

Accelerating SAP ERP Transformation with AI and Microsoft Cloud

Move Faster | Work Smarter | Stay Secure

**A Whitepaper on the SAP Business Suite
Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud**

Introduction

Empowering Cloud-First ERP Transformation

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is entering a new era of cloud-powered intelligence. By **2027**, SAP will end mainstream support for its legacy ERP (SAP ECC), prompting thousands of businesses to migrate to next-generation SAP S/4HANA cloud solutions^[1]. In the mid-market segment, an estimated **40,000 companies** can benefit from AI innovation in their ERP. To help digitally ambitious, cloud-forward companies make this transition swiftly and successfully, SAP, Microsoft, and Intel have partnered on a comprehensive program: the **SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud**. This end-to-end initiative provides a smooth path to SAP's modern cloud ERP, leveraging **30+ years of SAP–Microsoft partnership** and a global ecosystem of expert partners^{[3][4]}. By uniting SAP's latest technologies with Microsoft's cloud and AI innovations, the program enables faster time-to-value through pre-integrated solutions, **built-in AI**, and cross-platform integrations.

In this whitepaper, we examine four key aspects of the SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud:

- How **AI innovation** (SAP *Joule* and Microsoft *Copilot*) transforms ERP processes
- The seamless **integration with Microsoft Cloud** services
- The measurable **benefits** in scalability, efficiency, and cost savings
- A **future outlook** on how this program will continue to drive innovation and business growth.

AI Innovation: Joule and Microsoft Copilot Driving Intelligent ERP

At the heart of the Acceleration Program is a commitment to **built-in AI** that infuses intelligence into every business process. SAP's new AI assistant **Joule** and **Microsoft Copilot** work together to automate tasks, provide insights, and augment decision-making for users across both SAP and Microsoft applications^{[4][5]}. This AI-driven innovation is a core differentiator of the SAP-Microsoft partnership.

AI Copilots in Action

SAP **Joule** and Microsoft **365 Copilot** act as integrated AI Copilots, delivering contextual insights from SAP and Office systems to users in real time.

Conversational Intelligence

Employees can interact with SAP data through natural language: Ask questions, navigate records, and get instant answers or summaries via conversational AI interfaces.

Proactive Insights

AI monitors business data to highlight anomalies and trends (e.g., detecting finance irregularities or supply delays) so issues are addressed before they escalate.

SAP Joule – The AI Copilot for SAP:

Joule is SAP's embedded generative AI assistant that is integrated throughout the SAP Business Suite. It allows users to interact with enterprise data and processes in a conversational manner. For example, a procurement manager can simply ask Joule *"What are the top 5 delayed purchase orders this week?"* and get an immediate answer drawn from SAP data, instead of manually running reports. Joule provides **fast, precise insights** into business information (such as purchase orders, requisitions, invoices, etc.), offers seamless cross-application navigation, and can even answer questions by tapping into SAP's knowledge bases[6][6]. By leveraging SAP's Business AI and contextual data, Joule helps users make informed decisions faster and with less effort. It effectively turns raw enterprise data into **"decision-ready intelligence"**, increasing transparency and revealing opportunities to improve performance or eliminate inefficiencies[7].

Microsoft 365 Copilot – AI in Productivity Apps:

Microsoft 365 Copilot is an AI assistant embedded in the Microsoft 365 suite (Teams, Outlook, Excel, Word, etc.), designed to boost user productivity. Within this program, Copilot now has native access to SAP data and processes through its integration with Joule. Employees working in Microsoft 365 can query or retrieve **SAP Business Suite information directly from their Office apps**[3]. For instance, in Microsoft Teams a user could ask Copilot, *"Show me the current inventory level of product X from SAP,"* and Copilot (via Joule) will fetch the data from SAP and present it in chat. This means users get **seamless access to SAP's business information while staying in their flow of work**. Copilot can also help draft documents, emails, or reports that include live data from SAP, reducing manual copy-paste work and ensuring consistency.

