openSAP Invites, Episode 22 - Learn How to Speed Up Your Implementations of SAP SuccessFactors Solutions

Learn how to leverage SAP Best Practices and the package configuration manager to significantly shorten the time it takes to implement SAP SuccessFactors solutions.

Transcript

Robert Nichols: [00:00:07] Welcome to openSAP Invites. I'm your host, Robert Nichols. Today, I'm excited to welcome two guests from the SAP SuccessFactors Product Management Team, Jayendra Bisnik and Abishek Suvarna. Jay, Abi, and I will discuss a very valuable tool that their team developed for our partners, called the Package Configuration Manager. As a project manager with the openSAP team, I work closely with Jay and Abi to deliver an openSAP course related to the Package Configuration Manager (PCM). If you're not already familiar with this tool, you will soon learn how valuable it can be for our partners when implementing SAP SuccessFactors solutions. In short, and what's great about the Package Configuration Manager is that it is a business configuration tool that uses SAP Best Practices and SAP-qualified partner-packaged solutions to automate many of the standard configurations that are common across implementations. In other words, this tool helps partners to save considerable and valuable time, allowing them to focus more on implementing customer specific requirements. Jayendra Bisnik first joined SAP in 2003 as an application developer and is now a senior professional with over 18 years of experience in the area of human resources management as a developer, a consultant, solution architect, project lead and trainer. Jay has over ten years' experience in SAP Consulting and has been a trusted advisor to many global customers, helping them implement SAP Human Capital Management (HCM) and SAP SuccessFactors solutions. Abishek Suvarna joined SAP in 2008, working on SAP Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) solutions. He then switched to the HCM space where he has worked in product management and as a product expert working closely with partners and customers. He also currently leads the development and design for the Package Configuration Manager. Hello Jay, hello Abi and welcome to openSAP Invites.

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:02:01] Hi, Rob. Thanks for having us on the podcast. Greetings to all your listeners.

Abishek Suvarna: [00:02:07] Hello, Rob. I hope you're doing well. Hello to everyone. I'm very excited to be here today.

Robert Nichols: [00:02:13] Well. It's great to have you both here for this podcast episode. I know many in our audience know you from the openSAP course about the package configuration manager. Of course, we first made it available in June 2020 and then updated it for February 2022. And during that time, I've had the pleasure of working with you, and I've also had the chance to learn about some personal passions you each have. And so, before we get into the discussion about the PCM tool, I thought our audience would really enjoy hearing about these. So, I'll start with you, Jay. Now, you're a quizmaster with a passion for trivia. I know you've even published a book of fun filled knowledge questions. I know a lot of us out here, just general people here really enjoy trivia. So please tell us more about your passion for this.

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:02:58] Yes, Rob. Well, I've been fascinated by trivia quizzing from my childhood. Mainly watching quiz shows on television, like the Mastermind on BBC, which is my personal favorite. Then over the years, in addition to participating in quiz contests and trivia nights, I started hosting them too, which was a completely different experience. And recently I felt that I should publish some of my favorite questions that I had created for my audience in form of a book and share them with the rest of the world. And that's how my book "Quiz-A-Day" got published, and my second trivia book will be coming out very soon.

Robert Nichols: [00:03:45] So maybe sometime in the future, we may even see you on television hosting a quiz show?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:03:52] Hopefully, yes.

Robert Nichols: [00:03:54] That would be fun. And Abi, I know you have a passion for travel. And while a lot of people have a travel bucket list with many destinations unchecked, you have had the opportunity to visit over 40 countries. Can you please

share with us some of the places you've been and some of the amazing experiences you must have had?

Abishek Suvarna: [00:04:11] Yeah, that's correct, Rob. I've had a passion for travel from a young age, and I've been lucky to have visited a few countries so far. What draws me to visiting these new places is the opportunity to experience different cultures, the cuisines, and of course interact with the local people. It is hard for me to pick a favorite since every place is unique in its own way. I can talk to an experience that I had in Brazil before the pandemic hit. So, we were on one of the Blackwater rivers in the Amazon, and I decided to jump in for a quick swim, right? And suddenly I felt something brushed against my leg. And that was pretty scary. I quickly jumped back into the boat and then we realized that it was pink dolphins that had decided to pay us a visit. So that was truly a unique and exciting experience for me.

