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# MAXIMIZE the ROI of Your SAP PM

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**E**nterprise resource planning (ERP) software, like system applications and products in data processing (SAP), are critical systems for managing a business and its operations. This is why ERP vendors are continuously driving improvements to their product suites. Yet, there always remains numerous automation opportunities to augment ERP suite capabilities with third-party solutions. In fact, a recent SAP blog post focused on extending the capabilities of SAP S/4HANA, stating, “We all know that standard SAP software doesn’t cover the scope of all the company business processes. There is always a need for a new app, a new report, or a new functionality.”<sup>1</sup>

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The extensibility of SAP products has given rise to a massive ecosystem of add-on products from third parties that optimize the functionality and value of ERP. It reflects the right way to think about ERP – if a business and its people can work more efficiently and effectively with SAP and an add-on solution combined, then it’s a win for

both frontline workers and the business. Across all industries and aspects of business operations, significant improvements to the worker experience, operational excellence and cost savings can be achieved by leveraging SAP and third-party solution specialists in automation, digitization, data analytics and mobility.

One example where third-party solutions add tremendous value is in the transformation taking place within plant maintenance. SAP plant maintenance (SAP PM) has proven to be a critical part of operations. That’s because this core component of the SAP ERP helps support and maintain critical equipment and systems. Specifically, it empowers plant operators to:

- Inspect systems and equipment;
- Conduct preventive maintenance for ideal operating conditions;
- Manage maintenance requests.

As powerful as SAP PM and other plant maintenance solutions are, a full 80 percent of respondents in the 2022 State of Industrial Maintenance Report cited aging equipment or machine failure creating unscheduled downtime as the top hindrances to plant productivity.<sup>2</sup>

Does this mean that ERP systems lack robust design and functionality? No. Instead, it points to the value of having an ecosystem of third-party partners who can step up and deliver targeted, high-value add-ons to address industry issues and challenges as they arise. This innovation is great news for plant maintenance leaders who use SAP PM. Plant maintenance teams can leverage third-party solutions that can bring improvements, such as increased wrench time, efficiency gains from doing more with less, and even cutting down print costs by substantial percentages.



**Figure 1:** ROI from the maintenance planning and scheduling and mobile EAM SAP PM add-ons across various industries.

As a major module within the SAP ERP, SAP PM is crucial to ensuring the smooth flow of information between SAP’s different components and, thus, between frontline maintenance teams and the rest of the organization. Integration between SAP PM and other SAP ERP central component (ECC) modules keeps data in SAP PM current. It also automatically triggers processes in other modules, such as materials management and finance, when necessary. For instance, a repair activity could trigger a purchase requisition for an out of stock part.

best-in-class maintenance organizations have enabled their frontline workers to perform their jobs faster and more efficiently by optimizing the accuracy and timeliness of the data they need while giving them the freedom of mobility. These types of capabilities are complements to SAP PM that enable plant operators to fill gaps in their operational processes to improve the business.

Let’s take a closer look at two add-on solution examples illustrating the rapid value brought by third parties.

### **Maintenance Planning and Scheduling**

**Applications** – Rather than sifting through downloaded transactions from the standard ERP in a spreadsheet or project management software, a plant manager can use a planning and scheduling solution to automate data sorting and gain informative views for quick decision-making, saving hours in the process each week. This author has seen customers reduce planning & scheduling from two days to just two hours with this solution.

Evaluation teams should seek solutions that can track the skills and availability of the maintenance staff and then use this data to automate the creation of a baseline schedule. The availability of different user interface (UI) options, such as a Gantt chart, allows for dependency checks and facilitates schedule refinement. For flexibility to unique and changing needs, solutions incorporate the ability to add custom rules and data inputs into the scheduling automation to continually drive more efficiency.



**Integration between SAP PM and other SAP ERP central component (ECC) modules keeps data in SAP PM current.**



### **What to Add to SAP PM**

To make the most of a SAP PM investment today, focused add-ons should be evaluated by their ability to transform standard operations to best-in-class maintenance. For example, today’s

### Mobile Maintenance (Mobile EAM) Applications

A growing number of businesses are granting their end users access to SAP PM via modern software interfaces provided in third-party mobility solutions, vastly improving user experience. For maintenance operations, this means putting mobile devices in the hands of frontline workers, like technicians, so they can access and capture data quickly and efficiently.

The best mobile maintenance apps make it possible to manage tasks and synchronize mobile databases with ERP databases in real time, while enabling complete offline experiences for the maintenance staff. They also provide intuitive interfaces that drive easier and faster user adoption. With real-time access to the ERP system, technicians can quickly check a manual, look for parts, or report a problem. Moreover, mobility keeps techs in the field, enabling greater responsiveness and better resource utilization.

Using just these two add-on solutions to SAP PM, customer research shows greatly improved return on investment (ROI) from their SAP PM investments. Several companies are already transforming their maintenance operations, as the Figure 1 results show.

By following these tips for getting the most from SAP PM, plant maintenance leaders can optimize the user experience and improve plant productivity and efficiency to achieve similar results. Since

many of these add-on solutions are SAP certified, you can gain tremendous value while minimizing risk.

### References

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**Stephen Timms** has more than 30 years of global sales and executive leadership experience. He has held executive positions with multicultural operating companies across five continents, including more than a decade at

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