Integrated and Bi-Directional AI:

A standout feature is that SAP Joule and Microsoft Copilot are not siloed assistants; they are integrated. As of mid-2025, **Joule is available within Microsoft 365 Copilot** (general availability announced at Sapphire 2025)[3]. This allows Microsoft Copilot to intelligently pull in SAP context via Joule when answering questions or automating tasks. Conversely, by the end of 2025, Microsoft plans to make **Microsoft 365 Copilot accessible from within SAP's Joule interface** (this bi-directional integration was in preview as of mid-2025)[3]. In practice, this two-way integration means whether a user starts in a Microsoft app or an SAP app, they can invoke AI capabilities that span both environments. The AI agents share context: **Joule can use Microsoft 365 knowledge (like emails or calendar context) alongside SAP data to enrich its responses**, and Copilot can leverage real-time SAP business data via Joule[3]. This deep integration of AI ensures that insights are richer and more holistic, breaking down the barrier between enterprise data and productivity tools. Users get a **unified AI experience** that can answer complex questions (combining ERP data with documents or communications) and even take actions across systems.

To illustrate, consider financial consolidation: An analyst could ask in Teams, *"Copilot, summarize any budget variances in SAP for Q2 and draft an email to the finance team with the findings."* Thanks to Joule, Copilot can retrieve the variance analysis from SAP, then generate a summary and email draft in Outlook – all in one go. These scenarios show how **AI Copilots dramatically improve productivity and decision speed**, by automating data retrieval, analysis, and even communications.

The built-in AI also offers **proactive recommendations**. Because SAP and Azure AI services are connected, the system can detect patterns and anomalies across business processes. For example, machine learning models can flag an unusual spike in procurement spending or predict a potential supply chain disruption. Such an anomaly might trigger Joule to alert relevant users, explaining the issue in natural language. Indeed, SAP and its partners are exploring *agentic AI* use cases – autonomous AI agents that act on behalf of users. Initial use cases demonstrated include **identifying financial anomalies in real time and mitigating supply chain disruptions automatically**[\[1\]](#). Over time, as this technology matures, we expect the program's AI to not only respond to user queries but also to take initiative – adjusting parameters or initiating workflows when certain criteria are met, with human oversight. This **agentic AI** approach, as one Microsoft executive described, *"marks a significant milestone in innovation, where agentic AI is transforming the way businesses operate"*, unlocking unprecedented possibilities to drive efficiency and collaboration[\[7\]](#).

In summary, AI innovation through SAP Joule and Microsoft Copilot is a cornerstone of the Acceleration Program. These AI co-pilots empower users with **conversational access to enterprise data, automated workflows, and predictive insights**. By reducing manual effort and providing real-time intelligence, they boost productivity and help every level of the organization make faster, better-informed decisions.

Seamless Integration with the Microsoft Cloud Ecosystem

A major strength of the SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program is the **seamless integration between SAP systems and the Microsoft Cloud**. This deep integration spans collaboration tools, data platforms, analytics, security, and deployment, ensuring that customers have a unified technology environment. Instead of treating SAP and Microsoft as separate islands, the program connects them into **one cohesive ecosystem**. This integrated architecture yields smoother processes and a superior user experience, because people and data can move freely across platforms. Below are key integration points and how they enhance functionality:

- **Microsoft Teams Collaboration:** SAP business processes now connect into Microsoft Teams and other Microsoft 365 apps. Users can **access SAP workflows, alerts, and data within Teams** – for example, receiving an approval request from SAP (such as a purchase requisition or expense report) as a Teams message where it can be approved with one click. Likewise, SAP reports or dashboards can be shared in Teams channels in real time. This tight coupling of SAP with Teams

facilitates better collaboration and faster response times. Employees no longer need to switch context or log into a separate SAP system for certain tasks – they can engage from within the communication tools they use daily[4]. By integrating people with processes, organizations see improved cross-functional coordination. In procurement scenarios, for instance, **supplier discussions, purchase orders, and inventory updates can occur in one place (Teams)**, accelerating issue resolution and decision-making[7].