Robert Nichols: [00:05:06] I've never been to Brazil, but I have to tell you, if I was on the Amazon River, I don't think I'd ever jump in the water there. So, I can imagine that was pretty scary to feel something rub against your leg.

Abishek Suvarna: [00:05:16] It was. It was.

Robert Nichols: [00:05:17] And you said it was a dolphin? I didn't realize there was dolphins in the Amazon.

Abishek Suvarna: [00:05:21] They are pink dolphins actually. They are very, very unique.

Robert Nichols: [00:05:24] Wow. That sounds really exciting. So, in general, how are things for both of you in the SAP SuccessFactors product team these days?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:05:33] Here Rob, I'll go first. It's been an exciting time to be part of SAP SuccessFactors family. There are a lot of great innovations in the works, which means that we are going to release some really interesting features in the near future.

Abishek Suvarna: [00:05:52] And Rob, if I can add to what Jay mentioned. As we all know, the world faced some challenging times recently during the pandemic. But I think

we've all done a wonderful job to keep going and delivering great results for our customers. And during these trying times, the speed of innovation in HR space has been better than ever before, and SAP's purpose is to make the world run better and improve people's lives. So, this purpose became even more important and kept us all motivated to keep going.

Robert Nichols: [00:06:28] Oh, that's really good to hear. So, let's start talking about this awesome tool that you guys created for implementing SAP SuccessFactors solutions. As I mentioned, we recently updated the openSAP course for the Package Configuration Manager. And in fact, successful completion of this course is a requirement to gain access to the Package Configuration Manager tool. So, to our listeners who might not know much about the topic for this discussion today, Jay, could you introduce them to what are SAP Best Practices?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:07:00] Sure. Yeah. So, SAP Best Practices are a set of recommended HR configurations that we have gathered over the years from the HCM experts from all over the world. And these best practices are available in form of like consumable configuration blocks. And you can think of these configuration blocks as those toy blocks that we used to play with when we were kids. And these configuration blocks can fit together with other blocks. And in this way, a customer can create a unique solution based on their requirement. So, the customer and the partner can pick and choose whatever they want, depending on their requirements, and then they can create their own solution in a, in a less amount of time.

Robert Nichols: [00:08:06] That makes sense. And Abi, can you tell us more about the Package Configuration Manager itself?

Abishek Suvarna: [00:08:10] Yes, sure. So, the Package Configuration Manager or PCM that we call it sometimes leverages the concept of configuration blocks that Jay just described, and the PCM enables partners to extract, develop and deploy configuration blocks. Right? So, implementation teams can assemble or group these configurations into solution packages that can be reused across different implementations. And in addition, in build analytics are also available for partner management to track adoption and make informed decisions, which is obviously very important for the business. Right? And the PCM also gives partners the flexibility to

build their own solutions or build on top of the existing best practices. And they can also choose to mix and match the two approaches. It is also possible for single or multiple configuration blocks to be deployed in few minutes with a click of the button using the application.

Robert Nichols: [00:09:17] Yeah and that sounds great. I know, I have I have a background as a consultant in the field and, you know, I remember doing many implementations and having to do some repeatable steps over and over again from one, one client site to another. And I think what you're describing is a lot of the standard configurations are automated and therefore makes it a lot easier to just put in the standard stuff. And then, as you said, just kind of take these blocks and plug and play in terms of your very specific requirements for that installation or implementation. As I mentioned earlier, we rolled out a new version of that openSAP course on the PCM tool. Abi, can you tell us what are the key updates in this new version of the course? And why is it essential for anyone who completed the original version in 2020 and 2021 to take the newer 2022 version of this course?

