

# Is Your Sustainment Plan Up to the Test?

How to Keep Your SAP SuccessFactors Solutions Strong After Implementation



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**N**ew human capital management (HCM) implementations or rollouts can be glamorous and exciting, but the reality is that organizations need to be focused on keeping systems at peak performance and leveraging capabilities to their fullest at all times. Systems such as SAP SuccessFactors solutions provide lots of functionality, but if you aren't harnessing that functionality properly, you could be failing to maximize your investment.

To properly monitor and maintain the systems, you need to develop a sustainment plan that encompasses an understanding of the system's current status, the organization's current needs, and a vision for the future. By aligning these elements, you can ensure the strategic and tactical well-being of the system.

## Where Does Your System Stand?

The best way to determine the health of a system is to put it through a battery of tests to ensure that all of the functionality, reporting, adoption, and training needs are met.

For example, functionality should be current to product capabilities and manual workarounds should be kept to a minimum. Reporting should be accurate and easily understood, and should address the organization's needs. To address any user issues around functionality or improvements, users need to have access to training and resources that prepare everyone from new users to those who are changing positions within the organization. Without proper training, user adoption will dwindle.

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If these tests show any failings, the organization could start to see a number of symptoms of the system's poor health. Production and staging environments, for instance, may be out of sync and upgrades may not have been effectively applied. As a result, applications may be unimplemented or missing the latest functionality. This leads to more manual workarounds, or to users who claim that the system is riddled with reporting or analytical issues. User issues can then become more common, with support tickets about user friendliness or functionality on the rise.

## The Road to Recovery

After assessing your system's status, you need to conduct a system health check and look at issues that may arise. Start by assessing the following items:

- Usage of available system capabilities
- Overall quality of the implementation
- Strength of the foundation in the data model and applied releases
- Continued fit to the organization's needs
- Organization's readiness for use

To perform a system health check, you need to involve people who understand the business and its value proposition. The right team mix will vary per organization, but is typically a combination of functional super users and IT staff with strength in data and business analysis, system security, and project management skills. It is often beneficial to consult past project champions to ensure the vision is still being met. Individuals who possess a deep knowledge of SAP SuccessFactors solutions are necessary, and some will require a higher level of provisioning access if configuration changes are needed. It is also important to include team members who can move the business forward, approve or act upon changes, and manage change.

Once the team has identified the work needed to get the system on track, an effective execution plan must

be identified and carried out to address issues that fall into three categories:

- **System:** Configuration, system limitations, bug identification, and integration
- **Process:** How the business needs to use the system, conduct business steps, and incorporate best practices
- **People:** Change management, training, communication, and adoption planning

It is necessary for the resource team and the organization to identify what success looks like for this effort compared with the organization's overall value proposition. What are the results the organization intends to realize with SAP SuccessFactors solutions? Have key performance indicators (KPIs) been identified? Is it time to modify how that original target of success should now look? Once the vision of success is determined, requirements need to be identified and expectations need to be managed. Set realistic and meaningful KPIs that allow the organization to track success.

Finally, make sure that all good project practices are incorporated into the effort. Follow a methodology provided by your organization or the vendor. Align the team on health check goals and objectives. Review the organization's vision and incorporate it into the day-to-day activities involved with the health check. Once you've addressed the issues and risks that were uncovered, don't just consider the process complete. Determine and perform regular follow-up in an ongoing "state-of-the-system" review that involves top leadership. And don't forget to celebrate the wins so the team and organization recognize the importance of the process.

## Maintaining a Healthy System

To proactively keep your system strong and healthy, you should incorporate some simple controls and practices into an ongoing sustainment plan. Ensure the organization has a solid plan for change authorization and who can approve changes. Create role and task ownership so that there is a clear definition of roles and permissions. Monitor the groups that will be impacted by changes to the system and keep lines of communication open so they are informed and on board.

Any sustainment plan needs to have a release management strategy. As part of this strategy, monitor and apply changes that accompany system updates in alignment with the plan and vision of the organization.

Here again, it is important to have resources with a deep understanding of SAP SuccessFactors solutions to guide the organization in activating new release enhancements and functionality. Testing of the new release functionality with your specific system, regression testing, and change management all will need to be considered.

It is also important to keep the users in mind; of course, the system isn't useful without users! Plan for ongoing education: Cover systemic changes, but also ensure users have the necessary access and knowledge as careers evolve in the organization. In addition to boosting users' knowledge, make sure to manage their expectations by planning for updates, defining processes to request a change, and communicating the process and timeline to apply changes. Ensure continued leadership support even when active system changes are not underway.

As requests for changes to the system are identified, it is essential to manage how those items will be addressed. Create a consistent issue resolution process and ensure it is communicated throughout the organization. Track response time and ensure responses are content rich and provide the organization with the right message for solid system sustainment. Setting service level agreements (SLAs) may also be appropriate. Indicating the frequency of change request implementation based on internal help ticket response time, for example, will help establish confidence in the management of the SAP SuccessFactors system.

## Conquering the Challenge of Sustainment

With the ownership of software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions often being held by different areas of organizations than traditional on-premise solutions, sustainment needs to be managed in alignment across the business. With users throughout the organization and even external users now accessing your cloud solutions, the need for system responsiveness and effective alignment to organization requirements is even more critical. By incorporating a well-developed sustainment plan to increase the longevity of your current solutions and by utilizing a robust health check process, you can ensure your system is up to the test.

To learn more about hyperCision Inc.'s SAP SuccessFactors implementation and health check services, visit us at [www.hypercision.com/pages/system-health-check](http://www.hypercision.com/pages/system-health-check). ■