- **Data and AI Integrations:** SAP's data and application services are now integrated with Microsoft Azure's powerful data analytics and AI services. One example is the **link between SAP Business Technology Platform (BTP) and Azure AI services**[7]. SAP BTP is used for extending and integrating SAP applications, and those extensions can leverage Azure's AI/ML tools (such as Azure Cognitive Services or Azure OpenAI Service) to build smarter extensions. Moreover, Microsoft announced that **SAP's data management solution, SAP Business Data Cloud**, which includes SAP Databricks, **will be available on Azure** to leverage Azure native services, including Azure Databricks[3]. This means enterprises can more easily combine SAP data with non-SAP data. Ultimately, by unifying data estates across SAP and Azure, companies unlock faster, more actionable insights through the power of cloud analytics[3].
- **Security and Identity Integration:** Running SAP on Microsoft Cloud comes with the advantage of Microsoft's enterprise-grade security stack. The program extends **Azure's security services (like Microsoft Sentinel SIEM and Microsoft Defender) to SAP environments**[1]. As a result, security teams can monitor SAP application logs and threat signals in the same environment as the rest of their IT estate. Microsoft Sentinel, for example, can ingest SAP security events to detect anomalies or potential cyber threats targeting the ERP system. Microsoft Defender for Cloud integrates with SAP to provide advanced threat protection. Additionally, identity management is unified: customers often integrate SAP user access with **Microsoft Entra ID (Azure Active Directory)**, enabling single sign-on and consistent identity governance across systems. This unified security and identity framework means **enterprises get end-to-end protection and compliance**. Data is safeguarded with multi-layer encryption, and stringent access controls can be applied uniformly[5]. In short, customers can **"scale with confidence"** knowing their mission-critical SAP applications are running on a secure, compliant, and highly resilient cloud infrastructure[5].
- **Unified Deployment and Marketplace:** Simplifying the deployment of SAP solutions is another integration benefit. **Select SAP Cloud ERP packages are available in the Azure Marketplace** [3]. This is a significant step in reducing deployment friction. Companies can browse standardized SAP S/4HANA Cloud packages (including industry-specific offerings) via Azure Marketplace and deploy them with automated templates. The integration of SAP software into Azure's marketplace streamlines procurement (using existing Azure agreements) and ensures that the infrastructure configuration is optimized for SAP out-of-the-box. These integrations collectively result in

connected processes and a smooth user experience across SAP and Microsoft systems.

For customers, the value is clear: They gain **operating efficiency and agility**. By bridging SAP and Microsoft platforms, the program eliminates data silos and manual workarounds. A **connected ERP + Productivity environment** means, for example, a sales manager can update an SAP customer record from within Outlook after an email exchange, or a supply chain analyst can use Power BI on SAP inventory data to produce a visualization that's shared in Teams – all with proper security and governance in place.

From an IT architecture perspective, this deep integration reduces complexity and not only accelerates initial implementation, but it also lowers the ongoing maintenance effort for the IT team.

It's also worth noting that **Microsoft's broad technology stack is being used to differentiate SAP's cloud offering from competitors'**. According to SAP, Microsoft's unique integrations (Teams collaboration, Microsoft 365 Copilot, Azure data & AI, and security tools) create **add-on value that pure infrastructure competitors cannot easily match**. This close partnership approach is a response to the competitive landscape: while other hyperscalers also partner with SAP, Microsoft is the first to roll out such a comprehensive acceleration program with extensive platform integrations and AI features^{[1][1]}. The bottom line is that **customers on Microsoft Azure benefit from a richer set of capabilities** – from Microsoft 365 integration to marketplace deployment – that can translate into tangible business advantages.

Key Benefits and Business Value

The SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud delivers a range of benefits that directly address modern enterprises' needs for agility, efficiency, and growth. Below we outline the key benefits and provide supporting data points or metrics where available:

1. **Faster Time-to-Value and Agile Deployment:** One of the foremost benefits is the **acceleration of deployment and realization of value** from SAP solutions. By providing pre-integrated cloud infrastructure and leveraging best practices from SAP and Microsoft, the program **shortens implementation cycles significantly**. Joint SAP-Microsoft go-to-market teams and partner experts help customers adopt solutions quickly without "reinventing the wheel" for each project. According to SAP, the program's unified strategy and ready integrations speed up time-to-value. For customers, a faster go-live means earlier benefits realization, whether it's improved productivity, cost savings, or business insights. It allows companies to start innovating (and generating ROI) in months rather than years. The program also **targets critical business processes with modular offerings**^[1] (like finance, supply chain, etc.), which makes incremental adoption easier – customers can begin with a focused scope that delivers tangible value quickly, then expand. By using templates, reference architectures, and automation tools, the time and effort required to stand up a new SAP cloud system or to migrate from on-premises is greatly reduced.