Abishek Suvarna: [00:10:08] So, Rob, as you're aware, right? We had a very excellent participation for the first version of the course, and we received very positive feedback. Right? And one of the points that many participants came up with was that we demonstrate that we demonstrate more examples of how PCM can be used for the different SuccessFactors modules like employee central recruiting, etc. Also, not all partners managed to participate in the first version of the course. So. So. So, since 2020, we've also added some exciting new features to PCM. So, with this in mind, we felt that it was a good time for us to come up with the second version of the course with some real-life scenarios. On how PCM can help partners improve the implementation experience for themselves and it's for customers also.

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:11:04] Yeah. And I want to add a few more points here to what we mentioned in the current version of the course, the one that that we have released just now. In addition to the architectural concepts that we are teaching in that course, we are also providing the complete overview of PCM. The participants also get to learn how to build configuration blocks for some of the SuccessFactors modules, mainly in employee central area as well as in the talent modules. And this new version can be a refresher for those participants who went through the earlier version but did not get a

chance to invest time on the application itself. So, they did the course, but they did not go to the application, and they did not actually create the configuration blocks. So those participants can benefit out of this. And all the participants will get to see the latest updates that Abi mentioned a while back. So, we have done a lot of we have we have added a lot of new features and they can learn some new tricks that will help them to build their customer specific configuration blocks.

Robert Nichols: [00:12:31] So, the key message there is if you took the older version of the course, you really should take the newer version of the course. But if you did take the older version of the course, you still have access to the PCM tool, correct?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:12:43] That is right.

Robert Nichols: [00:12:44] So let me ask you, how did your team come up with the idea for the PCM tool? What were the key business problems that you were trying to solve?

Abishek Suvarna: [00:12:53] So Rob, in 2017, we released the automation of best practices by which the deployment could be done with the click of a button. So, meaning to say that configuration could be applied to a system essentially with a click of a button in the SuccessFactors application, right? So, people in the ecosystem like the concept. And by 2018, we found that many partners were asking for a similar automation concept to build their own solutions. So, this is where we decided to build an application that came to be known as the Package Configuration Manager. So, in the past, the base configurations had to be deployed over and over again in every implementation, which was very tedious, time consuming and obviously an error prone activity since it was manual. Right. And on top of this, every consultant had their own version of the baseline configuration, which might not have been the latest version, which would lead to errors downstream. Right? So, with PCM, the deployments can be done fast and with high quality. Also importantly, configuration blocks can be reused by consultants across the partner company, leading to more efficient use of resources.

Robert Nichols: [00:14:22] So we hear how important or how valuable this tool is for our partners out there implementing these solutions. But how do these SAP Best

Practices and the Package Configuration Manager help the end customers of SAP SuccessFactors?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:14:35] Yeah. So, as you mentioned in this podcast that the implementations sometimes have a lot of repetitive steps. And in the past in the recent past, the SuccessFactors implementations were mostly done manually by consultants. And as Abi mentioned, most of the implementations look different. So, with SAP Best Practices, we have standardized the base configuration. And the automation that we provided since 2017 has sped up the implementation process. The configuration that we provide is of industry standard and comes at no charge to the customer. So, the customer does not pay anything. And the baseline content ensures that there is a smooth and fast initial implementation with high quality of configuration content. So, with best practices, the customers get a choice to pick and choose their business processes scope with cross product and cross module integrations also. And here I would like to mention that the integrations were a major pain points with customers that we came to know of, and that's where we provided these integration configuration blocks and best practices, because the customers previously used to spend a lot of time and effort in creating those integrations. And after these configuration blocks for integrations have been released, we got some very good feedback from the customers. So that that that is a very good, positive story that we have got. Abi, do you want to add anything else here?

