

openSAP Invites, Episode 12

LEARN HOW TO DEFINE AND EXECUTE AN ENTERPRISE INTEGRATION STRATEGY WITH SAP INTEGRATION SOLUTION ADVISORY METHODOLOGY

Transcript

Elisabeth Riemann: Welcome to openSAP Invites, I'm your host, Elisabeth Riemann, and in this episode, we're learning all about SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology with Katrin von Ahsen, product expert for intelligent enterprise technology at SAP. Katrin explains SAP's integration strategy, outlines customer use cases, and shares her own expert insights so we can learn how to define and execute holistic integration strategies. We also talk about her highlights from the openSAP course, "SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology" and find out about new developments to come. Katrin von Ahsen is a product expert for intelligent enterprise technology at SAP. She's responsible for enhancing and rolling out the SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology and supports the rollout of SAP Intelligent Enterprise Strategy with a focus on technology aspects. Katrin's a frequent speaker on integration topics at SAP TechEd, SAP Community, SAP user groups, and more. She has over 20 years of experience with SAP integration technology and concepts in various roles ranging from consulting to program and product management. Let's say hello. Hello, Katrin.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Hi Lizzie.

Elisabeth Riemann: Welcome to openSAP Invites. It's fantastic that you're here today so we can learn from your integration expertise and gain a better understanding of what SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology is all about. Katrin, you're an experienced instructor and an expert speaker on integration topics. Can you take us behind the scenes and share a couple of your personal experiences from working on your latest openSAP course, aptly entitled, "SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology". Can you tell us more?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so this was this time really special situation, right, so I already delivered some other openSAP courses at the studio where everything was well prepared and equipped, but this time with a pandemic situation where we all are in, it was really special, right? Because I was just sitting on my own at an SAP office in

November. It was raining outside and actually recording all these videos for the openSAP course. Right. So, it was really a special experience. And I was somehow a bit concerned. As you know, there were some discussions going on about another lockdown situation. And so, I was a bit in a hurry to get things done, but I was lucky. So, everything was recorded and delivered on time, even though the conditions were not the best ones.

Elisabeth Riemann: We hope that we can welcome you back to the studio next time. I know there's a lot

Katrin Von Ahsen: Oh, yeah.

Elisabeth Riemann: Goes on behind the scenes. Another question I want to ask you as well. How was the teamwork between you and the other course instructors working on the courses? I guess that must have been more difficult as well while you were all working remotely.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Oh, no. So actually, we're used to that and was really nice atmosphere, even though everything was delivered and managed online. So, we were in close contact with the openSAP team and with my co-speaker Ivo Droesser. So actually, at SAP we are used to work in virtual teams like that.

Elisabeth Riemann: Very good, and Katrin, as ever, a lot of thought went into the course structure itself. Can you talk us through some of your favorite aspects, the strengths of the course, and some of the highlights that we can look forward to there.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, sure. So, I have to say, I really like the learning format of openSAP because the content is really easy to consume, right. And for me, it was really a great opportunity with the course to expand the scope of the SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology. So, this was actually a perfect time and opportunity to introduce new topics along the course and with that into the ISAM framework as such. And so, in regards of the key strengths, I have to say here with this course, we have the perfect combination of standard learning content and a case study with some exercises. So, we have to say in methodology, like we have here, is actually a lot of theoretical content. And here this has been complemented now with a case study which is based on a real

customer example and therefore the methodology, as such, it's easier to consume and actually more tangible. And I hope that this is really a great learning experience for the openSAP learners.

Elisabeth Riemann: And I think it's really great to include that case study when you say it's very kind of theory-based itself with the methodology, I think it's really important to give us like a real-life use case scenario so we can really get our minds around that as well. And Katrin, you mentioned the ISAM framework. I guess that's the abbreviation, the acronym that you use a standard. Is that correct?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, sure, because it's a lengthy name as you know, SAP is well known for lengthy product names and so on with the SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology, it's actually better known as simply ISAM along our community.

