

2022 State of Automation and Integration

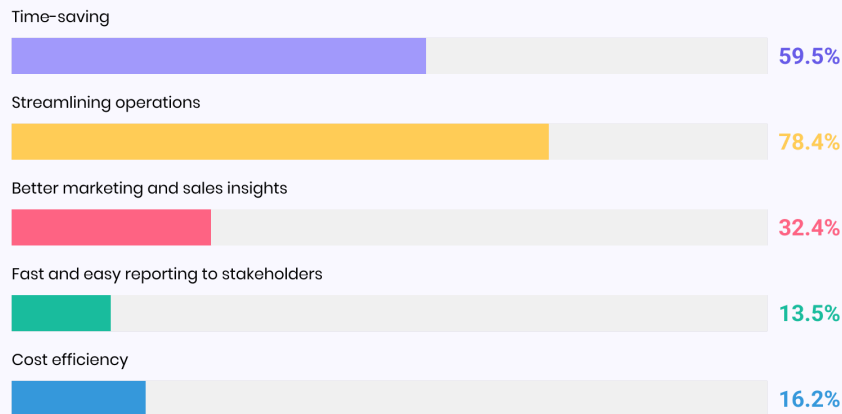


2022 State of Automation and Integration

What Drives Automation and Integration Adoption?

In our over 12+ years in the integration and automation industry, we have heard a lot of reasons why businesses of all sizes rely on these two solutions.

What is the main benefit you got from using integration solutions?



Back in 2009, when we first got started, automation would still make you think of clunky robots. And if it didn't, then you were working for a Fortune 500 company that afforded to invest in developing proprietary automation or integration systems – or, more seldomly, buy them from vendors at prices that made your head spin.

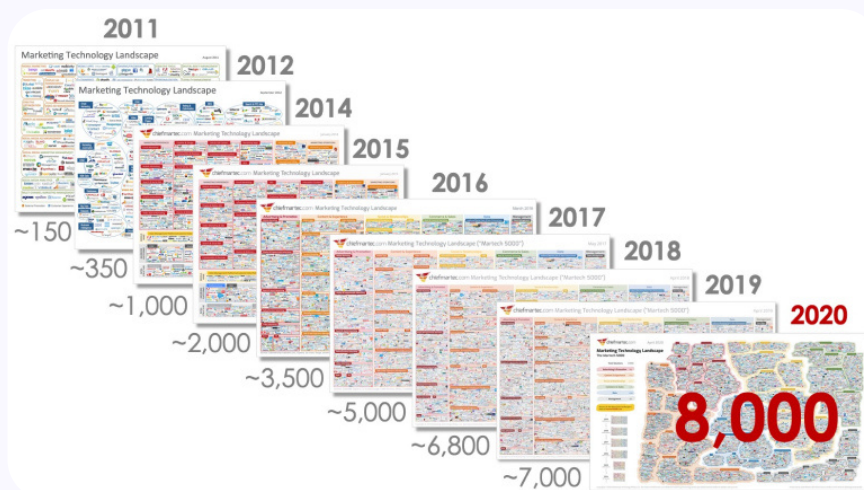


Image Source: [Chiefmartec.com](https://chiefmartec.com)

In the last decade, things have changed massively. Almost every company relies on at least a few integration and automation solutions. But the market still has plenty of room to grow, as adoption in some industries is lagging behind.

So we wanted to put some numbers to the reasons we already knew and learn what exactly drives automation and integration. Additionally, we learned:

- What makes some companies hold off on adoption or, on the contrary, jump on the bandwagon?
- What are the main reasons why people use automation and integration?
- How has automation and integration changed the way they do business?

Our survey confirmed some things we already knew and shed light on new reasons why automation and integration matter to businesses of all sizes:

- Operations streamlining and time-saving are two of the biggest drivers in the industry.
- Better marketing campaigns are the number one goal of automation and integration users.
- Still, most of our respondents aren't very keen on updating or upgrading their software stack in the near future.
- Some businesses still move data manually between applications but feel that automation and integration would greatly improve their productivity.
- Automation and integration maturity is still underway for most companies.

