ServiceNow Application Integration: Build vs. Buy

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INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has completely changed the way businesses strategize. Collecting big data is essential, but the ability to analyze and incorporate insights from that data is becoming a must for any organization. What makes this an even bigger challenge is that these data practices must be incorporated seamlessly into an already existing business structure and must be continually updated along with everything else.

The latest research included in IDG's *2018 The State of Digital Business Transformation* report shows that 89 percent of organizations have plans to put digital first in their business strategy, and 44 percent have fully adopted digital. Companies are engaging more IT staff and making investments in developing their automation and data analytics programs.

Implementing a digital-first plan can include cloud integration, the Internet of Things (IoT) considerations, software storage, and application performance monitoring. IDG data shows that the top five technologies already implemented by companies are:

- Big data/analytics (58 percent)
- Mobile technologies (59 percent)
- Private cloud (53 percent)
- Public cloud (45 percent)
- APIs and embeddable technologies (40 percent)

The IT business managers surveyed by IDG in this study were asked what becoming a digital business really means. Among responses were:

- Enhancing productivity through a suite of tools including mobile, data access, and artificial intelligence
- Achieving improved business performance through the availability and visibility of data
- Meeting customer experience expectations through better data collection and analysis
- Providing access to assets from anywhere at any time
- Digital modifying processes
- Developing new digital revenue streams
- "Digital globalization," which enables goods, services, finance, and people to move on a global level because of worldwide data transfer

Demand continues to grow for accessible data and information, as well as products. Your enterprise IT environment needs to stay out of the way of holistic business goals.

What's clear is that companies need to continue streamlining processes and integrating application data across platforms. Cloud solutions must be connected so that processes are fast and efficient and don't weigh down the business.

Building the integration seems simple enough, as cloud vendors provide application programming interfaces (APIs), and you may think that your in-house IT team can handle it. Plus, you may see the price tag of a pre-built solution and assume that building in-house will save money.

However, a successful integration plan and overall business strategy depends on the ability to connect every disparate application, both within the cloud and on-site. These connections must be seamless to be effective and are much more than just connecting one endpoint with another.

This dilemma begs the question, is it better to build or to buy an enterprise integration solution?

Build it or buy it?

IT application integration is a crucial part of fully utilizing a Configuration Management Database (CMDB), such as ServiceNow. The question is, whether or not integrations built in-house can get the job done effectively and cost-efficiently.

When making the call, consider:

- The team you have available to do the work
- The specific endpoints you need to connect
- Your timeline for completion

If, for example, you have up to a year to build integrations, and you have a full team of developers to work on them, you could have the resources to self-build.

However, if you're on a shorter timeline, have a pretty small IT staff, and are hoping to connect more than two endpoints (and more in the future), you may be better off going with a pre-built integration tool, such as ebridge.
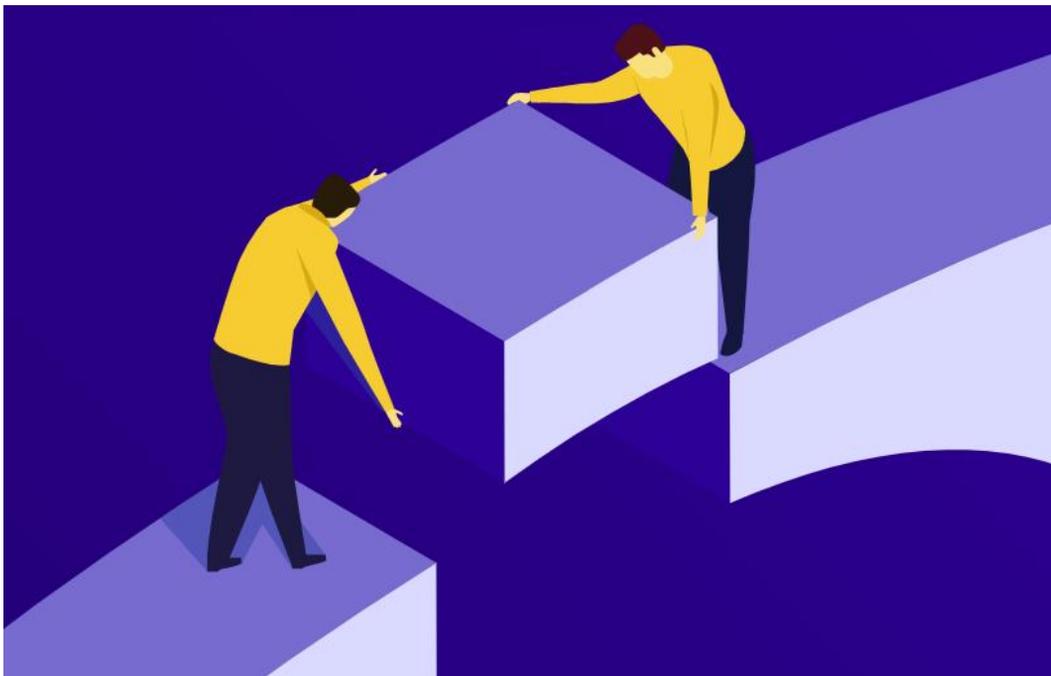
Building It Yourself

As with any type of do-it-yourself project, you may have a bigger, more time-consuming commitment on your hands than if you buy the solution in an all-in-one package. Handling data is no exception. Creating a successful integration plan means more than the ability to transfer data between databases.
Difficulties presented by building the introduction yourself include:

Managing many moving parts.
There is a lot involved in data integration. Think of all the moving parts: application vendors, APIs, application administrators, users, and your developers, among others. Because information about all of these moving parts is learned and mastered by developers on staff, consider what would happen if a new team member is brought in or someone leaves.