Elisabeth Riemann: Very good. So, before we talk about ISAM in itself in more detail, can you start by telling us about SAP's overall integration strategy?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, sure, happy to do so. Yeah, so what we are working on is to deliver really an integrated intelligent suite, right. To tightly interweave and connect the various SAP applications along end-to-end business processes and how we are doing that with the help of technology concepts of the SAP Business Technology Platform. So, here we have introduced the concept of suite qualities, which are technologies that are applied to the lines of business applications. So, like consistent user experience, like aligned domain models like, so all facilitating an out-of-the-box integration of SAP applications.

Elisabeth Riemann: And Katrin, you've extensive experience yourself with integration technology topics at SAP. Can you share some insights into your focus areas and activities? Because I know that you're very, very busy on all these integration topics in general.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, so I'm actually now with SAP for 20 years and always working on integration topics, so starting as a consultant and product management with the key integration technologies. And now I'm with the product management team for Cross Architecture, which is also driving the Intelligent Enterprise Program. And this

team actually covers integration from a holistic perspective. So, covering all the dimensions like the processes, the data integration, the user experience, analytical integration. So really to deliver a truly integrated experience for our customers. So, I'm responsible here for the SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology as such. So, I'm working on expanding the scope of the methodology. I'm validating the new concepts with SAP customers and partners and rolling out all these news and enablement and learning offerings around that. And furthermore, I'm also contributing to the Intelligent Enterprise Program at SAP with a focus on the integration aspects here, for instance, to evangelize the concepts and strategy of rolling it out towards customers and partners, and another activity that's actually to safeguard our key customers on the journey to becoming an intelligent enterprise. Right, to guide them about how to implement the end-to-end business processes and also to take the learnings from these customized implementations and to bring these back into the development organizations moving forward.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's great work. So, let's now turn our attention to SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology itself. What is it all about exactly? Can you talk us through some of the main aspects and the theory there?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, so in a nutshell, this methodology helps customers to define and execute an enterprise integration strategy so as such the methodology of provides you with a lot of accelerators like integration patterns, architecture blueprints, and further best practices for cloud and hybrid landscapes. Right. And what's really nice and I like about the methodology that it offers a clear adoption path. Right. So, all this structured along four main use cases. And with that we offer really customers a proven path for adopting the methodology in a stepwise fashion.

Elisabeth Riemann: And is it something that's been created specifically along the intelligent enterprise strategy? Can you tell us how things started and how it became exactly what it is today?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, so actually, the methodology is not new, so we have introduced the Integration Solution Advisory roughly seven years ago. Right. So, but now with the Intelligent Enterprise Strategy, it has gained a lot of importance. And so, it's again in the limelight, again at the heart of the SAP strategies. And so there has

been always a need by our customers to differentiate, for instance, from the competition where you need to adopt a lot of new applications and technologies. And all these activities come along with new integration requirements. And actually, the scope of integration is also constantly increasing. So here we have always had the need and desire from customers to offer the need for more guided and structured approach on integration.

Elisabeth Riemann: So, it's really based on customer feedback that you've received then as well to really base it on their needs and to cater for those requirements.

Katrin Von Ahsen: True.

Elisabeth Riemann: And Katrin to help us better understand the wider business context, can you talk us through the greatest challenges of enterprise integration, perhaps that you've come across through your work at SAP and maybe talk about how the SAP solutions and the methodology itself help here?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so what we see is actually that the application also the technology landscapes of our customers are evolving fast, right? So, they have a mix of SAP solutions and technology from applications and technology from other vendors, custom-build applications, legacy solutions, and always the requirements to deliver some innovations for their particular business. Right. And here, actually, with the Intelligent Enterprise Strategy, we're actually helping our customers with an out-of-the-box integration for the SAP applications along defined end-to-end business processes and the other side of the house, it's that our strategy and also the methodology is not limited to the SAP world. So, it's open to integrate also with third-party applications. Right. And with that, with the methodology, we are offering really a guided approach for enterprise integration.