This document details every response we got and puts them in context: how will the market fare in the upcoming years and what do people *really* need when it comes to automation and integration?

Survey Methodology

We surveyed a wide range of professionals across the world, working with companies of all sizes. Our focus here was surveying the people who handle automation and integration in their company, so we can get a better feel of their needs and challenges.

Who Answered Our Survey?

Most of our respondents come from the nonprofit (27%), IT/software (24.3%), education (10.8%), or digital marketing (8.1%) industries. They hold C-level positions or work in the systems/data/admin departments of their companies.

“

I like that this has allowed us to have an easier time integrating our CRM solution to our email marketing software and has simplified our workflow for us.

”



Jilian K. | REIGL USA

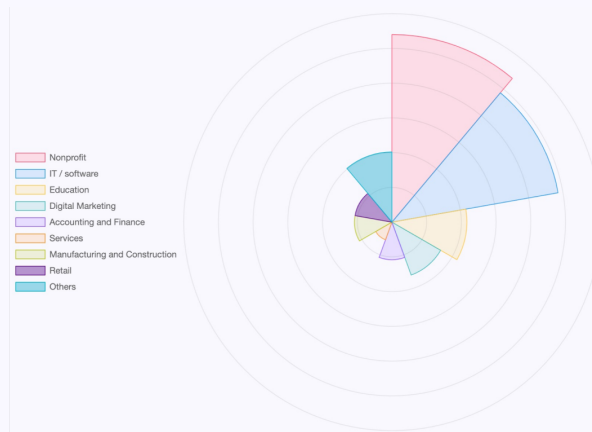
Why Survey SMBs?

The size of their companies varies a lot, too. However, most of them come from small- to medium-sized companies. In our experience, this is the least surveyed segment of businesses when it comes to automation and integration. And we wanted to right this wrong, because we strongly believe that:

1. SMBs (including nonprofits) need automation and integration the most.
2. SMBs can fuel unparalleled industry growth. We've already seen them accelerate their digital transformation during the pandemic, so now it's just a matter of sustaining this trend.

Our mission: as you may already know, our mission was always the democratization of data. We always believed that, if you can generate data, you should have the tools to leverage it, as well. This means affordable integration and automation. This is why, on SyncApps, we have free plans and a permanent 50% discount for Nonprofits, Education, Medicine, and Governmental Institutions. It's our way of bringing everyone on board -- affordable solutions for every company, irrespective of its size.

What industry is your company in?



Integration Maturity Level Across Surveyed Organizations

Most of our respondents have been using integration for one to three years or for more than three years (70.2%).

However, a significant proportion have been using integration for less than three months (16.2%) or less than six months (13.6%). In total, they make up more than 25% -- that is a quarter of our respondents.

When coupled with our in-house data regarding the new subscribers that created an account with SyncApps starting with 2020 (when the first wave of the pandemic hit), we can confidently say that the integration adoption is still in its infancy for SMBs.

“

The tech support is fast, efficient, and always helpful. I love working with their team. They are always willing to work with us and ask the right kinds of questions to make sure we are implementing the proper solution in the best way possible.

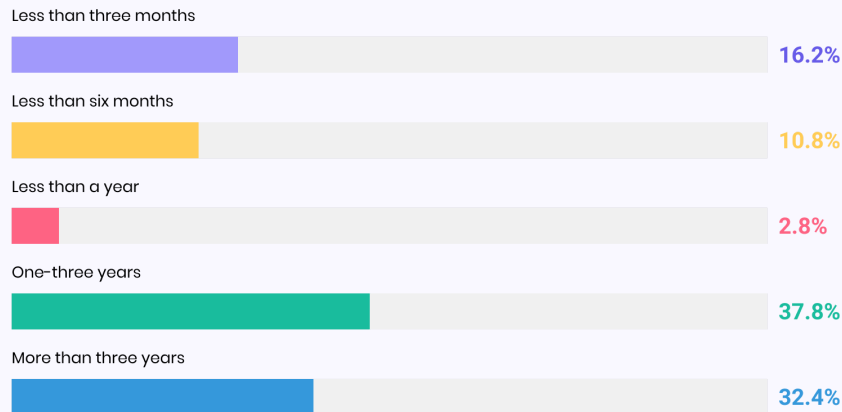
”



Margo G. | Shopify, Product Manager

In the past two years (and especially in 2020), SyncApps had a major boom of new subscribers. The new subscribers accelerated their integration adoption because of the pandemic – because they were somewhat forced to go digital.