Abishek Suvarna: [00:16:38] So let me think. I think you've covered most of the points related to best practices. Maybe I can add a little to the Package Configuration Manager. So today the Package Configuration Manager is not available for our customers to use. Only for SAP Partners. There are, however, certain indirect advantages to our customers as well. Right? And, as you mentioned earlier, Jay, with this automation now extending to partners with PCM, the initial implementation time for partner solutions can be significantly reduced and obviously it is of a higher quality now, right? Since it's automated, it's tested. So, what partners can do now in projects is that they can focus more and spend more time on customer specific requirements and thereby obviously providing more value for our customers. And it's also possible to build regional and niche solutions which can be built and obviously deployed to customers at a very competitive price now.

Robert Nichols: [00:17:50] And does the does the PCM tool cover all SAP Best Practices?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:17:55] Yeah. That's a very good question, Rob. Yes. PCM does cover all the standard best practices content that you find inside the SAP SuccessFactors product. So, in PCM, there are different sections that the user can go to. And one of the, I would say very useful sections is the best practices section where, you know, the user could go and look at the whole portfolio of our SAP Best Practices and from there they can copy, review, and then deploy the best practices directly to any target SuccessFactors instance they want. We do cover all the business processes, so with these configuration blocks, the consultants can activate different business processes for their customers. And the business processes include the core processes in employee central, for example, in recruiting management, compensation, succession and development, performance and goals management and now onboarding. However, I would like to mention over here that learning management, recruiting, marketing and analytics are still not in scope, but we do have plans to add these to the PCM scope in the future.

Robert Nichols: [00:19:29] And I'm sure there's a lot of people out there to be anxiously waiting for that additional feature. So, I know you are both in customer facing roles and you kind of hinted to this earlier. I would assume you have some real-world success stories you would like to share.

Abishek Suvarna: [00:19:44] Yeah. In the last two years, obviously, there's been a lot of interest for the tool, and you have quite a few users who are onboarded as well and a few customer stories to share. Right? So, both regional and global partners have created and deployed the SuccessFactors package solution. Using the Package Configuration Manager and one of our global partners has managed to fully automate their proprietary implementation starter kit solution on the Package Configuration Manager. So, this has reduced the time they used to take to kick start the implementation from weeks to a few days. Another partner has built an industry specific solution for the finance industry in the UK and this solution can now be implemented in about eight weeks at a very attractive price. So, after the recent implementation, the partner mentioned that without the automation capabilities offered by PCM, they would not have had the confidence of offering such a comprehensive solution at such a

competitive price. And Jay, I know that you had an interesting experience with a customer recently. Would you like to talk a little bit about it?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:21:14] Yeah. Yeah, Abi sure. I was actually thinking about that particular story, and I've been telling that story to a lot of people recently. So, this this is about a US based customer implementing the recruiting management module. And the major pain point here, as with many other customers, is the offer letter templates. You know? That they give to their employees when they are going to join. And for this customer, there were like 4000 templates, and they were spread across 100 countries with 20 languages. So, it was kind of a very big mountain to climb for the consultants, and that's where they started using PCM in their project and they saved around 3000 hours of implementation time and their project timeline reduced by 90%. So that was a great story that I've been telling a lot of people. Apart from this, if you look internally inside SAP, there have been success stories here also and we always talk about SAP using SAP. So, our professional services consulting teams also use PCM for automating the deployment of their base configuration. I have been a consultant myself and when I go back to my previous colleagues in consulting, they tell me how big a timesaver the PCM has been. And now those colleagues focus more on customer specific requirements in an implementation project rather than worrying about how they can get the baseline configuration set up. So that's been a very good addition to their ammunition as consultants. Apart from that, even some of the demo environments in SuccessFactors these days, they are maintained using PCM.

Robert Nichols: [00:23:34] You mentioned they had 4000 templates for offer letters. Is that, is that because of the many countries and languages and maybe different roles that they're jobs that they're offering the letter to? I mean, why are so many for just an offer letter? Why are there thousands of templates?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:23:52] So, the fact that this company is a multinational company with very large customer, very large employee base, and it's spread, as I mentioned, to 100 countries. So, they had different kinds of employees in different regions. And even for a for a particular region, they had many variations based on the employee type they had. So that's why they had so many, so many variations for their offer letter templates.

