



White Paper

Lessons Learned SAP Cloud ERP

AP Automation with SAP S/4HANA
Cloud Public Edition

A white paper for finance leaders and business IT decision-makers in SAP organizations looking to run secure, highly automated, and Clean-Core-compliant invoice processes in the cloud

xSuite

xsuite.com

Content

01

Executive Summary

02

SAP's Cloud Strategy: The Path to the Future

1. GROW with SAP – Direct Entry into the Public Cloud
 2. RISE with SAP – The Path via the Private Cloud
 3. Clean Core – The Guiding Principle for Sustainable ERP Architectures
-

03

Three Customer Types, One Goal: SAP Cloud ERP – S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition

1. The Satellites – Agility in a Corporate Context
 2. The Newbies – An Easier Entry into the SAP World
 3. The Brave – A Direct Move from SAP ERP to the Public Cloud
-

04

Lessons Learned from Public Cloud Projects

1. A Completely Different Project Approach
 2. Expectation Management is Critical to Success
 3. Change Management is More Important Than Technology
 4. The Role of IT is Fundamentally Changing
-

Content

05

AP Automation in the Context of the Public Cloud

1. Why Invoice Processing Is the Ideal Use Case
 2. Clean Core & Automation – A Harmonious Interaction
 3. Requirements of Accounts Payable
 4. Requirements of Business IT
 5. Insights from xSuite Projects
-

06

Conclusion



01 Executive Summary

The ERP market is at a turning point. For decades, enterprises have relied on heavily customized on-premises ERP systems, continuously extended to meet specific business needs. While these landscapes once enabled differentiation, they are now increasingly constraining organizations. High operating costs, limited upgradeability, and growing technical debt are slowing innovation and reducing agility at a time when speed and scalability are critical.

In parallel, enterprise software has clearly shifted toward standardized, cloud-native SaaS models. ERP is following the same trajectory. SAP is driving this transition with a well-defined strategy. GROW with SAP provides a fast-track entry into the public cloud, while RISE with SAP offers a transformation path via the private cloud with a long-term orientation toward public cloud adoption.

At the heart of SAP's cloud strategy lies a new architectural paradigm built around Clean Core and side-by-side extensions on SAP Business Technology Platform (SAP BTP). The ERP core remains standardized, stable, and continuously upgradable, while differentiation, automation, and innovation are moved to the platform layer. This separation enables organizations to modernize without sacrificing release readiness or system stability.

As a provider of SAP-integrated solutions for finance and procurement with a strong focus on intelligent, largely touchless AP automation, xSuite supports around 1,600 SAP customers worldwide. This close engagement with real projects provides a clear view into how SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition is selected, implemented, and adopted in practice. Since launching one of the first fully BTP-native invoice workflows for SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, certified by SAP in 2024, xSuite has been actively involved in early-stage public cloud finance transformations.

This white paper distills the most relevant lessons learned from real-world public cloud projects. It addresses both:

- Finance leaders and heads of accounts payable, focused on efficiency, automation, transparency, and compliance
- Business IT and SAP decision-makers, responsible for architecture, integration, Clean Core compliance, and long-term scalability

Across projects, three recurring customer archetypes emerge:

1. The Satellites – agile subsidiaries within larger corporate groups
2. The Newbies – organizations entering the SAP ecosystem for the first time
3. The Brave – SAP-experienced companies moving directly from SAP ECC to the public cloud

In all scenarios, one insight is consistent: SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition delivers substantial value, but it requires a fundamental shift in mindset

Deep customization is replaced by standardization. ERP-embedded extensions are replaced by platform based side-by-side services. SAP BTP becomes the central automation and innovation layer.

Invoice management is where this shift becomes most tangible. It is highly repetitive, strongly compliance-driven, and ideally suited for standardization and automation.

In public cloud projects, invoice processing consistently delivers fast, measurable business outcomes, including higher touchless rates, shorter cycle times, and improved auditability. As a result, it has proven to be an ideal starting point for finance automation in SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition.

02

SAP's Cloud Strategy: The Path to the Future

SAP's move to the cloud is deliberate and strategic. Rather than enforcing a single migration model, SAP offers different transformation paths aligned with customer maturity and starting points. What all paths share is a clear long-term target: a standardized, cloud-native ERP architecture.

2.1 GROW with SAP – Direct Entry into the Public Cloud

GROW with SAP is designed for organizations that are new to SAP or deliberately pursue a greenfield approach. It provides the fastest route into SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, with predefined best practice processes and a guided implementation methodology.