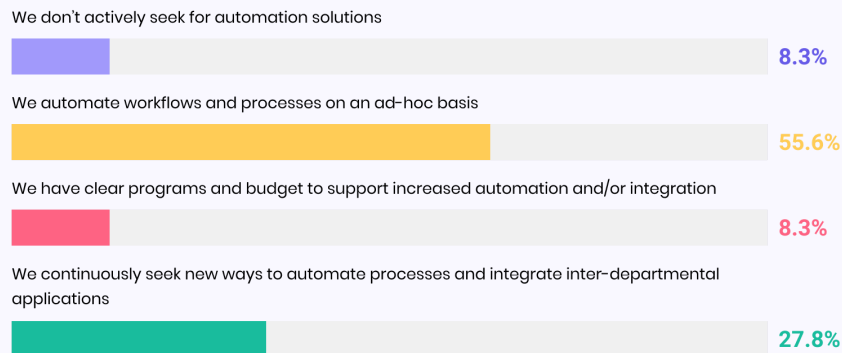
How long have you been using integration solutions?



This assessment is congruent with the respondents' own view of their integration maturity levels. 55.6% of our respondents said that they automate workflows and processes on an ad-hoc basis. 8.3% of them don't actively seek automation and integration solutions.

On the other hand, 27.8% of our respondents actively seek new ways to automate processes and integrate inter-departmental applications. However, only a little over 8% have clear budgets and programs to support an increase in automation and integration adoption.

How would you rate the level of automation and integration maturity in your organization?



While the maturity level of integration and automation across SMBs has yet to develop further, we can infer that at least one good thing came out of the pandemic: the accelerated digital transformation that has put millions of businesses all over the world on a track to better leverage their data.

“

Eliminates a lot of tedious tasks, SyncApps lets you automate a time-consuming process of syncing contacts and groups from Salesforce to MailChimp. SyncApps is a really helpful link between our CRM software and our email marketing tool.

”



Patty B. | Blink Now, Chief of Staff

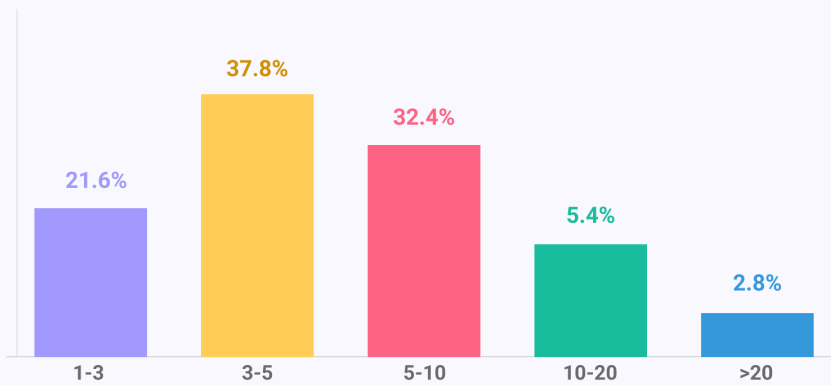
Once they have started adopting automation and integration, they have also uncovered their benefits. Let's take a look at what drives SMBs to buy automation/integration solutions.

What Are the Main Drivers of Automation and Integration?

What drives companies to adopt integration and automation solutions? To answer that, we started by asking them how many software applications they use (to gauge the need for integration) and why they adopt "regular" software solutions -- to gauge the difference between them and integration/automation if any.

