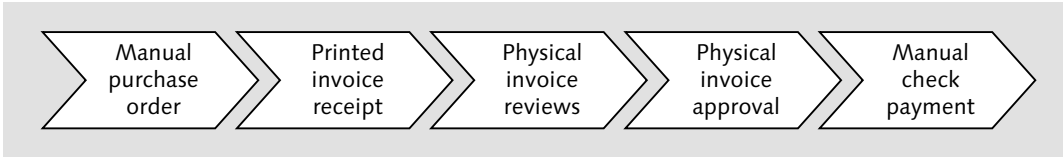


Figure 2.3 Manual Procurement Processes

If any item between the purchase order and the invoice does not reconcile, the process is put on hold and the supplier and company must exchange printed material to resolve the differences. Once they resolve any noted discrepancies in the paperwork, the printed invoice is forwarded for approval at the required level of management authorization. When this management approval is received, a check can then be manually issued and sent to the supplier in payment.

Take a closer look. The steps in this process are noticeably time-consuming. The parties spend much time checking for discrepancies and then searching out the reasons for them. Most inconsistencies are due to entry errors made by the sender or receiver rather than attempts at fraudulence. Each company involved, supplier and receiver, pays a penalty in employee time lost for these discrepancies. A great deal of this time lost can be restored through automation.

In the automated version of this process shown in Figure 2.4, all steps are accomplished in the SAP system and transition points from actor to actor are generated by workflow technology. Thus, the purchase order can be generated, approved, and distributed to the vendor by means of the SAP Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) application. Once the services are rendered by the supplier, the resulting invoice is either transmitted electronically or physically scanned by the implementing company.

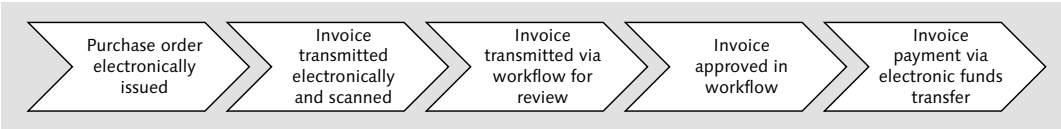


Figure 2.4 Automated Procurement Processes in an SAP Implementation Process

From that point forward, the invoice is an electronic document that can be immediately transferred using workflow to each reviewer or approver in the process. When final approval for invoice payment is received, the disbursement will be accomplished using electronic funds transfer (EFT) from the payer bank to the supplier bank. No manual check is required.

This and many similar automation processes are available through the SAP system using a combination of configuration, portal technology, and workflow. Chapter 6 will outline an approach where the implementing company’s senior executives give direction to the project team regarding these types of process changes. The SAP client executive who is servicing the implementing company will be able to set up functionality demonstrations and thereby greatly facilitate use of the SAP system in support of process changes.

2.2 Building New Skills in the Project Team

An SAP implementation team is a special thing. In most cases, this is a group of people—many without any SAP system knowledge—who are expected to accomplish a minor miracle. Because this is comparable in scope and effort to the launch of a major software product, the individuals who accomplish a successful SAP implementation rise to rock star status within the company.

Many companies do not recognize the special human asset that they have created with the SAP implementation project. Unlike the product launch, many on the

SAP project team will have limited experience in the core subject matter. They may have never used SAP or understood how it works prior to the implementation project. They will generate this subject matter expertise through the lifecycle of the project.

Figure 2.5 shows this skill change along four different dimensions: achieving results, handling responsibility, working under pressure, and demonstrating leadership. When making the shift to the SAP implementation project team, circumstances will alter members’ performance profile. By an almost magical process, they become a high-performance team. Similar to a fitness regimen, the added level of effort required can produce substantial gains for those participating. Some team members will make great changes, some will make marginal changes, and a few will change not at all or even not make the grade. For those who do make major changes, the implementing company will acquire human assets who have greatly exceeded their former capacity.