For many newcomers, this model significantly reduces complexity. Standardized processes are activated quickly and can be selectively extended later, for example by adding automated invoice workflows via SAP BTP. This enables fast time to value while keeping future scalability in mind.

2.2 RISE with SAP – The Path via the Private Cloud

Organizations with existing SAP landscapes often choose RISE with SAP as an intermediate step.

It offers greater flexibility and compatibility with existing customizations while modernizing the underlying platform.

Importantly, RISE is not an endpoint. It is best understood as a transition model toward the public cloud. Processes such as invoice management can be redesigned early based on Clean Core principles, ensuring that extensions and automations are future proof and transferable to a public cloud environment.

2.3 Clean Core – The Guiding Principle for Sustainable ERP Architectures

Clean Core is the defining architectural principle of SAP's cloud strategy. It represents a clear shift away from deep custom developments in the ERP core toward standardized processes and stable interfaces.

Instead of embedding custom logic directly into the core system, enhancements are implemented via SAP BTP. This approach preserves upgradeability, reduces technical dependencies, and ensures that innovation cycles are no longer constrained by individual system modifications.

For invoice management, Clean Core means that core posting and accounting logic remains standard, while workflows, validations, exception handling, and automation logic are implemented side by side on SAP BTP. BTP-native solutions such as xSuite's invoice workflow exemplify this approach by combining functional depth with full Clean Core compliance



03

Three Customer Types, One Goal: SAP Cloud ERP – S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition

Despite different starting points, customer projects follow recognizable patterns. Based on extensive project experience, three customer archetypes stand out.

3.1 The Satellites – Agility in a Corporate Context
Satellites are subsidiaries, regional entities, or newly acquired organizations operating within larger corporate groups. They typically require speed, simplicity, and scalability rather than highly customized processes.

The public cloud is particularly well suited to these requirements. Standardized processes enable rapid deployment, while automatic updates and centralized operations significantly reduce local IT overhead.

AP automation is a prime example. Satellites need lean, standardized invoice workflows that comply with local regulations such as e-invoicing while aligning with group-wide standards. The combination of SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition and BTP-based invoice workflows provides exactly this balance.

xSuite Example

A global filtration group operates SAP S/4HANA Cloud Private Edition at headquarters while rolling out the public edition to subsidiaries. Using xSuite's BTP-native invoice workflow, subsidiaries process invoices with a high degree of automation, while the group benefits from standardized data models and consistent reporting.

3.2 The Newbies – An Easier Entry into the SAP World

Newbies are organizations adopting SAP for the first time, often driven by growth, regulatory pressure, or international expansion.

For these companies, SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition offers a structured, modern entry into enterprise ERP. The standardized SAP process model provides clarity and reduces implementation risk, while continuous updates ensure long-term viability.

Invoice management is frequently one of the first processes to be professionalized. Digital, automated workflows replace manual, email-based procedures and establish a scalable foundation for compliance and growth.

xSuite Example

A fast-growing telecommunications provider implemented SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition with a strong focus on invoice processing. Using xSuite's BTP-based workflow, invoices are processed digitally, transparently, and audit-ready from day one.

3.3 The Brave – A Direct Move from SAP ERP to the Public Cloud

The brave are SAP-experienced organizations that bypass the private cloud and move directly to SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition.

This approach requires a willingness to rethink established processes and accept standardization. Custom developments must be reassessed, and extensions must be rebuilt according to Clean Core principles.

Despite the challenge, the payoff is significant. Organizations avoid double transformations, gain early access to innovation, and establish a future ready ERP architecture.

xSuite Example

A global management consultancy moved directly from SAP ECC to the public cloud. Invoice processing was redesigned using the BTP-native xSuite solution, combining standardized global processes with flexible, Clean-Core-compliant extensions.



04

Lessons Learned from Public Cloud Projects

Public cloud ERP projects follow a fundamentally different logic than traditional SAP implementations. While classic programs focused on blueprinting and custom development, SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition is driven by standardization, early decision making, and architectural discipline. Success depends less on technical complexity and more on governance, alignment, and execution rigor.

Across industries and customer types, several recurring lessons consistently determine project outcomes.

4.1 A Completely Different Project Approach
SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition enforces a fit-to-standard approach. Predefined SAP best-practice processes serve as the baseline, and deviations must be clearly justified. Configuration replaces extensive customizing, and functional gaps are addressed via side-by-side extensions on SAP BTP.

This approach shortens project timelines but increases the importance of early decisions. Organizations that attempt to replicate legacy processes typically introduce friction and delay. Those that embrace standardization benefit from faster time to value and a more stable architecture.

For AP automation, this means establishing standardized posting logic in the ERP core while handling approvals, exceptions, and validations through BTP-based workflows.

