

SAP S/4HANA

WHITE PAPER

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE WITH SAP S/4HANA
- A CONVERSATION WITH LINDA GEORGIU

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Purpose

To help business and IT leaders make a confident, well-timed decision on SAP S/4HANA. The paper reframes the move away from a technical upgrade and towards a business decision: a chance to modernise operations, sharpen decision-making, and build an ERP platform that keeps pace with the organisation. It sets out where the deadlines now sit, what the realistic options are, and how to avoid the traps that stall these programs.

Scope

This paper is written for organisations evaluating or preparing for a move to SAP S/4HANA. It treats the transition as a business transformation rather than a system swap. The end-of-support milestones for SAP ECC create real urgency, but the larger prize is faster, cleaner operations and the ability to act on data in real time.

It walks through the limits of legacy ERP and shows how the S/4HANA architecture answers them. In-memory analytics, embedded AI and machine learning, and the Fiori interface together deliver speed, scale, and room to innovate. The paper sets out the business case, including lower running costs, stronger compliance, and better experiences for customers and staff.

It also weighs the main migration routes - Brownfield, Greenfield, and hybrid approaches such as Bluefield - and names the issues that most often derail programs: over-customisation, poor data quality, and thin executive sponsorship. Data governance is treated as a make-or-break factor, both during the build and well after go-live.

Finally, it looks ahead to a modular, composable ERP that can grow and adapt with the business. It closes on how Atlin supports clients across the full lifecycle, from early planning and partner selection through to post-go-live optimisation and long-term capability uplift.

Best Practise

Define a Clear Migration Strategy

Choose the right path (Brownfield, Greenfield, or Hybrid) based on your business goals and system complexity. Clarity from the outset prevents costly delays.

Prioritise Data Governance Early

Clean, structured data is non-negotiable. Invest in cleansing, archiving, and governance up-front to cut risk and bring ROI forward after go-live.

Secure Strong Executive Sponsorship

Visible leadership drives alignment, funding, and momentum. Programs stall without committed sponsors who stay close to the work.

Engage Experienced Partners

Demand for SAP skills is climbing as the deadline nears. Partners such as Atlin help you navigate the technical, organisational, and commercial moving parts with less risk.

Introduction: Why This Moment Matters

Interviewer: Linda, there's been a lot of noise around SAP S/4 HANA. Is it really that big a deal?

Linda Georgiou: It is. This is not a routine upgrade, it is a strategic reset. S/4HANA changes how a business runs day to day, from real-time decisions to cloud agility and a clear view across the enterprise. Mainstream support for ECC ends in 2027, so many organisations are being pushed to act. But the deadline is the smaller half of the story. The bigger opportunity is what you can do once you are on a modern platform.

1. What's Driving the Shift?

Interviewer: What's prompting organisations to make the move now?

Linda: Legacy systems like ECC simply cannot keep pace anymore. Leaders are left wrestling with disconnected workflows, sluggish reporting, and climbing costs just to keep things running. That pain becomes far more acute during a restructure, or when two organisations come together through a merger or acquisition, the moment you need clean numbers quickly and the old system cannot deliver them. And the deadline pressure is genuine. Mainstream maintenance for the older ECC enhancement packs wrapped up at the end of 2025, with the headline 2027 cut-off not far behind. Industry estimates still place many thousands of organisations on ECC well into the close of the decade, which means a large share of the market has left its move dangerously late.

2. What Makes S/4HANA Different?

Interviewer: So what's actually different about S/4HANA?

Linda: Speed, scale, and smarts. It is built on an in-memory database, so analytics and transactions run on live data rather than overnight batches. The Fiori interface is far closer to the consumer apps people already use, and AI, IoT, and machine learning are built in rather than bolted on. It also cuts the need for the heavy customisation that made ECC so expensive to maintain. Done well, your ERP shifts from a cost centre to something that actually enables growth.

3. Real Business Benefits

Interviewer: Can you give us a sense of the outcomes organisations can expect?

Linda: Absolutely. Done right, S/4HANA provides better visibility, faster decisions, stronger compliance, and a better experience for both customers and staff. The savings can be striking too. I have seen clients spending upwards of \$180K a month just to keep legacy systems alive. That kind of waste compounds quickly, and it is money that could be funding the transformation instead.

4. Migration Paths and Pitfalls

Interviewer: How are organisations approaching the transition?

Linda: There are three broad routes. Brownfield is a technical conversion of what you already have. Greenfield is a fresh build. Hybrid approaches such as Bluefield sit in between, letting you carry across what is valuable and leave the rest. What matters most is clarity. Programs get stuck on over-customisation, weak sponsorship, or simply underestimating the data migration. You need governance and change leadership from day one, not as an afterthought halfway through.

5. Data: The Unsung Hero

Interviewer: Let's talk about data. What's often overlooked?

Linda: After go-live, data becomes either your biggest asset or your biggest risk. We help clients cleanse, archive, and decommission legacy systems while building genuine data governance around what remains. A good strategy can cut storage by up to 50% and return value in as little as 6 to 18 months. Skip that work and you carry years of mess into a brand-new system.

6. Future-Ready, Composable ERP

Interviewer: What does the future look like?

Linda: Composable. S/4HANA supports a modular approach – think microservices and connected ecosystems rather than one monolith. That gives you room to scale, adapt, and evolve. Whether you are plugging in a new AI tool or pivoting to a market shift, you are no longer locked in. It is worth knowing the commercial model has moved with this too. SAP has folded its subscription offer under the broader Cloud ERP banner, and licensing now leans on measures like Full Use Equivalents and document-based Digital Access. Those mechanics need to be modelled early, because they shape the real cost of each path.

7. Weighing the deadline against your options

Interviewer: With 2027 so close, what are the real choices on the table?

Linda: It helps to be precise, because the cliff edge people imagine is really a series of steps. Mainstream support for the current ECC releases runs to the end of 2027. After that you can buy extended maintenance to 2030, but at a premium of roughly two percentage points, which lands as a meaningful cost increase for no new capability. Beyond that there are narrower lifelines – a private-edition transition option for some of the largest, most complex estates, and third-party support that can stretch further still. Those buy time, not progress. They are a bridge while you plan, not a destination. The honest message is that doing nothing simply gets more expensive and more constrained each year.

8. How Atlin helps: from selection to sustainability

Interviewer: Where does Atlin come in?

Linda: Wherever you are on the journey, we bring structure, clarity, and momentum. We support clients across:

- ERP needs analysis and partner selection
- Roadmap and readiness planning
- Business process optimisation
- Organisational change and training
- Data migration and system integration
- Post-go-live support and capability uplift

Our team has supported some of Australia's largest transformations, from the \$17B Defence ERP reform to sector-wide upgrades across Justice, Health, and Infrastructure.

9. Ready to Begin?

Interviewer: What should leaders be thinking about now?

Linda: It's time to move from curiosity to clarity. Whether you're still evaluating your options or already scoping your move, the earlier you engage with experienced partners, the smoother your transition will be. Start with a conversation. We're here to help.

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Our Team



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