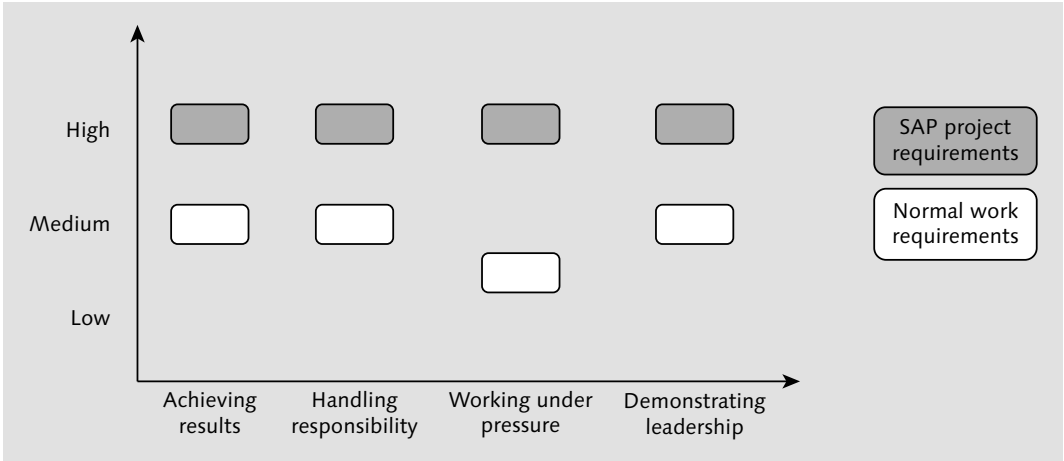


Figure 2.5 Team Member Skills Development Profile in an SAP Implementation Project

Compared to the effort involved in standard day-to-day tasks, the project team assignment brings continuous intensity and demand for rapid response to issues. This higher performance requirement creates new levels of capability. The four dimensions where these changes will take place are as follows:

- **Achieving results**  
An SAP implementation project is a series of ongoing demands for results. On a daily basis, the project team members are expected to produce according to

the schedule and deliverables required. Every team member has an assignment and is expected to accomplish it. Achieving results is built into the DNA of an SAP project team and soon becomes a part of the DNA for every project team member.

The will to succeed and to resolve obstacles becomes a point of pride for virtually all team members. Each obstacle overcome becomes a matter of pride and reminds the team just how proficient it is. Teams create their own culture and this can manifest itself in many ways. However, at the core of an effective SAP project team is a shared drive to achieve results.

► **Handling responsibility**

Teams and team members fundamentally understand that they own their deliverables. The responsibility for success or failure lies with each individual. Over time, teams become adept at identifying their responsibilities and making sure they are accomplished. No one is looking over their shoulders and no one needs to. Nor does anyone spend time reminding team members of their deadlines. They already know them.

► **Working under pressure**

Implementing companies are especially familiar with the old adage that "time is money." Any delays to the project plan will undoubtedly cost the company and create unforeseen expenses. These, in turn, can necessitate a reallocation of financial budgets. Of course, these are not popular. Overruns may impact the company revenue stream by placing holds on product launches or hiring of new sales representatives.

Because everyone on the project team remains acutely aware of the costs attached to delays, they strive to do everything possible to stay on time. Almost always, this involves the team working longer hours and finding creative solutions to make deadlines. Working under this kind of pressure for two to three years leaves a lasting impression on team members' work habits. What was previously a difficult and stressful challenge now becomes a normal part of daily business.

► **Demonstrating leadership**

Everyone on an SAP project team becomes a leader at one time or another; more often than not, this occurs without the accompanying title. With so many things to be done and so little time to do them, team members quite commonly take on leadership roles when they see that initiative is required.

This is especially true during realization and final preparation when, compared to blueprinting, the number of deliverables per week can triple or quadruple. Team members recognize what tasks require leadership and then provide it. It is very common during systems testing to see team members take a leadership role on their own initiative for cross-workstream testing or managing defect resolution.

The message is clear: Companies that appoint an SAP implementation project team receive a secondary bonus. They greatly expand the capabilities of their staff assigned to the project team. The challenge is to provide job responsibilities and tasks after the project has been completed commensurate with these increased skill levels.

This requires planning on the part of project sponsors and constant assessment of each project team member. In this way, the implementing company is in position to take advantage of the high-performance team it has created.