Elisabeth Riemann: And can you talk us through some use cases?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so as outlined already, we have structured the whole methodology along four core use cases, and so here the journey of our customers typically start with the first one, which is an assessment of the current integration strategy, to actually identify what kind of further integration requirements and

technologies are needed. Then you can take it to the next level with the second use case where you design your hybrid integration platform. And this is typically something which you cannot procure just a single integration solution, and that's it. So, it always depends on the customer context and the particular requirements. So, it's in most cases a mix of existing integration technology, which is complemented with new one. And with that it forms a very specific hybrid integration platform for customers. Once done, you need to execute and implement your integration strategy and this is done with a third use case, where you are defining integration best practices. So here the methodology provides you with a lot of best practices, which are vendor agnostic, so common and well-known integration best practices and specific ones for SAP integration technologies, which you can take as a starting point to define your enterprise integration guidelines. The fourth use case, and last but not least, tackles the whole organizational dimension on integration. Right. Because it's not sufficient just to make sure that you have a platform and all the strategy around that. You have actually also to enable your integration developers to deliver and implement the integrations based on agreed standards.

Elisabeth Riemann: I think it's really great that you have those four use cases, right, that really guides the whole process and addresses the complexities of a hybrid integration scenario. Right. And can you tell us a little bit more about the business value? I mean, you spoke a little bit about the best practices and things, but can we delve down into the business value that the methodology really provides?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, so in a nutshell, the methodology helps our customers to change from a non-systematic approach to a systematic one, which is well structured and can be well documented, and as a result, it helps to raise the integration maturity level of an organization. And what's a business benefit of that? So, if you have defined an integration strategy which is being executed on, you can also deliver integrated business processes which actually cater to the needs of your specific business requirements. With that, you can also improve the employee and customer satisfaction. For instance, if you have a great user experience along your business processes, spending across various applications. And furthermore, integration is actually the enabler of innovation. Right. So therefore, the integration strategy papers, also named Intelligent Enterprises Are Integrated Enterprises. Right. Because if you integrate your

data and you have access to that in the proper fashion, you can enable a 360-degree view on your entire business and actually gain new insights and findings out of that.

Elisabeth Riemann: And what's been the customer feedback that you've received so far?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so actually, the methodology is very well perceived because it's not it's really easy to consume, it's not actually independent or can be used in coexistence with other enterprise architecture and methodology. But it's really great because customers can pick and choose the areas and accelerators which fit to the requirements and can also adapt them to their needs. And here, that's really great that you can really start small and grow over time to really introduce a profound enterprise integration strategy.

Elisabeth Riemann: It's a real benefit for the customers then to really start small and then to really base it on their own requirements. That's great. And Katrin, you mentioned the accelerators just there again, which accelerators are available with the methodology?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, so here we have a best practice in place, so again, we have vendor-agnostic best practices which you can apply to SAP and also to a third-party integration technology. So here we have, for instance, integration dos and don'ts in place. So, these are general recommendations about how to design and implement integrations. We provide a catalog of integration use case patterns, which are describing integration scenarios and then vendor-agnostic fashions and also architecture blueprints around that, which help to describe actually the integration architecture of particular use cases along also the business applications.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's excellent because I think when you have the blueprints, the patterns, and those best practices and dos and don'ts, that's a really good starting point for the customers as well. And so, we get an impression of the timelines, how much time do customers really need to implement to get this kind of in place and to start their integration journey?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so it's actually a great kick start with the framework we provide, right, so you can actually get started fairly quickly, however, for introducing and bringing such an integration strategy to life this is actually also a journey. But what we see amongst our customers is that these really slice and dice the methodology to their needs. For instance, they just select one topic, one area which we call an integration style, for instance, process integration and deeply dive into the details of this particular area, while others are really taking the full scope of the methodology for shaping out and profound enterprise integration strategy.