4.2 Expectation Management Is Critical to Success

A key risk in public cloud projects is the assumption of functional parity with legacy SAP systems. The public cloud deliberately restricts certain capabilities to ensure stability, security, and continuous innovation.

Successful projects invest early in expectation alignment. Business and IT stakeholders must clearly understand which requirements are covered by standard processes and which need to be implemented via platform extensions. In finance, this translation is particularly important to avoid late stage rework and frustration.

Clear expectation management turns perceived limitations into architectural clarity.

4.3 Change Management is More Important Than Technology

Technically, SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition is a mature platform. The greater challenge lies in organizational change.

Standardized processes and higher automation levels alter established working patterns, especially in finance teams.

In accounts payable, roles shift from manual transaction handling toward exception management and rule definition. When supported by transparent workflows and clear responsibilities, this shift improves productivity and process control.

Projects that underestimate change management risk low adoption, even with a solid technical setup

4.4 The Role of IT Is Fundamentally Changing
In the public cloud, IT moves from system customization to platform orchestration. Core responsibilities include integration, API governance, security, and lifecycle management of BTP-based extensions.

This shift requires strong architectural governance. When executed well, it results in a cleaner, more resilient ERP landscape that supports innovation without recreating legacy complexity outside the core.



05

AP Automation in the Context of the Public Cloud

AP automation is one of the clearest examples of how organizations can realize tangible value from SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. The invoice management process combines high volumes, regulatory pressure, and well-defined workflows, making it both business-critical and highly suitable for automation.

5.1 Why Invoice Processing Is the Ideal Use Case
Invoice processing is repetitive, rules-based, and compliance-driven. At the same time, many organizations still rely on manual steps for capture, validation, and approval.

These characteristics make performance improvements highly measurable. Automation rates, processing times, exception volumes, and straight through posting can be tracked and optimized. In public cloud projects, AP automation frequently delivers fast and visible ROI.

It is therefore an effective entry point for broader finance automation initiatives

5.2 Clean Core & Automation – A Harmonious Interaction

Clean Core does not limit automation. It changes how automation is implemented. Instead of embedding logic in the ERP core, automation is moved to SAP BTP.

Workflows, validations, integrations with OCR or e-invoicing platforms, and advanced rule logic can be implemented side by side without affecting system stability or upgradeability. This decoupling enables continuous improvement and prepares organizations for future innovations.

5.3 Requirements of Accounts Payable
Accounts payable leaders focus on efficiency, transparency, and compliance. They expect fully digital, auditable processes with short cycle times and predictable outcomes.

Public cloud standardization supports these goals, provided that invoice automation solutions are designed specifically for SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition and follow Clean Core principles.

Usability and exception transparency are critical success factors for user acceptance.

5.4 Requirements of Business IT

Business IT evaluates AP automation solutions based on architectural fit. Key criteria include SAP certification, Clean Core compliance, security, and long-term maintainability.

BTP-native solutions that integrate seamlessly with SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition support IT governance and reduce long-term risk.

AI invoice processing often becomes a reference architecture for future cloud extensions.

5.5 Insights from xSuite Projects

Early public cloud projects show clear differences between solutions designed for the public cloud and those adapted from private or on-premises environments.

BTP-native, SAP-certified solutions enable faster implementations, higher automation rates, and more stable operations.

Organizations that adopt this approach early not only modernize invoice processing but also establish a scalable blueprint for further finance automation.

06

Conclusion

SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition represents the future of ERP. Whether as satellites, newbies, or the brave, organizations can benefit from standardized, cloud-native architectures.

Invoice processing stands out as a high-impact entry point. When implemented in a Clean-Core compliant, SAP-native way, it delivers fast value, strong compliance, and a scalable foundation for broader finance automation.

Organizations that act now position themselves for long-term competitiveness, continuous innovation, and a future-ready finance organization.

About the xSuite Group

xSuite is a software manufacturer of applications for document-based processes and provides standardized, digital solutions worldwide that enable simple, secure, and fast work. We focus mainly on the automation of important work processes in conjunction with end-to-end document management. Our core competence lies in accounts payable (AP) automation in SAP (including E-Invoicing), for leading companies worldwide, as well as for public clients. This is supplemented by applications for purchasing and order processes as well as archiving. Delivering everything from a single source (software components and services), xSuite solutions operate in the cloud, on-premises, or in hybrid scenarios. We are proud of the superior quality products we offer, proven by the SAP solutions and deployment environment certifications we regularly receive. With over 300,000 users benefitting from our solutions, xSuite processes more than 80 million documents per year in over 60 countries.