## 2.3 Transforming SAP into a Company Asset

Michael Doane, author of *The SAP Blue Book* and *The SAP Green Book* (SAP PRESS, 2012), has urged implementing companies to see the SAP system as a long-term investment and treat it as such. Let's elaborate on this theme and connect it to the SAP implementation project.

Doane makes the case that a great many implementing companies focus almost exclusively on getting the SAP implementation project right and fail to recognize that, as a long-term asset, an SAP system will require considerable upkeep and maintenance during its likely 20-year period of use.

Doane's asset-based approach is important for two reasons.

1. It encourages companies to see the SAP implementation project as setting the stage for long-term system usage. Rather than completely emphasizing the success of the short-term implementation project, the company would also focus on how to make the system viable for company operations over time.
2. It provides a wake-up call to the company. Putting an SAP system in place is comparable to using company and system integrator resources to build a vehicle. Except this vehicle will exhibit properties of a mass-transit system, with

all its complexities. It will have large numbers of users located in different geographical locations. It will also require continual maintenance to stay in working order.

The argument goes something like this: Those elements that make for a successful project do not necessarily make for a successful long-term company asset. For reasons of cost, pride, and urgency, the implementation project centers on speed to deployment. This focus may cause the company to set aside those factors that would make for successful long-term use of the SAP system, including in-depth consideration of needed business processes or building user skills necessary to operate the system.

**Pitfall Alert**

If the implementing company already has an SAP sustainment organization, address how it will work together with the project team throughout the life cycle. Make sure that everyone is on board. If the implementing company does not have an SAP sustainment organization, begin the planning right now.

Figure 2.6 shows these two components: SAP system implementation and SAP system long-term usage. The implementation project has large numbers of resources devoted to it, is assigned a very substantial budget of company resources, and develops its own sense of importance. On the other hand, for most companies, preparing for continuous operations remains very much a backburner activity; they wait until after the implementation has been completed to plan post-go-live operations.

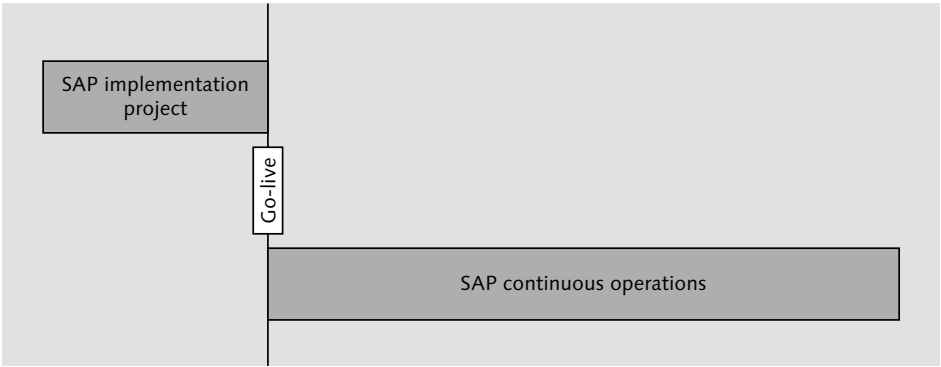


Figure 2.6 Relative Timing for SAP System Implementation versus SAP System Operation

Let's consider the relative timing of implementation and ongoing operations. An implementation may take three years, and long-term system operation may go on for at least five times that long. All of a sudden, it's apparent that the investment to put the system in place dwarfs the investment to keep it running.

Further, the *kinds* of investments to put the system in place differ markedly from those required to keep the system in place. As Table 2.1 indicates, the types of activities needed to deliver the system will likely vary considerably from those needed to maintain the system once it is live. By definition, the SAP project team is a delivery-focused organization. This means in practice that project leadership concerns itself solely with putting the system in place and relegates all other matters to second place. On the other hand, once go-live has occurred, the SAP sustainment organization pays utmost attention to how the system is operating and how to improve that experience.