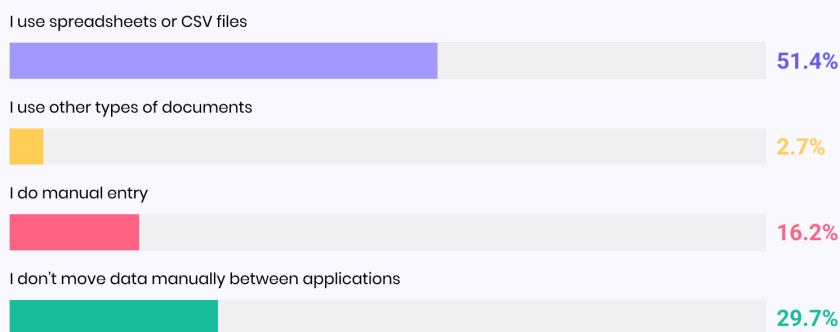
Most of our respondents (70.2%) use between three and 10 software applications. This means a lot of data siloes and a lot of data that cannot be properly leveraged since it's being kept away from other data it could be merged with.

How many software applications/solutions does your department use on a daily basis?



More interestingly, more than half of our respondents use CSV or similar format files to move data between applications. Over a quarter of them don't move data between applications at all. This is another strong data silo signal.

How do you move data manually between applications?



“

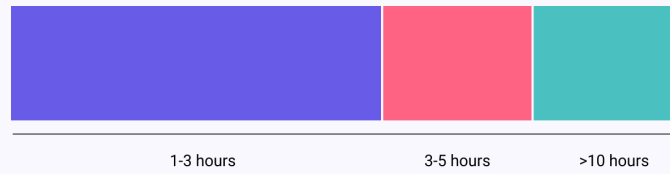
Syncing our Salesforce lists with Constant Contact to send email newsletters and announcements has been simple with SyncApps. It saves us a ton of time having to create the lists manually.

”



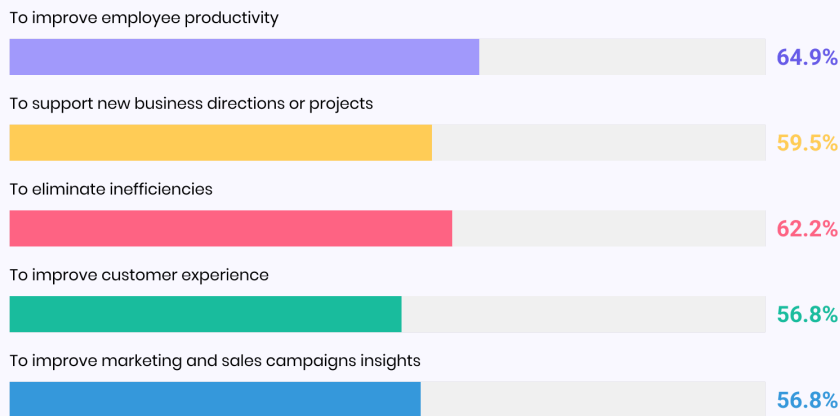
Storey S. | Greenway Health

Most of our survey respondents spend between one and five hours every week moving data between applications.



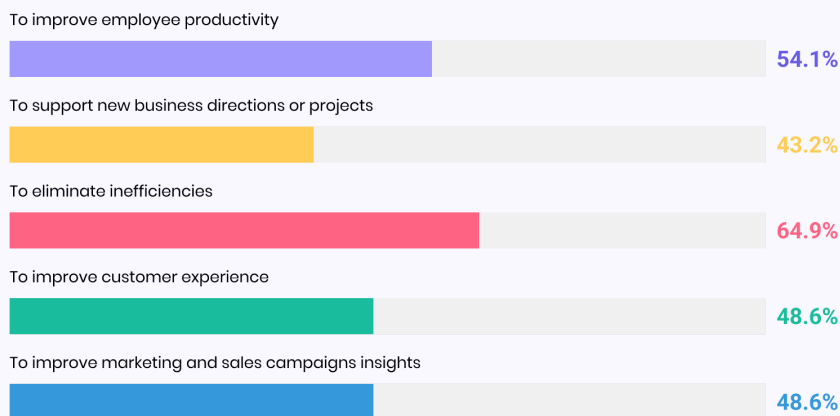
When they subscribe to new software or purchase it, most SMBs do it to improve employee productivity, eliminate inefficiencies, support new business directions or projects, or improve marketing campaigns insights

Why do you purchase/subscribe to new software applications?



