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SolMan In The Cloud?

The roadmap of SAP Solution Manager (SolMan) and SaaS solution SAP Cloud ALM poses more questions than it answers. One thing is certain: SAP Cloud ALM is not an adequate replacement for SolMan.

By Heiko Walter Bernhart, Itesys

SAP Solution Manager (SolMan) is the proven on-premises suite for centralized and integrated application lifecycle management (ALM) of SAP system landscapes (ERP or S/4). The ALM solution, which SAP touts as a single source of truth, offers a variety of scenarios that support the lifecycle of SAP application landscapes.

With SAP Cloud ALM, another ALM solution has been available for some time, which is readily labeled as the successor to SolMan. It is not, however, an adequate replacement, because this solution would have to offer just as comprehensive a range of functions as SolMan. At present, it is primarily suitable for companies that exclusively use cloud solutions from SAP (S/4 Hana Cloud, SuccessFactors or the SAP CX portfolio). Unlike SolMan, however, SAP Cloud ALM offers one key benefit: It can be put into operation quickly and delivers initial monitoring data within a few hours after implementation.

The tool of choice

However, SAP Cloud ALM cannot be used as a central, strategic ALM solution. It does not even enable lifecycle management of Business Suite, ERP, and non-SAP applications. It also lacks functions for IT service management (ITSM).

SAP Cloud ALM becomes the tool of choice under the following conditions: No other monitoring tool is in use, infrastructure and system monitoring is not required, and the built-in integration with the ServiceNow ITSM solution can be used. In practice, this is true for only a few companies.

The integration of third-party tools such as ServiceNow is necessary because the individual ALM tools are used in the overall context of enterprise IT, which usually consists of SAP and non-SAP software. The integration of such solutions prevents the creation of data silos and enables end-to-end reporting and automated support processes - a major advantage in times where qualified IT personnel is in short supply. Disadvantage: With ServiceNow - in contradiction to the „single source of truth" concept - an additional ALM tool is needed, for which license costs are also incurred.

It is not advisable to do without integration and instead send monitoring alerts to the e-mail inbox. This is because the support employee must bridge the gap between tools by first logging into Outlook and then manually processing each alert in a time-consuming process - goodbye, single source of truth. This can lead to delays, which can cause a small „ember" such as a performance problem to spread to a „large-scale fire", in the worst case to a failure of the SAP systems.

Beyond 2027

Of course, not everything that glitters is gold with SolMan, either. As of today, mainstream maintenance expires at the end of 2027. SAP customers who already use SolMan or are planning to use it are rightly asking themselves what will happen after that. Will they have to pay licensing costs? At present, SAP is also no longer planning a new release for SolMan (current version 7.2 with SPS 15) and thus no further development; customers will have to make do with SPS update packages.

All of this creates a great deal of uncertainty. SAP customers are therefore advised to seek the support of a partner who has experience and the necessary know-how regarding the use of SolMan as well as SAP Cloud ALM. Such a partner can provide them with competent advice on selecting the SAP ALM tool best suited to their requirements, so that they can benefit from this investment for a long time to come.

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The SAP Solution Manager – or SolMan, as it has been lovingly dubbed by the SAP community – is the central point for service and maintenance. In a hybrid IT architecture – on premises and on demand – maintenance becomes even more important.