

Upgrading SAP for Compliance

Professionally managing and implementing the patching of a critical ERP system with minimal disruption to day-to-day operation



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Key outcomes

- 8,000+ SAP ECC notes/fixes implemented.
- 98% of system integration tests done in 7 days.
- 92% system integration test pass rate in 10 days.

Technologies

- SAP ERP Central Component (ECC)
- SAP Single Sign-On

Delivered

- SAP Testing
- Staff Augmentation

The challenge

Upgrading and patching software is a necessity, but sometimes it can be a complicated or tiresome process.

For large-scale systems like SAP, it can also be expensive, requiring a significant investment of time and resources to apply support packages. Not only does it take SMEs away from more valuable activities, but it can be challenging to find the right people from the wider business to do the testing.

For those reasons, it can be easy to forgo or forget about patching a SAP implementation. If it already works well, some do not see the harm in letting it slip several versions behind the currently supported release.

This may seem like a workable strategy. However, if a specific, critical problem suddenly affects its functionality, contacting SAP for support will often result in the advice to apply the latest patch.

Applying patches for SAP products can take several weeks at best, and that does not include the additional time needed to test that they work correctly. The business impact for this type of delay can be significant.

The SAP ERP Central Component (ECC) at this government organisation worked so well that they made a strategic decision to not patch it until needed. While this meant that their setup adequately supported their operations, it eventually became non-compliant from a legal reporting perspective.

In response to this, the government organisation launched its SAP Patching Project to ensure that its ECC setup met the new compliancy regulations expected by the tax office for the coming financial year. It would also need to be tested to ensure existing and new functions were working correctly.



The solution

As experts in quality assurance with strong expertise and experience in SAP systems, the government organisation selected Planit as its approved testing services provider.

First, we worked with them to devise a test strategy. Since it is not possible to test every single business process in the limited time available, the priority then was to test the critical processes so that business continuity is ensured after the upgrade.

A risk-based approach was adopted for the testing. This enabled us to deliver optimal test coverage and quality results on critical business processes covering all WRICEF (workflows, reports, interfaces, conversions, enhancements, forms, and authorisations) areas, while also reducing the cost and workload constraints to the government organisation.

Our next step was to perform a review of their SAP landscape and provide a testing framework that could be followed for the different projects. This was important given the modularised nature of SAP systems with components rarely able to be tested individually.

We engaged with the different business areas (procurement, finance, human resources, payroll, asset works and management, and data and reporting analytics) to map the government department's end-to-end business critical processes. This enabled us to determine the testing requirements.

Our team carried out functional, system, system integration (SIT), user acceptance (UAT), product validation (PVT), and smoke unit testing of the patches applied to their ECC environment. Due to the quantity of the changes from SAP required to ensure compliance, the project was completed in two phases.

During phase one of the patching, several modules within the ECC setup were patched using support packages. This consisted of over 8,000 SAP "notes" or fixes that corrected general problems, security flaws, legal requirements, and improved functionality. As part of this testing, SAP Single Sign-On, which enables users to log in once to securely access all the software they require with no need to log in again, was also assessed.

The second phase of the project involved implementing various SAP legislative changes, fixes for that financial year, and setup for the following year's processing.

Outcome

A six-month timeline was set by the government organisation for the testing of the ECC upgrades and we successfully ensured their setup was compliant to the tax office's standards by that deadline.

Due to the tight project timelines, we used test automation to drive delivery efficiencies, resulting in SIT completing ahead of schedule. SIT achieved 98% execution rate in just seven days and a 92% pass rate in ten days, enabling user acceptance testing to commence sooner.

Due to our delivery excellence and customer-focused engagement models, the government organisation continued to engage us for ongoing testing services. Following the end of the first-year contract, they had the option to extend our test partnership for an additional two one-year terms, which they did on both occasions based on the results and value we continued to deliver to them.

Our test automation strategy allows us to re-use assets and increase delivery efficiency. Over the three-year period, we were involved in multiple SAP patching projects at the government organisation to ensure they were applied correctly to comply with legal and compliance standards.

The successful upgrades brought the government organisation a lot more value than simply keeping their SAP setup up to date and legally compliant. They now have a regular patching regime, and thanks to the knowledge transfer included as part of our engagement, their own people also have the necessary understanding to test subsequent patches.



About Planit

Whether you are just beginning your SAP transformation or are maturing your existing landscape, we can help you achieve your platform goals faster by assuring quality and accelerating delivery.

Ask us how our expert advice, hands-on skills, technical solutions, and value-add SAP Accelerators can deliver quality quicker for your SAP implementation!

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