The reasons why SMBs use integration and automation solutions are very similar – the percentages too. With one exception: more people say that automation/integration helps them eliminate inefficiencies.

Why do you purchase/subscribe to new integration solutions?



“

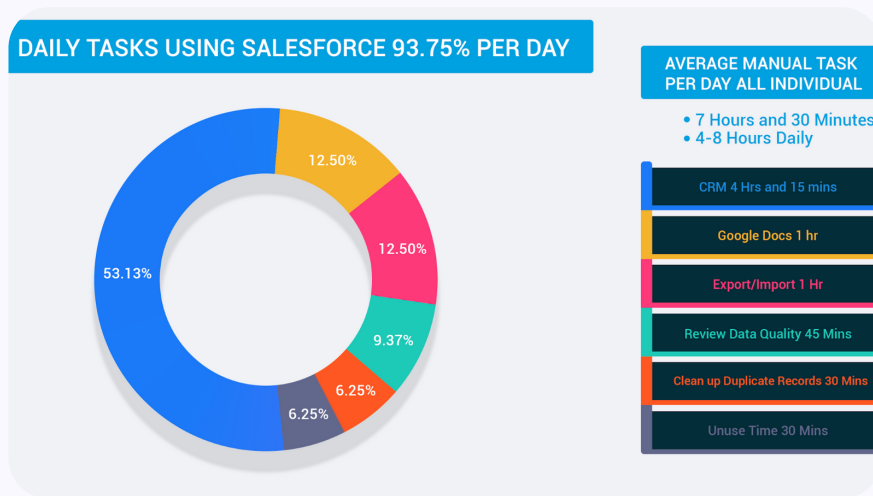
Use SyncApps to sync campaign members from Salesforce to Constant Contact for social sharing of campaigns for increased profits.

”



Matthew B. | Winston-Salem

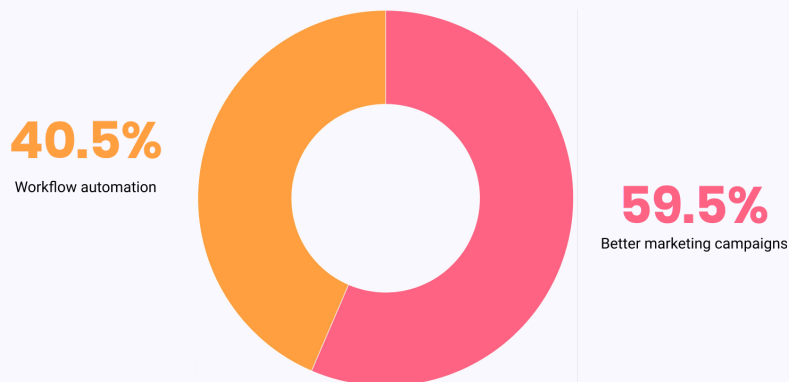
As we already knew from our chats with SyncApps subscribers, manual data transfers are inefficient and prone to errors. Integration mitigates the risk of human error. At the same time, it helps save a lot of time – about as much as our respondents stated they were spending on manual data migration:



According to an older survey we conducted at SyncApps, free subscribers report saving between two and five hours a week, which adds up to 13+ days per year saved. And that’s just by using the free SyncApps account over manual import/export and segmenting tasks between eCommerce, CRM, and marketing software.

How Are SMBs Using Integration and Why?

Our survey revealed that the main use case of integration is better marketing campaigns (59.5%), followed by workflow automation (40.5%).



Again, this is consistent with our day-to-day talks with the SyncApps subscribers. Integration fuels better marketing campaigns by combining insights from across platforms into a single dashboard, with relevant metrics viewable at a glance.