Databases can vary greatly in structure and procedures, so it's next to impossible to streamline processes based off one type of structure or logic. In fact, without the ability to adapt to business structure, which is always changing, the integration won't be successful, at least not for long.

Different API standards.
Unique APIs are used by each system—there is no one-size-fits-all. Moreover, APIs must be understood for every application that will be connected to the cloud, as well as the APIs for the cloud itself. This means that your team must be familiar with or learn many different API standards and languages, as well as how they work with other technologies.

Custom code takes time.
Cloud applications can be customized so that you have tailored fields within custom code. While this may seem like a plus, remember that whoever is the administrator will have to add these fields manually, and thus the IT team will have to oversee integration for each application that needs to be connected.

Security considerations.
There are many security concerns with cloud applications. Sometimes an API won't transmit data until it receives separate authentication web service calls, and there could be a limit to the number of times a call can be made to an application within a specified timeframe. The amount of data transmitted per one call could also be limited, and these API terms may change regularly.

Getting to the source of errors.
Despite best efforts, mistakes and errors happen. A system for reporting and alerting is crucial to successful integration. The team must be notified when something goes awry, and it's also important that the cause and source of the issue is discoverable and can be addressed quickly. Monitoring tools and thorough logs must be considered and used when implementing a build-it-yourself integration process.

While building the integration yourself may seem like it would be more economical than buying, it just isn't always the case, especially when you consider the time and resources it will take to complete it successfully.

It's worth considering whether your current IT team can handle these challenges and take all the time necessary to complete a successful build it yourself integration.

Buying a Pre-Built Solution: ebridge

Instead of facing the challenges by trying to build the integration manually, consider a SaaS solution such as ebridge, which can provide numerous benefits when you're integrating applications with ServiceNow. Pre-built connectors can streamline and accelerate the process, helping to reduce the cost of integration significantly.

Moreover, your business has likely invested in IT applications and security already, so why not ensure that everything is seamlessly and cost-effectively integrated into ServiceNow? Through the ServiceNow portal, ebridge allows you to manage popular IT programs such as SolarWinds, Active Directory, JASK, BigFix, IBM QRadar, and many other IT programs.
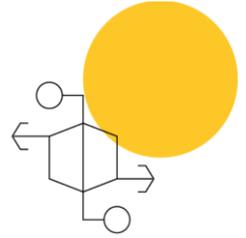
What is bidirectional data correlation?

Bidirectional data correlation is a two-way synchronization of data. With this form of integration, your IT team can connect the dots across any enterprise application, while gaining the ability to act on real-time data from ServiceNow.

ebridge is a ready-built SaaS tool that helps businesses consolidate and fully utilize ServiceNow's ITIL framework for integration.
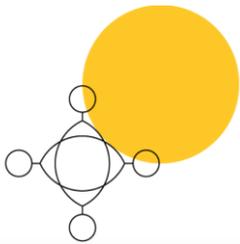
Advantages of a pre-built solution.

A pre-built solution will help your company populate ServiceNow with assets from existing IT applications, and can provide the following additional advantages:

- Speed up deployment
- Reduce integration costs with pre-built connectors between enterprise IT and security applications
- Improve visibility across IT assets

Using ebridge to enhance ServiceNow will increase and improve the data received, allowing you to turn data points into actionable insights for the business. Your team will have more time to focus on other business concerns, and your bottom line won't suffer from the months that it may take to build your own integration.

Other advantages of pre-built solutions for IT professionals and decision makers include:

No information barriers.

Information barriers are removed so that IT professionals have a seamless, connected experience.

Combine data from all applications.

Data from all IT enterprise applications can exist in ServiceNow. ServiceNow users can define the "source of truth" by integrating data from many existing sources and tools. This way, you can easily see an overall picture of your business.

One interface.

A single user interface allows for less friction in communications between all the applications that your business may have. This means one pane of glass is all it takes for a holistic view.

Automation.
Automated updates are possible with ebridge, which helps you save time determining which endpoints need to be updated. You'll be able to run updates and patches within ServiceNow. ebridge also will automatically analyze data and use sensors to reveal any changes to your enterprise infrastructure assets.

Consolidated costs.
IT enterprise technology costs for ServiceNow ROI are consolidated with a pre-built tool like ebridge.