2. **Improved Scalability and Performance:** Moving SAP workloads to Microsoft's global cloud infrastructure gives enterprises virtually unlimited scalability and high performance on demand. The program offers **enterprise-grade reliability** to support large-scale operations — SAP Cloud ERP on Azure now comes with a financially backed **99.95% uptime SLA** for mission-critical instances^[7]. This is a significant upgrade in reliability, equating to only about 4 hours of unplanned downtime per year, which is critical for 24x7 global businesses. In practical terms, such high availability ensures continuous business operations (e.g., no more extended outages for maintenance windows as cloud architecture offers seamless updates and failover). The program helps turn SAP into a more elastic, always-on service which can keep up with business growth and dynamic workloads. And speaking of growth, Intel-powered Azure Mv3 virtual machines support a wide range of sizes all the way up to 32 TB of memory per VM, enabling consolidation and larger in-memory databases to run on a single node, which is critical for high-performance SAP workloads. Couple scalability with improved performance from Azure infrastructure powered by 4th Gen Intel® Xeon processors, which deliver up to 30% faster SAP HANA data load time and approximately 15% higher per-core throughput compared to previous-generation VMs.^(See Link)
3. **Operational Efficiency and Workforce Productivity:** By integrating AI and simplifying processes, the program drives significant improvements in operational efficiency. Routine tasks that once took hours of manual effort can be automated or accelerated. For instance, with **Copilot and Joule automating data retrieval and report generation**, an analyst can produce a financial summary in minutes instead of spending half a day running SAP transactions and copying data to Excel. These embedded AI tools can help increase transparency in operations and identify ways to enhance performance or eliminate inefficiencies^[7]. By surfacing these insights, companies can optimize workflows (for example, automating an approval step that was causing delays). Collaboration efficiency is another area of gain: with SAP info available in tools like Teams, employees spend less time switching between applications and hunting for data. Cross-functional teams can react faster because everyone has the same real-time view of data and status. A concrete example is in **procurement** – procurement teams using the integrated SAP-Microsoft solution saw *streamlined sourcing and better supplier collaboration*, as all stakeholders (procurement, finance, suppliers) could interact on one platform with up-to-date data, reducing back-and-forth emails^[7]. This led to quicker turnaround on purchase orders and fewer errors. Overall, by **eliminating manual work and enabling automation**, organizations free up their employees to focus on higher-value activities (like analysis, strategy, customer service) rather than clerical work.
4. **Enhanced Decision-Making with Data-Driven Insights:** With integrated analytics and AI, the program helps companies become more **data-driven** in their decision-making. In traditional setups, data often resides in disparate systems that don't talk to each other (for example, SAP ERP vs. CRM vs. Excel spreadsheets), making it difficult to get a holistic view in a timely manner. Now,

with **SAP Business Data Cloud on Azure**, decision-makers can access unified dashboards that pull live data from SAP and other sources. This means KPIs and operational metrics are always current, enabling real-time monitoring of the business. Executives can get answers to complex questions by simply asking M365 Copilot or running a Power BI query, rather than waiting weeks for an IT-generated report. The **AI capabilities also turn raw data into actionable insights** – for example, predictive models can forecast demand or cash flow based on SAP transaction history and external factors, letting managers take proactive steps. SAP and Microsoft highlighted that companies will gain *“deeper insights and improved operational efficiency through collaborative innovation”*^[7] thanks to this program. A tangible example comes from the procurement function: organizations achieved **real-time spend analysis and improved compliance** by merging SAP procurement data with analytics, which helped identify maverick spend or budget anomalies instantly^[7]. In summary, the program equips businesses with **better intelligence at their fingertips** – leading to more informed and timely decisions at all levels, supported by facts and predictive insights rather than guesswork.