“ My favorite tool for Salesforce - Mailchimp integration. A fully-featured and flexible integration tool that I can quickly implement and customize for individual organizations' needs.



Stephanie K. | Redpath Consulting Group

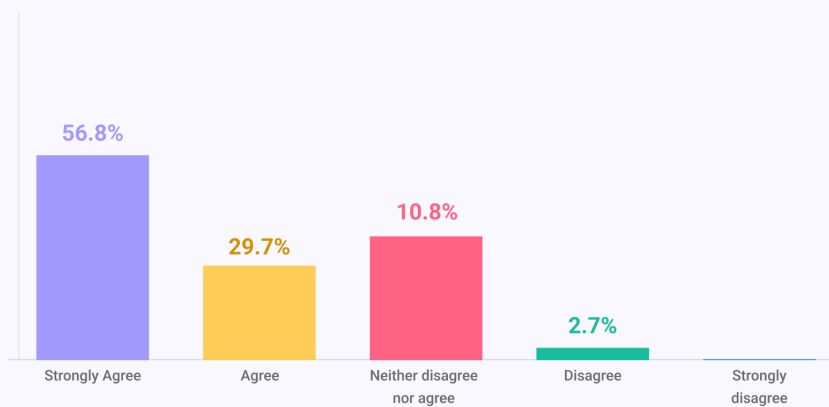
”

We currently serve 38,000+ subscribers from over 20+ industries and in 100+ locations around the world. Throughout our history, they have logged 100,000+ tickets. We ask them their problems, answer questions around use cases, initiatives and survey their SyncApps set up success.

More often than not, their main need is of better insights. They have the data, we just help them put it together and, above all, make it actionable.

Aside from getting better marketing insights, our respondents, also get another major benefit: a whopping 86.5% of them agree that automating mundane or repetitive aspects of their work increases their productivity. This means more time freed up to be spent on strategy and other important cognitive processes that a machine can't take over for humans.

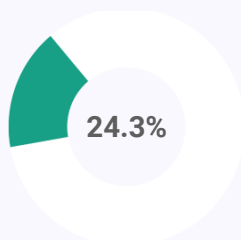
Automating some of the more repetitive or mundane aspects of my work would increase my productivity



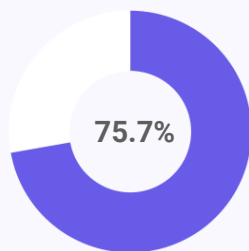
Challenges in Integration and Automation Adoption

Despite the obvious benefits, not everyone is ready to bet everything on integration and automation. Naturally, we wanted to know why.

The top two answers paint a clear picture: the lack of integration/automation skills within the department, along with challenges in securing the internal resources to manage and fund integration/automation tell us that more work is needed in this area.



Almost a quarter (24.3%) of the respondents said that they have trouble identifying ROI-positive integration and automation opportunities.



Will things change in the near future (one to three years)? Our respondents showed moderate optimism.

This gives us an excellent starting point to look at what's to come in 2022 and beyond.

“

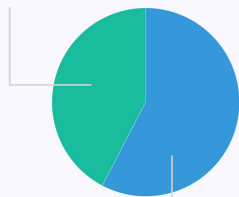
Flexibility and customization of the tool.
Responsiveness of the team. Advanced mailing list
management and synchronization between Salesforce
and Mailchimp.



David D. | Nexell GmbH

”

What Does the Future Hold in Store for Automation and Integration and the SMBs Relying on Them?

48.3%**51.7%**

When asked about their plans for 2022, our respondents had an interesting take: a staggering 51.7% of them say they will maintain their software stack. At the same time, 48.3% of them plan to invest more in automation.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, integration and automation come with clear benefits – and the subscribers know it. But there are still challenges to be addressed. Some of these challenges lie with the creators of integration and automation solutions.

For instance, automation solutions need to get better at proving their ROI. This may seem like a tall order, especially in the integration segment, where the solutions rely on other platforms and their respective APIs, as well as on their respective features releases.