Elisabeth Riemann: And is support available from SAP during this integration journey that a customer starts on, how does that work?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes sure, so the methodology and the framework is available for free, and we have now this openSAP course in place, which is a great kick start to learn how to apply the methodology. SAP also offers services around the integration methodology so to deliver tailored workshops on the methodology and also guide customers so their particular implementation of ISAM at their organization.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's great because I think it's so important that you have that guidance, right, you learn the theory and then you have the practical experience when you start implementing these changes and really integrating your hybrid environment. So, if we stay with the customer perspective just now, how are SAP customers adopting the methodology? Which insights can you maybe share with us there from a customer perspective?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so here we have lots of customers adopting the methodology. So, for instance, we had at SAP TechEd last year a customer speaking, it was Chevron, and here this customer adopted the methodology along the journey towards SAP S/4HANA. And that's actually a very common adoption use case, right? When you're actually moving towards S/4HANA, that's always an opportunity to redesign things, your business processes or technology or integration strategy. Right. And so here it was really nice because this customer has adopted the methodology along all these use cases. For instance, took the accelerators from the methodology to define integration principles. Chevron introduced an API-first strategy along that, and which also introduced an API and integration governance process at Chevron. And here that was

really a perfect mix of the technology strategy and also the organizational aspects of integration which this customer has applied.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's really good to hear more about Chevron's approach. That's great.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Right, and the recording of this lecture is also publicly available.

Elisabeth Riemann: Ah, so we can provide that link then in the show notes to the episode. That would be great. And Katrin, the course is fairly new, but I always like to ask what's to come next, what's in focus, what's development focusing on in the coming months? Can you tell us more there?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes sure, so actually what we are doing is actually to further evolve the integration methodology to cover further topics and technologies. So here with the openSAP course, we have, for instance, introduced the analytics integration style. So actually, here we go hand in hand with the overall SAP integration strategy in the context of the intelligent enterprise. Right. So here, now we have introduced analytics going along with the suite qualities of the intelligent enterprise. We have now new concepts for Master Data Integration, and these will be fed and results and added to the framework of the integration methodology too. Furthermore, we are growing both in co-innovation approach on the methodology. So, we are always looking for feedback for SAP from SAP customers and also partners, their experiences with the methodologies and areas to improve and expand the scope. And another activity, what we are driving now at SAP is actually to correlate the integration methodology with other SAP methodologies and solutions. Right. For instance, we have the SAP activate methodology in place, which is the methodology for implementing SAP solutions. And here we have already a preview as part of the openSAP course, where you can use of the SAP activate methodology and the integration methodology together. And here we will be working on to take a more tightly interweave and interconnect the methodologies and frameworks at SAP moving forward.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's true integration in every sense of the word, then integrating with other methodologies, too. And I think it's really great when SAP provides such a holistic approach then as well. That's really fantastic. And Katrin, you're very busy. I

know with all your different custom activities speaking at different events, can you let us know what are your next activities? I mean, you've been very busy with openSAP. What's your focus for the next few weeks and months?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so the next few weeks and months is actually yeah, and further enriching the methodology and with the co-innovation, with the customers and also what we are doing is actually intensifying the roll-out activities along that. And we have lots of news around that regarding the SAP integration strategies. So, I think, yeah, for sure, I will be pretty busy with all these activities in the next couple of weeks and months.

Elisabeth Riemann: And Katrin, can we focus now to kind of provide a bit of a summary about your practical recommendations about how we can get started. So, say that I'm an SAP customer, how can I best get started now with the methodology? What's the best approach?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, so here we have actually some news for our customers, we have recently published a new version of an integration guide. So, this is the integration architecture guide for hybrid and cloud landscapes. And with this update, we have actually restructured the whole content along the concepts of the integration methodology. So, you can find here also an introduction to the integration methodology as such. And then we give actually recommendations along for the SAP integration technology according to the ISAM principles. Another opportunity, if you would really like to learn more for sure, is to enroll in the openSAP course, which is currently on air. So here you have also the opportunity to engage with your peers, for instance, in the discussion forum and also to practice a bit of ISAM with the help of the case study and the exercises along that.

