

5 trends redefining business integration

 By [Jeff Ryan](#)

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Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions are meant to run your entire business. Unfortunately, in the past, not all solutions or business processes could be integrated or tailored to unique business needs.



Source: Supplied. Jeff Ryan, managing director for AWCape.

And, ERP, what it was a few years ago, versus what it is today, is completely different.

However, the future of ERP will undergo significant changes, driven by the ever-evolving technological landscape. In 2024 and beyond, you can expect to see a continued focus on integration, with five new trends that will further streamline and optimise business processes.

- **IoT Integration: Real-time operations:** It's no surprise that IoT is transforming many industries by connecting physical devices to the digital world. Warehousing and distribution are two industries that have been fundamentally changed where IoT is providing real-time visibility of inventory levels, tracking shipments and monitoring the location and even condition of goods.

It is also being used to automate fulfilment and replenishment processes and monitor the performance of warehouse equipment. In the future, there will be even stronger integration between ERP systems and IoT devices.

This enables businesses to have real-time data from their operations. This data can then be used to improve decision-making, optimise resource allocation, and predict potential issues. It can also be used in combination with financial or other data to improve forecasts and ordering cycles.

- **Hyperautomation: ERP task automation:** Hyperautomation is a business-driven, disciplined approach to rapidly identify, evaluate and automate as many business and IT processes as possible.

Hyperautomation involves the use of multiple technologies, tools, or platforms, including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), event-driven software architecture, robotic process automation (RPA), business process management (BPM), integration platform as a service (iPaaS), low-code/no-code tools, packaged software, and other types of decision, process, and task automation tools.

When we look to the future, there will be a continued rise of hyperautomation solutions that are specifically designed for ERP integration. These solutions will make it easier and faster for businesses to automate tasks, such as data entry, order processing, inventory management, invoice processing, such as Sage Intacct Accounts Payable Automation, for example.



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Furthermore, low-code or no-code integration solutions are making it possible for businesses to integrate their ERP system with other applications without having to write code (or without expensive outside development partners). This will make integration more accessible to businesses of all sizes, regardless of their technical expertise.

So, all CFOs should take note here as expectations will be to combine data across multiple business systems with financial data and to make real-time spending and investment decisions based on these data models.

- **AI and ML in harmony:** AI and ML are already being used to enhance ERP systems in various ways, such as demand forecasting, customer segmentation, timesheet automation, Accounts Payable invoice automation and fraud detection.

Looking forward, we will see even more AI and ML capabilities being integrated into ERP systems and these newer versions will learn and react faster and provide even better insights. This will allow businesses to automate even more tasks, make better decisions, and gain deeper insights into their operations.

Also, proactive and predictive AI and ML can help prevent costs or errors before they occur. GL (General Ledger) outlier detection is one example that can pick up transactions that are “not normal” before they are processed. In the same way, predictive models can simulate millions of scenarios before go-live, preventing unpredicted losses.

- **iPaaS: Simplified cloud integrations:** In most industries, cloud is the preferred deployment option for ERP systems. In 2024, more businesses will migrate their ERP systems to the cloud. This will provide these businesses greater flexibility, scalability, security (due to economies of scale of providers) and cost savings.



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Supplementing this, Integration Platforms as a Service (iPaaS) offerings are growing with a broader range of pre-built integrations for the most popular cloud-based applications. This will make it easier for businesses to integrate their ERP system with other cloud applications without having to develop custom integrations (and move to a different ERP at a later stage).

- **Cybersecurity: Safeguarding integrated systems:** As businesses integrate their ERP system with other applications and devices, there are more potential weak points, making businesses more vulnerable to cyberattacks. We will see a growing emphasis on cybersecurity for integrated systems.

This includes implementing strong security protocols, conducting regular security audits, and training employees on cybersecurity best practices. The latter, where hybrid working and Bring Your Own Device have already become mainstream, should be a very high priority for any business to prevent malicious attacks through their employees' personas and devices.

- **Final words:** ERP integration will be exciting and potentially shift businesses to be market leaders by improving their efficiency, agility, and profitability. However, the implementation of both the ERP and related integrations takes time, so it is important to stay ahead, work with a trusted business partner and start planning for these changes today – you don't want to be left behind and play catch-up.

ABOUT JEFF RYAN

Jeff Ryan is the MD for AWCape, a Sage Business Partner and has over 20 years of experience. He has extensive strategy and technology consulting, project management and business development experience in multiple industries. In addition, having held several senior positions in different organisations has given Jeff a deep understanding of business drivers and needs.

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