Still, we are happy to report that our subscribers know that they can save up to five hours every week just by using a free SyncApps plan. Translated in man-hours, this can mean quite a lot at the end of the year – usually far outweighing the cost of the subscription.

At the same time, automation solutions need to get more user-friendly. As the adoption by SMBs increases, we, as an industry, need to acknowledge the fact that smaller companies don't have dedicated IT specialists and that most employees wear many hats.

This means that very few of them have the time to go through a steep learning curve when they adopt a new solution. Even fewer of them have the time to learn new skills from scratch.

SyncApps is a no-code, plug-and-play platform. Plus, our 24/7 support department is always there for our subscribers, irrespective of the plan they are on (yes, even for free plans). We have already started redesigning our Help Center to make it even more user-friendly.

For 2022 and beyond, we plan to spend even more resources addressing the usability and user-friendliness of the entire SyncApps ecosystem. We know that this is a big part of our commitment to democratize data leveraging and make it accessible to every organization that needs it.

As the industry itself matures, SMBs can expect to see better integration and automation solutions all around. They can even expect to see a cross-breed between the SaaS model and on-demand features.

For instance, at SyncApps, most of our new features and integrations are inspired by our subscribers. Oftentimes, we have created a feature from scratch just because one of our subscribers requested it. At the same time, we have launched a lot of new integrations when (potential) subscribers asked about them.

Still, to leverage integration and automation to the fullest, SMBs need to take control of their business processes and software stack. The next chapter explains how.

“

Using SyncApps for Salesforce to Mailchimp Sync and EventBrite sync. Genuinely blown away by the power of the product and the responsiveness of the team to all of my questions.

”



Danny B. | Science Gallery International

Final Automation and Integration Recommendations: How to Do More with Less

One thing this study made clear is that software stacks will not be shrinking any time soon. While some of our respondents don't plan to invest in new software soon, the vast majority will either stick to the existing stack or add to it – but very few of them will actually shrink their stack.

Context is important here: this study came after almost two years of massive investments in software. It's only natural that these investments take a break, while the companies learn how to get more out of them. In fact, it's something we've always encouraged: start small and take the time to master every solution before you invest in another one.

However, this makes integration and automation all the more important. The more the software stack increases, the bigger the need to get your solutions talking to each other.

How can you do that with a minimal budget and considering the existing skills shortage? In our experience, leveraging automation and integration to the fullest without spending a fortune looks like this:

- 1. Don't wait for it to get built.** Building your own automations and integrations takes a lot of time and a lot of money. Plus, since the platforms themselves change a lot, you will need an in-house maintenance team at all times. XaaS solutions are far more affordable. You can test most of them for free until you find the one that matches your goals.
- 2. Evaluate the ROI of your software stack.** Before you invest in automation, take a good look at the solutions you are already paying for. Do you need them all? Do you need to integrate them all? Our survey showed that not all respondents can prove ROI from their software, so an evaluation is the first step to a ROI-positive strategy.
- 3. Identify manual processes that can be automated.** Our survey showed that automation can greatly increase productivity, while integration brings excellent ROI through better marketing campaigns. Before you invest in another solution, look at the manual processes you are still spending too much time on. Can they be automated? Can they be improved upon? When you have a clear list of these processes, you can start to:
- 4. Automate more.** Go slowly and with a precise target. Start with departmental needs and then move on to inter-departmental integration and automation.
- 5. Aim for integration and automation maturity.** The most successful companies have an ongoing automation and integration process. As the market evolves and new and better solutions are launched, these companies are the first to implement them. Of course, this means that the first four steps above have been executed. This way, when a new solution is launched, a company can quickly evaluate whether they need it or not.

Why are all these steps necessary? Without them, you risk one of two things. You can get left behind if you are not ready to adopt a solution quickly after its launch. Or, even more dangerously, you adopt too many solutions just because of the hype around them.

When that happens, you end up with an oversized software stack that doesn't match your team's skill set and does more harm than good. In the end, you will be wasting money on solutions that only gather virtual dust.