Elisabeth Riemann: And I guess at this point, we could also remind learners that it's also possible once the course closes to access that course content in self-paced mode. Obviously, the discussion forum wouldn't be open, but at least then you can still learn about the content then in self-paced mode, which is always a good option to have.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, for sure. And it really complements nicely the ISAM framework and template we are providing. So, this is then really the time, if you would

like to get started, then you just simply take the framework of ISAM and get started to shape your enterprise integration strategy.

Elisabeth Riemann: That's really good. And Katrin, we've spoken a little bit about partners also taking advantage of the methodology, what's the approach there that you recommend?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, so here the methodology is available for free so partners can leverage the methodology according to its terms of use, and we see actually a lot of partners are delivering workshops on the integration methodology at their client's, right, to shape out here their integration strategy. And you can also take it to the next level to also engage with your clients on the implementation of the integration scenarios moving forward.

Elisabeth Riemann: And Katrin, how can we keep up to date with the latest and greatest from the SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology, also called ISAM. What do we do there to keep in touch?

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yes, so we have a public landing page available at SAP.com so you can find here basic introductory information about ISAM at sap.com/integrationmethodology. We have also an integration architecture community in place. So, if you would like to join this community, just send an e-mail to isam@sap.com and my colleagues will be onboard and send you an invitation link for joining this community. Here, we share actually the news of their new webinars up or new content about the methodology are shared in this round. And it's also a perfect opportunity to provide feedback on the methodology in this forum. Furthermore, you're welcome to follow me on LinkedIn and Twitter and at the SAP Community.

Elisabeth Riemann: And we'll include all those links in the episode show notes. Katrin, to conclude today's episode, can I ask you to name three key benefits of SAP Integration Solution Advisory Methodology?

Katrin Von Ahsen: So here I have to say, what I think is the highest benefit is that you can change really from an unstructured integration approach to a structured one. Right. Because what we see that lots of customers don't have actually an overview about what

kind of integration technologies they have in place, how they can actually support their upcoming business initiatives. Right. Their digital transformation projects. Right. And here actually the methodology is a perfect opportunity to come to a really well-structured approach on enterprise integration.

Katrin Von Ahsen: So that's actually the first benefit. Another benefit is really that the methodology is very well adopted and proven. Right. So, we have introduced it a couple of years ago and so here we have gained a lot of insights into all these customer implementations of SAP integration technologies and also how our customers are adopting the methodologies. And therefore, we have to say that the methodology is very mature. The third aspect is really that it not only covers the technology dimension on integration. Right. So, this is really a strong portion of the methodology where we look at the different use case patterns and we have a scoping approach in place where you can identify the needed integration technologies. Right. And the best practices around that. However, the best-defined integration strategy and hybrid integration platform doesn't help if your organization is not adopting and executing on that. Therefore, we have now expanded the scope to also cover the organizational dimension better on integration. So, how can you change towards a more agile integration practice at your enterprise? Right. So how to introduce integration, governance and quality assurance and such kind of an agile environment? So, this is really new food for thought, which we have recently introduced. And I think that's another key benefit of the Integration Solution Advisory Methodology.

Elisabeth Riemann: Katrin, thank you so much for speaking to us today. It's been great to hear about SAP's integration strategy, learn about the methodology, and above all, hear about your own integration insights.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, thanks for the invitation, it was really great, I'm really happy to be here on this podcast.

Elisabeth Riemann: It was our pleasure. Thank you, Katrin.

Katrin Von Ahsen: Yeah, goodbye.

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