Robert Nichols: [00:24:24] So this would be common for a lot of large global companies, I would imagine, such as SAP, for example.

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:24:31] Yeah, that is true.

Robert Nichols: [00:24:33] That's good to hear. So, you kind of hinted towards some new HR business processes being added on in the future, like learning management, recruiting, marketing. But can you tell us what are the future expectations for SAP Best Practices in the Package Configuration Manager?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:24:52] Yeah, Rob. So, we have a motto in our team to keep learning and improving. And this also reflects in the solutions that we deliver with best practices and Package Configuration Manager. We try to constantly improve our configuration content on the best practices side based on the feedback that we get from different stakeholders like partners, consultants, and some other internal product teams. We also deliver best practices for new features that are added by the SuccessFactors product teams. And I would like to give an example over here, a very recent example and a very relevant one where we released our best practices for the vaccine solution. And this vaccine solution captures the COVID vaccine status for employees. And that's a very relevant case for now. The feature became very popular amongst the customers, and we received really great feedback on this feature. And that is a good example of how the best practices solutions that we release, and, in this case, we released on a very urgent basis depending on the market requirements. And we will continue to do that in the future also. And Abi, please add if I missed anything over here.

Abishek Suvarna: [00:26:25] So Jay, I think we've, we've received very similar feedback, or I should say we've received a lot of feedback from users for the Package Configuration Manager as well. And since its release, right? We've added many new features and extended several functions to cover the different product areas. We also plan to add a new technology platform to improve the performance on the application and give our users a much better experience. Right. And we believe that with our collaboration with our partners and our internal stakeholders, we will be able to constantly deliver a higher quality product that will improve the implementation experience for both our partners and our customers alike.

Robert Nichols: [00:27:20] I hope I hope this has been as enlightening for our listeners as it has been for me. So, let me ask you if our listeners want to learn more besides obviously the openSAP course on Package Configuration Manager, where can they find more information?

Abishek Suvarna: [00:27:35] So I can take this, Rob. Right? So, we have more information available about the SAP Best Practices on the SAP Help Portal for PCM. We encourage all our partners to take the openSAP course if they haven't done so already. And in addition, we also have some enablement content like videos, blogs, etc. on the PCM application itself. So, we've like I mentioned, we've also published blogs on both the SAP Best Practices and PCM. The links to which can be found in the description.

Robert Nichols: [00:28:18] Yeah. I'll be sure to add any of these references and links to the podcast show notes for our listeners. But as we as we now start to wrap up this discussion, let me ask you, can you summarize two or three key takeaways for our audience?

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:28:34] Sure I can do that, Rob. So, the first key takeaway is that the best practices and the Package Configuration Manager are free for anyone in the SuccessFactors ecosystem to use whenever they want. For the second takeaway, I would mention that now with PCM, partners can build their offerings on top of best practices, and these best practices are standard configurations based on the feedback that we have got from the field, from various stakeholders, as I mentioned, both internal and external. And we have seen increased adoption over the years making the best practices a standard. Right now, I can say it's a standard for many implementation projects, if not all. And the final takeaway is that with the combination of best practices and PCM, the implementation partners can create a lot of value for our customers without adding any extra costs to their offering.

Robert Nichols: [00:29:42] This has been a really, really good conversation. Abi, Jay, I want to thank you very much for participating in this podcast. It's been a real pleasure for me partnering with you and your team these past years. So, thank you.

Jayendra Bisnik: [00:29:55] Thank you very much, Rob. I really enjoyed this session.

Abishek Suvarna: [00:29:58] Thank you, Rob. It's been a pleasure.

Robert Nichols: [00:30:02] Thank you for listening to openSAP Invites. I'd also like to thank my producers, Gabriel Tomescu and Lorna Richards. If you've enjoyed this episode, please share, rate, and leave a review. Also, be sure to check out openSAP's free learning offering of massive open online courses, microlearnings and podcasts on openSAP.com.

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