5. **Cost Savings and Improved Total Cost of Ownership (TCO):** Moving to SAP on Azure and utilizing the Acceleration Program can yield significant cost advantages. First, there are **infrastructure cost savings**: Running SAP in the cloud can be more cost-effective than maintaining on-premises datacenters. With Azure’s implementation of the latest high-performance Intel technology for SAP, businesses can do more with less by reducing compute costs while still achieving the desired performance. This can result in simplified landscapes and reduce licensing and management costs. Organizations can also avoid large upfront capital expenditures on hardware and data center facilities, instead paying for what they use on Azure (an operational expense model). The program’s **accelerated time-to-value** translates to cost savings in the form of less project waste – when projects are faster and more likely to succeed, money isn’t burned on lengthy implementations or rework. The inclusion of best practices and guidance can prevent costly mistakes during migration. There are also **new revenue opportunities and efficiencies** unlocked (as noted earlier, improved decisions and processes), which contribute to a higher return on investment. From a TCO perspective, companies benefit from Microsoft’s economies of scale – they get world-class infrastructure and updates without bearing the full brunt of maintenance. Finally, the ability to leverage **cloud incentives and licensing benefits** (such as Azure Hybrid Benefits, or special SAP on Azure bundles) can further lower the effective cost. All these factors combine to make the economic case for the program very compelling.
6. **Security, Compliance, and Risk Mitigation:** Enterprises are understandably cautious about moving core systems to the cloud unless security and compliance are assured. The SAP Business Suite on Microsoft Cloud provides a **hardened, enterprise-grade security environment** that often surpasses what organizations can achieve on-premise. This starts at the hardware level in collaboration with Intel to enable features like Intel Total Memory Encryption(TME) and advanced

reliability, availability, and serviceability features in Azure infrastructure. Further, data is protected by encryption in transit ~~and at rest~~, with Microsoft’s encryption key management and options for customer-managed keys. Identity controls via Entra AD enforce strong authentication (including multifactor auth) for SAP users. The integrated **threat detection and response** capabilities (Microsoft Sentinel, Defender) mean that any suspicious activity in the SAP environment can be quickly flagged and addressed using automated playbooks[1]. This reduces risk of breaches or fraud. Additionally, the program inherits Microsoft’s broad **compliance portfolio** – Azure meets dozens of industry and regional compliance standards (ISO, SOC, GDPR, etc.), which can help customers more easily comply with regulations for their SAP data. For customers in regulated industries or public sector, features like data residency and the new **European digital sovereignty commitments** from Microsoft ensure that cloud adoption does not conflict with data sovereignty needs[3]. The net benefit is a **trusted platform** where customers can operate their critical business processes with peace of mind. As SAP’s Chief Partner Officer, Karl Fahrbach, noted, by combining forces, SAP and Microsoft have created “scalable tools that address complex challenges” and simplified operations for customers in an ever-evolving landscape[7][7] – this certainly includes the complex challenge of keeping systems secure and compliant. Ultimately, the program enables customers to **innovate boldly, without compromising on security or stability**.

To summarize, [Table 1](#) highlights some of these key benefits and the associated value drivers:

Benefit Area	What It Means	Key Metric/Outcome
Faster Time-to-Value	Accelerated implementation using pre-built integrations and partner expertise.[7] Businesses can go live sooner and start earning returns on their investment quicker.	A Forrester Consulting study found organizations cut the time-to-market for new SAP operations by <i>approximately 25%</i> after moving to Microsoft Cloud
Scalability & Reliability	Elastic scaling of SAP workloads on Azure’s global cloud, and enterprise-grade high availability for critical systems.[7]	99.95% uptime SLA for SAP private cloud on Azure ensures minimal downtime[7] (translating to robust continuity).
Operational Efficiency	Streamlined business processes, less manual work, and AI-assisted task automation across SAP and Microsoft apps.[7][7]	E.g., Real-time procurement insights led to reduced maverick spend and faster sourcing cycles[7]. (Qualitative improvements in cycle times and labor hours saved.)
Data-Driven Insights	Unified data and advanced analytics/AI deliver real-time, actionable business insights for better decisions.[7][3]	E.g., Finance team identifies anomalies instantly (vs. monthly)[1]; procurement analyzes spend continuously, improving compliance[7].