Managed within ServiceNow.
ebridge is a SaaS solution, so end users can still use the familiar ServiceNow environment, so no new technology needs to be learned. And, if IT personnel leaves, there won't be extra training involved since ebridge is administered and maintained *for* your business.

Reduced repair and maintenance costs.
The cost of repairs and replacements related to failures are reduced, as are inspection and maintenance costs.

Anticipate problems.
A pre-built integration solution will allow you and your team to anticipate an issue before it goes wrong, with testing tools that highlight areas of concern.
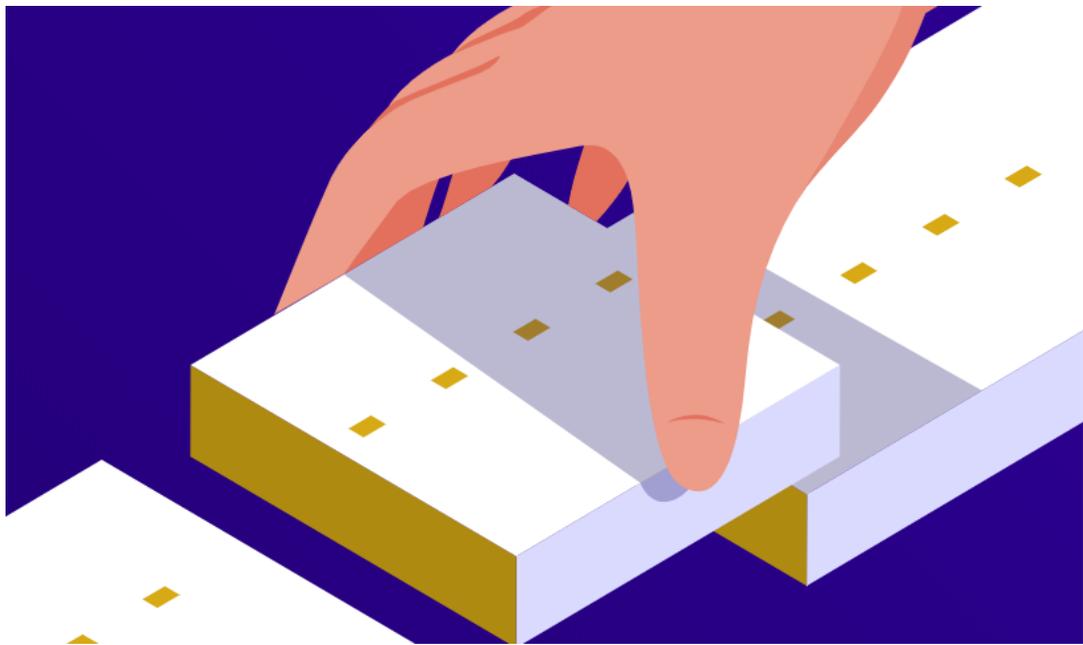
Other capabilities of ebridge include:

- Discovery: find hardware-specific data points and already installed software
- Impressive real-time asset loading capability
- Scheduled outages are better planned
- Optimized design and operating practices
- Improved personnel, customer, and environmental safety
- Much more than just an endpoint-to-endpoint data transfer
- Transforming data from vendor product sets are done with deeper product knowledge
- Consumable data for optimal CMDB use is produced

Conclusion

Companies will find more success when they decide to purchase an integration solution. Valuable IT resources won't be wasted, and automation will allow a pre-built integration solution to update and improve right alongside a growing business.

Making a commitment for an Enterprise CMDB solution, such as ServiceNow, is a major investment by any organization. Driving more relevant data into its CMDB increases productivity, lowering your ROI in the ServiceNow investment. Buying pre-built, professionally developed products that can be integrated quickly, and are professionally supported, ensuring compatibility on all future integrations of either the data generating applications or the ServiceNow CMDB, quickly increases your ServiceNow ROI. It also preserves continuous compatibility of the data generating application ecosystem without the risk of previous internal custom programming that may lack a high-quality programming pattern or require a dependency on future individual programming skillset.

It's helpful to review the way standard application integration within ServiceNow would work compared to an ebridge integration.

Standard:
- Although ServiceNow would support bidirectional transactions, developers still have to do the work with manual tasks
- Data could be limited by the efforts of developers
- Data isn't correlated
- There are many moving parts to build and seamlessly integrate
- Integration takes a long time

[ebridge integration](#):
- The SaaS tool does the bidirectional transaction work for you
- Tasks are automated so that data is acted upon
- Data correlation improves processes
- A variety of different third-party applications can work together to provide outcomes
- Pre-built connectors to applications reduce integration costs and speed up integration deployment
- Datasets are thus enhanced

ebridge is a real-time interface from Champion Solutions Group that connects all of your enterprise IT and security applications with your ServiceNow CMDB. ebridge produces a fully collected data set that's quickly delivered to ServiceNow and integrates with your service management processes. ebridge can also provide inventory, configuration, audit, vulnerability, and compliance data. The end result: less risk, more savings, improved service. Learn more about ebridge: https://ebridge.championsg.com/.

Sources:

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