

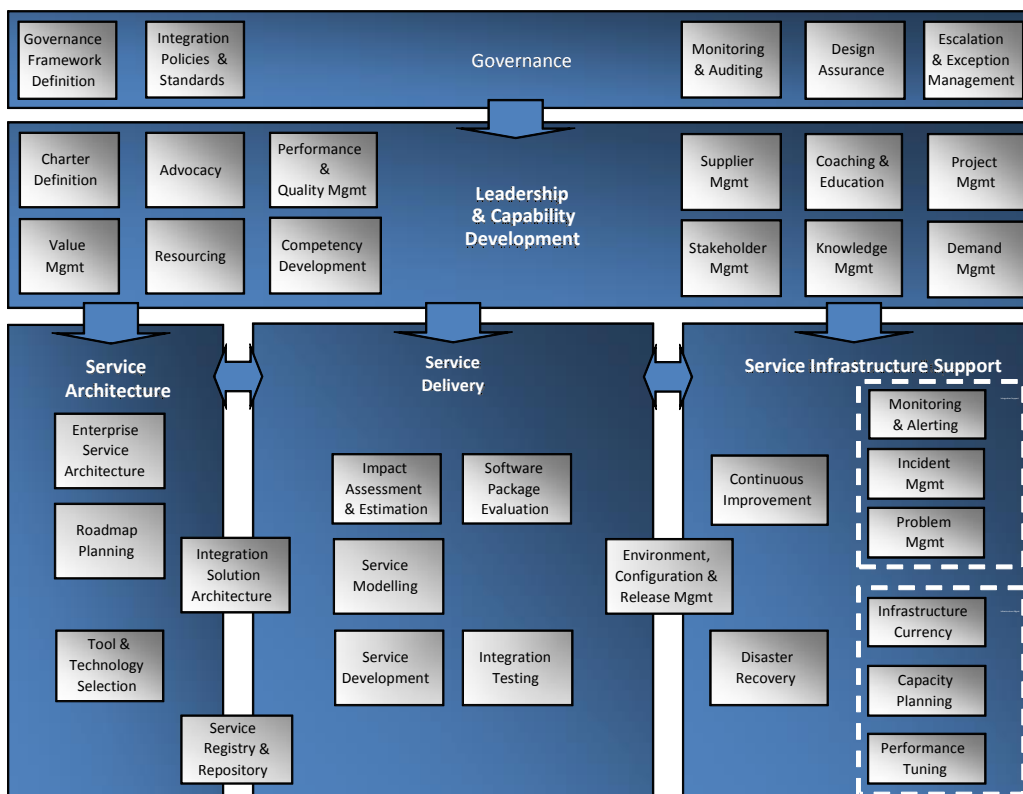
THE NEW INTEGRATION CAPABILITY

To CoE or not to CoE – that is the question

In order to deliver integration successfully and systematically, the discipline of integration needs to be managed as a capability.

The introduction of new integration technologies into organisations is often part of a more holistic approach. This includes either the establishment of a formalised capability, or the extension of a capability that is already well established and managed. This capability can take many different forms, and really needs to be tailored to the structure of the organisations and the objectives and purpose of the capability in terms of the wider strategic objectives.

This often culminates in the formulation of a Centre of Excellence, Competency Centre or a similar construct of Integration function that considers the management of the full lifecycle of the capability from strategy and demand planning through to support and operational excellence. Here is an illustration of some of the common capabilities that organisations regularly seek:





The approach to this hasn't significantly changed for years and whilst some organisations choose to use new terms for it, the focus is still around a 'centre' to achieve the management of the capability.

There are, however, a number of major forces that are significantly changing the way that organisations should plan for integration, these include:

- **The changing world of what is being integrated** – this includes more complex scenarios such as multi-cloud, PaaS, SaaS, omnichannel, IoT etc. due to the increasingly pervasive nature of integration in the architecture of modern organisations. This is in some ways is compounded by the effect of the advent of digital and the exploitation of API-centric approaches, and is being accelerated by RPA, and AI/Machine Learning.
- **The fundamental paradigm shift in integration technologies** towards iPaaS (integration Platform as a Service) and API-led integration. This has led to the introduction of more user-friendly and productive interfaces and as well as methodologies for integration.
- **Increasingly agile-aware organisations** that wish to deliver incrementally or using bi-modal or multi-modal delivery methodologies.
- Increasing **user-centric bias of integration**, related to supporting Digital platforms and Digital transformation initiatives

The vision for many or even most modern organisations is an integrated multi-technology environment, typically encompassing hybrid on-premise and cloud deployments whilst providing seamless integration both internally and externally to partners, suppliers, customers etc. and to systems such as SaaS, PaaS. The effect of this change is that rather than having either a centralised or federated model for integration competency there is a strong need to have a ubiquitous competence across organisations (not just in classic IT) at a certain level, and then different specialisations and/or competences to support different scenarios and complexities involving different types of integration and associated technologies. This breaks the classic model that has been followed for many years within organisations and represents a fundamental shift in how the capability of integration is thought about – it is no longer a 'centre' of anything.

The change in technology paradigm towards iPaaS has had an effect on planning integration capability too. Classically, integration activities and development was performed by highly skilled integration experts with deep expertise in integration and typically specific technologies. What iPaaS technologies have done is enable other types of people to those experts perform many integration tasks, and in doing so has reduced the need for specialists in many scenarios. This has been achieved by making integration much more accessible to all. Gartner recognised this trend and has been speaking of "ad hoc" integrators and citizen integrators. Similarly, due to the advent of APIs and digital as well as user centricity, digital integrators are also increasingly at the forefront.

Organisations' value in re-thinking the way integration is organised is high, because by enabling more people to understand and execute certain integration tasks and to democratise integration as a competence is to enable more effective realisation of a modern digital-centric organisation. Enabling a different way of organising and planning integration competence can also provide huge efficiency gains. The number of design hand-offs can be reduced, specialists can focus on their specialisation, many integration tasks can be commoditised across the wider workforce and the whole integration eco-system can become a strong change-enabler for organisations.



At the core of reconsidering the approach to integration capability is the business value in a changed approach. There are numerous business benefits including:

- **Higher productivity** – through a number of techniques, including streamlined business/technological design
- **Responsiveness** – reduced time to deliver change and implement technologies
- **Understanding** – integration has been seen as a black-box for too long, and the change in the organisational approach offers an opportunity to fix this. With business participation in integration lifecycles the knowledge bleeds into the business
- **Business Enablement** – recognising integration as an enabler to solving problems from a business perspective. This includes business stakeholders gaining a better idea of the ‘art of the possible’
- **Digital Enablement** – allowing the business to better understand and work with integration as part of a digital approach

Contrasting with the earlier example of the **Centre of Excellence** construct, the way in which integration should be planned as a capability to exploit the new reality is quite different. Some of the key differing characteristics are:

- Much **higher emphasis on building competence** on integration across the organisation, not just IT
- Ongoing **internal communications and enablement activities** to realise the potential of the democratisation of integration
- A **different governance approach** to better align to different roles performing integration tasks and far more federation in effect
- Potentially **different sourcing models** for specialist skills, since these are likely to be needed less but potentially at a higher level of specialisation
- With the expectation that technology advancement in this area is still accelerating, that a **regular cadence is established for refinement of approach**

Glue Reply has been helping organisations establish and improve their integration capability for over 15 years, and have helped everyone from relatively small specialists to multinationals to find their path to the optimum approach for their organisations.

GLUE REPLY

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