Cost Savings	Lower IT infrastructure and maintenance costs, and improved efficiency reducing operational expenses. [8]	Up to 30% reduction in total cost of ownership for SAP by leveraging cloud automation and scalability [8] .
Security & Compliance	End-to-end security monitoring, identity management, and compliance support leveraging Azure’s capabilities. [1] [5]	99.95% SLA plus integrated threat protection lowers risk of business disruption; compliance with standards (GDPR, etc.) eased by cloud controls.

Table 1. Key benefits of SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program and their impact, with supporting data.

Future Outlook: Innovation and Growth on the Horizon

The SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud represents not just a point-in-time offering, but an evolving partnership platform that will continue to grow. Looking ahead, several developments and trends are set to shape the future of this program and the value it provides to businesses:

Continued Global Expansion:

In the near term, SAP and Microsoft are rolling out the program to more regions worldwide. As noted, the program started in the United States in 2025 and is planned to expand to Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand by late 2025[\[4\]](#). This means customers in those regions will soon have access to local resources and datacenter support for the program. Beyond 2025, we can anticipate further global reach, possibly extending to additional markets in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. The global rollout is important because many enterprise customers operate internationally; having the program available in all their key markets ensures a consistent transformation approach and the ability to meet local compliance (for example, data residency rules in the EU will be addressed via EU-based Azure regions and SAP’s commitments to sovereignty[\[3\]](#)). By making the program truly global, SAP and Microsoft aim to drive a worldwide wave of cloud ERP adoption in advance of the 2027 on-premises support deadline.

Deeper AI and “Agentic” Capabilities:

AI will become even more central to the ERP experience. A major upcoming milestone is the **bi-directional integration of Microsoft 365 Copilot within SAP Joule**, completing the two-way AI assistant connectivity[\[3\]](#). Once Microsoft Copilot is fully embedded in SAP (expected by the end of 2025), SAP users will not only ask Joule about SAP data but could also invoke Microsoft 365 actions from within SAP systems. For example, an SAP user might trigger Copilot to create a Teams meeting or draft a Word doc based on an SAP scenario, without leaving the SAP interface. This blurring of boundaries between enterprise apps will further streamline workflows. Beyond this, SAP and Microsoft

are exploring the frontier of **agentic AI** – autonomous agents acting on behalf of users or organizations. We may see intelligent bots that can execute transactions in SAP, not just recommend them. Microsoft has been working on an *Agents for Enterprise* concept, and SAP has its AI research; together they could introduce AI that, say, automatically reorders stock when levels dip or AI that negotiates routine purchases within defined parameters. The quotes from leadership underscore this direction: They speak of a milestone where *"agentic AI is transforming the way businesses operate"*^[7]. In practical terms, the future ERP system might have AI delegates continuously working in the background. Over the next few years, expect frequent updates to Joule and Copilot, with new capabilities like industry-specific AI models (for instance, an AI trained to optimize retail merchandising or one for predictive maintenance in manufacturing). SAP already hinted at integrating large language models (including partnerships to use OpenAI and other models) and Microsoft's Azure OpenAI service provides the tools. As these capabilities roll out, customers will receive them as part of their cloud service – ensuring **they can leverage the latest AI innovations without huge additional investments**.

Ecosystem Growth and Marketplace Evolution:

The success of the program hinges on the partner ecosystem. SAP and Microsoft are likely to **onboard more system integrators and ISV (Independent Software Vendor) partners** into the program. This means an expanded pool of trained practitioners to help customers implement, as well as more third-party solutions that complement SAP on Azure. The Azure Marketplace availability of SAP offerings points to a trend: we might see a rich catalog of **pre-packaged solutions (perhaps industry cloud offerings or SAP add-ons)** delivered via the marketplace. This could include things like an SAP+Azure solution for "smart factory" or for "digital finance" that a customer can deploy with one click, developed by partners but certified by SAP/Microsoft. **New Features and Integrated Services:** Both SAP and Microsoft have roadmaps that will continuously inject new features into the program. For example, SAP's ongoing S/4HANA enhancements and industry cloud developments will be woven into the program. Microsoft's Azure will also introduce services beneficial to SAP customers (for instance, improvements in Azure's high-memory VM instances for SAP HANA, or new data integration tools). We can expect **tighter integration with Microsoft's broader enterprise offerings**. Think of Microsoft Power Platform – tools like Power Apps and Power Automate could become more seamlessly integrated with SAP, allowing business users to compose mini-apps or workflows that extend SAP functionality without code. This democratization of innovation could be part of the program's offerings, enabling "citizen developers" in a company to build custom solutions on top of SAP and Azure data (with guardrails). Microsoft's focus on **multi-cloud and hybrid scenarios** could also play a role; Azure Arc, for example, might manage SAP deployments across on-prem and cloud for those who need a gradual transition.

