



# Extending SAP Workflow: Getting More Out of Your Application

Although some companies are happy with what standard SAP Workflow offers, others want third-party applications to extend its capabilities. In this e-book, learn how to add on to SAP Workflow, including mobile options, and what to consider when selecting a third-party application. Get tips on assessing whether to buy an add-on application or create one in-house.

**BY WILLIAM NEWMAN**

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# SAP Workflow Add-Ons Expand Possibilities

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**S**AP WORKFLOW is an application that allows companies to execute business processes in a roles-based manner across many SAP enterprise functions. Companies often turn to third-party Workflow applications to add functionality that SAP does not provide out of the box. That way, they avoid issues that could arise with custom code, such as the code breaking when they upgrade their SAP systems.

The introduction of imaging techniques, including digital signature capability, has opened the door even wider to third-party add-on applications to Workflow. These add-ons are designed to provide efficiency gains and cut down on paper consumption, for example. Other third-party applications offer features such as integration with email, allowing approvers to receive Workflow requests by email.

## A WHOLE WORLD OF SAP WORKFLOW ADD-ONS

Some SAP add-ons for SAP Workflow let users include documents to review. By using a third-party application, users can review the workflow in their native application environments, such as a financial or engineering application, instead of within the SAP system.

Organizations can also use add-ons for SAP Workflow to specify which roles have access to different areas of the SAP system. Managers can configure roles to match the same access inside SAP ERP without having to use the SAP system directly. For example, an engineer working on a drawing package that integrates with SAP ERP can use the same role—identified in both applications—to access drawings, files or specifications.

The same goes for sales representatives who are accessing the SAP CRM system using a third-party application. Managers can create roles

to align to permissions found in similar roles in SAP CRM.

Companies can also use third-party workflow applications to help manage the workflow between non-SAP CRM applications and SAP sales and distribution (SD). For example, a third-party application handles the sales and order origination process in the native workflow and sends the information to SD to create a sales order. The application then has access to that sales order as part of the customer's order history.

### WORKFLOW ADD-ONS FOR SAP MOBILE

The emergence of mobile platforms offers additional options for extending the capabilities of SAP Workflow processes. Some companies use third-party mobile add-ons for SAP Workflow reporting. For example, for financial approval and CRM activities, companies can use mobile SAP add-ons to view the workflow processes on mobile dashboards. These dashboards can provide real-time sales levels, budget forecasts and other key metrics,

allowing the sales team to make real-time decisions in the field.

Some companies create SAP mobile applications with workflow-like properties using the Sybase Unwired Platform (SUP) Server. With SUP,

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companies can create a sophisticated workflow application that allows users to retrieve information from the SUP Server and display it in SAP Workflow as a step in which a recipient needs to make a decision. A more complicated mobile workflow application could involve an application that uses online request menu items to invoke various create, update or delete operations in the same flow. ■

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**HEN** selecting add-ons for SAP Workflow, companies should assess

what the financial impact on the company will be as well as the user experience. And while using a third-party application can reduce the number of user licenses, companies still need to consider the cost of the application as well as integration and maintenance costs over the life of the application environment.

When evaluating a third-party workflow application, organizations should consider both the user base and the IT department. In many cases, the add-ons are full SAP partner products or they are certified by SAP.

Here are user-oriented questions companies should consider:

■ ***Do non-SAP users need to have access to the information in the SAP system?***

This is a basic role-definition question. Often users think they need access to the SAP environment; in fact they rarely do and would be better served by SAP add-on software.

■ ***How do users prefer to access the information they need?***

By extending SAP Workflow into their functional areas or by integrating a third-party application? For example, engineers access applications designed for their areas of the business. Allowing them to continue in that environment by implementing an SAP add-on application that integrates with SAP Workflow significantly increases the adoption rate among employees.

■ ***Do existing applications have SAP Workflow integration capabilities built into their design?***

I have seen organizations that think they need an SAP or a third-party application—and nearly buy the applica-

tion—only to find they already own it, or they own the rights to purchase it as part of an existing software license agreement.

■ ***Is there a desire to extend the SAP system capabilities and information into mobile applications?***

Mobility provides a new dimension to workflow, from administrative tasks, such as time approvals and travel expenses, to location-based sales force automation applications. Many SAP third-party partners are developing extensions to SAP applications—including ones built on the Sybase Unwired Platform—that include role-based workflow applications.

And here are technical questions companies should ask:

■ ***Does the third-party SAP Workflow app offer application programming interfaces?***

The IT department needs to know this so the team has an idea of how well the third-party application integrates with the SAP system.

■ ***Does the IT staff have the skills to create an SAP Workflow add-on?***

Companies need to look at the ramp-up time to cover this capability if it doesn't exist and determine cost benefits, if any, of building the add-on instead of buying it. Given the growing number of off-the-shelf, certified,

third-party applications, the need to create add-on applications is not as common as it once was, but it's still a valid option.

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■ ***Are SAP Workflow licenses available, or can the organization reassign existing licenses to employees who need it?***

This may seem horribly obvious, but the organization may already own the app. If so, it doesn't need to buy another one. Likewise, a company may find that some employees are on the license but never use the application.

After asking these questions, the next step is to map out a cost trade-off between working with SAP Workflow and extending it with one or more third-party applications. Depending on the use case for the applications—such as general routing, functionally specific to a part of the business or mobile extensions—it may make sense to simply build the process inside SAP Workflow.

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## DON'T FORGET ABOUT CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Organizations also should consider change management. I have seen several cases in which training and change management were neglected: Employees worked around SAP Work-

### Third-party workflow applications allow reluctant users to contribute to the business environment of the SAP system.

flow, causing hiccups in the approval processes. That said, third-party workflow applications allow reluctant users to contribute to the business environment of the SAP system without the headache of convincing a user group to use an application they vehemently don't want to.

Extending SAP Workflow with third-party apps is an excellent way to prepare for broad use of an SAP system—users will already have experience executing many of the steps. ■

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*Extending SAP Workflow: Getting More Out of Your Application* is a [SearchSAP.com](http://SearchSAP.com) e-publication.

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