System-Related Activities	System Delivery	System Operation and Maintenance
Essential activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ In-depth understanding of business process changes</li><li>▶ Ability to create company commitment to delivering the system</li><li>▶ Proficiency in documenting system design decisions</li><li>▶ Capability to write test scripts and conduct thorough testing</li><li>▶ Ability to conduct data-conversion processes from legacy systems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ High degree of system user skills</li><li>▶ Committed super users and process owners active in system usage</li><li>▶ Effective system governance at all levels in the company that decides questions of system continuity</li><li>▶ Skilled SAP-focused IT business analysts who support the system</li><li>▶ Rapid and coordinated responses to system outages</li></ul>
Important activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Skills in developing targeted user-training materials</li><li>▶ Focus on timelines and deliverables</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Designing plans for system releases</li><li>▶ Monitoring system performance</li></ul>

Table 2.1 Activities Needed for System Delivery versus System Maintenance



The information presented in Table 2.1 makes an important distinction: The skills critical for system delivery will not be the same ones critical for system sustainment. Thus a company SAP governance team that has led a successful implementation will not necessarily be prepared for governing the now-live system for the years ahead. An implementing company making effective plans for system governance must make sure this transition point is well understood and needed skill sets are in place.

Our final chapter, Chapter 23, reviews the transition process to sustainment and how the governance process will operate in this new world. Sustainment will lack the drama and constant urgency of the implementation project. However, it will be equally important for the company to perform well. Building the home well is one thing; learning how to live in it is very much another.

But before arriving at sustainment, we have a good distance yet to travel and a great deal of material to cover. Our next chapter describes the Accelerated SAP methodology. It gives an overall roadmap for the project team to travel in its implementation journey. Let's head there now!

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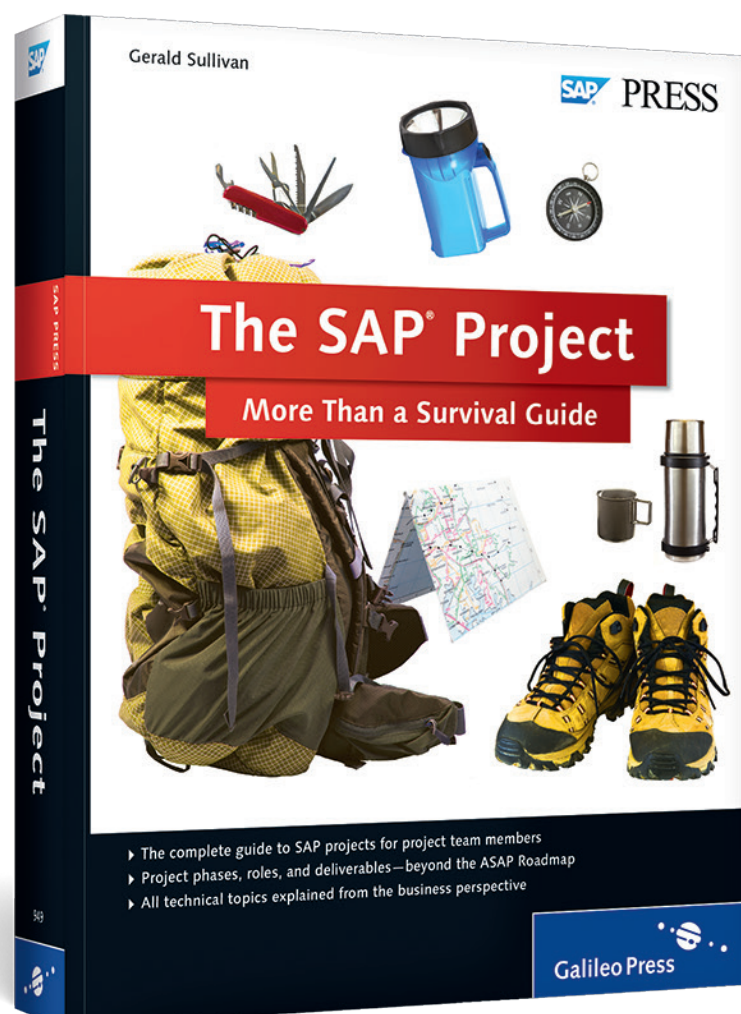
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