Industry-Specific Innovations:

Both companies know that one size doesn't fit all. Expect the program to deliver more **industry-specific accelerators and solutions**. SAP's Business Suite covers many verticals (manufacturing, retail, healthcare, etc.), and Microsoft has clouds for industries (like Microsoft Cloud for Retail, etc.). The convergence of these could yield tailored packages – for instance, an acceleration package for Automotive suppliers that includes specific SAP modules, IoT integration via Azure, and AI models for predictive quality. Already, we saw procurement-specific benefits highlighted[7]; going forward, we may hear about things like “fast-track for digital manufacturing” or “accelerated SAP for healthcare compliance” through this program. These would further entice companies in those sectors to jump onboard.

Customer Community and Feedback Loop:

As more customers join, SAP and Microsoft will undoubtedly foster a community (perhaps through the SAP user groups like ASUG, and Microsoft's user forums) to share feedback and drive improvements. The Azure blog noted how valuable customer feedback from the preview was in reaching general availability for some features[3]. This tight feedback loop will continue. In effect, early adopters are co-innovators in shaping the next iterations of the program. The future outlook includes more of this co-innovation. We might see **customer advisory councils** that influence which features get prioritized – for example, if many customers request a certain type of analytics integration or a workflow improvement, SAP/Microsoft can address that quickly via cloud updates. This responsiveness is part of the new cloud model of ERP (contrasted with the old on-prem model where you waited years for the next major release). Therefore, customers can expect that the program will not stagnate; it will adapt yearly or even quarterly, delivering incremental enhancements at a steady pace.

2027 and Beyond – A New Normal for ERP:

By 2027, when SAP's on-prem ERP mainstream maintenance ceases, we expect a large portion of SAP's customer base to have moved onto cloud platforms like Azure, either through this program or similar initiatives. At that point, the conversation will shift from “*migrating to cloud*” to “*optimizing on cloud*”. The Acceleration Program is likely to evolve into a longer-term **value optimization program**, ensuring customers continue to derive new value post-migration. This could involve benchmarking services (comparing KPIs across the ecosystem to identify improvement areas) or continuous improvement workshops provided by partners. The partnership might also extend into **business process outsourcing or managed services**, where routine operations are handled by AI and partners, letting the customer focus on innovation. Essentially, once everyone is on S/4HANA in the cloud, SAP and Microsoft will aim to keep their platform sticky and essential by layering on more and more capabilities – from AI-driven business planning to immersive analytics (perhaps using mixed reality with Microsoft HoloLens to visualize SAP data, as a fanciful example).

In conclusion, the **future of the SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program** is one of ongoing innovation and enrichment. SAP and Microsoft have signaled a long-term commitment to this alliance, meaning customers can invest with confidence that the platform will be supported and enhanced for years to come. The collaborative roadmap ensures that as technology advances – whether it be AI, user experience, or cloud infrastructure – those advances will be integrated into the SAP-Microsoft solution set. For businesses, this partnership offers a way to stay at the forefront of enterprise tech with far less friction. By joining this program, organizations essentially hitch themselves to the joint innovation engine of two of the world's tech giants. The result is a modern, intelligent ERP environment that not only meets today's needs but is continuously evolving to meet the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

Boldly moving forward, companies leveraging the SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud are positioning themselves to outpace competitors – they can innovate faster, operate more efficiently, and adapt readily to change. With a solid cloud foundation, intelligent AI-driven processes, and a rich ecosystem of support, these enterprises are well equipped to drive growth and resilience in the digital age. The partnership of SAP and Microsoft, strengthened by this program, truly empowers customers to *"transform today to be resilient tomorrow"*, making the vision of an AI-optimized, cloud-powered business a present reality and a promise for the future.

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