Digital Access: It's Getting Serious

In February 2020, there was an announcement on the SAP Help portal:
From 2020 onward, Digital Access documents would be a focal point.
Which can only mean one thing: Hypercare audits start now!

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I n this case, caring is not what you want from your software vendor. In a recent announcement, SAP advises customers that indirect access will be a focal point in audits from now on, "The measurement includes all Abap-based productive and development systems that are listed in the enclosed SAP measurement plan. Depending on your licensed SAP products and metrics, more data can be requested. If the measurement results transmitted during the audit indicate indirect access, SAP will get in contact with you for clarification if necessary." Well, the team getting in contact with customers will probably be of the Global License Audit and Compliance (GLAC) variety if even so much as an activity check is triggered.

Now what?

As per its terms and conditions, SAP could request retroactive payments based on its price list if indirect access is indeed documented during an audit. Even current discounts pertaining to the Digital Access Adoption Model (up to 90 percent price reduction!) are then difficult to enforce. Your negotiating power in this situation is basically nonexistent. Once you have switched to Digital Access, there's no turning back. Once you have decided on the document-based licensing model (or once you were forced into it), there's no way of returning to other SAP licensing options. The Digital Access licensing model is therefore not a more customer-friendly solution to indirect access, but a way to capitalize on and monetize digital transformation.

It has gotten more difficult for SAP to justify licensing fees for indirect access. We at USU know that because we have actually been involved in numerous successful audit defenses concerning indirect access. Over the years, it has become hard to deny that with the rise of intelligent technologies like RPA, AI, and IoT, more connected systems instead of Named Users would access SAP systems. From practical experience with customers, we can now confirm that existing conforming scenarios can suddenly require a fee due to Digital Access.

However, there have also been cases in which Digital Access was actually the most cost-efficient option for customers. In our Digital Access analyses, the results varied widely on a case-by-case basis regardless of company size. It is therefore crucial that your analysis to identify the right solution for your company is thorough. And, if you were wondering: Now is definitely the right time to act.

New unannounced reports

Up until now, SAP also included any follow-up documents – meaning non-chargeable repetitions of already counted documents - in its estimations. The website help.sap.com documents this restriction, "Follow-up documents are not automatically excluded from estimations. This must happen manually once the reports have been finalized."

Secretly, without any announcements, SAP changed its estimation notes and reports. For next-generation ERP solution S/4 Hana and its predecessor ECC, there are new versions of the notes and reports in question available - under a new name, of course.

Previous estimation notes and reports have naturally been classified as out of date because they have been replaced by new ones. At least for finance, some of the previously mentioned follow-up documents are now excluded from estimations, which has generally reduced the number of counted documents in finance by 60 percent on average. While this is a good start, we think that there is more to be done. However, you need to act. Analyze your indirect access and Digital Access before SAP does.

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