Accelerated SAP Implementations

> I once put instant coffee in a microwave and almost went back in time.
> Steven Wright.

In 1995, the drums of the North American press began to pound out an impatient rhythm: SAP takes an eternity to implement. In 1996, that pounding turned to a steady, *noisy* beat and, in the spring of 1997, SAP America unveiled its new methodology for implementing R/3. It was called Accelerated SAP or ASAP for short. After myriad improvements to this methodology in the intervening ten years, it is now called ASAP Focus.

ASAP Focus, to its credit, has a rational AS-IS phase and there is a treasure trove of tools that *will* help you to speed up the process, such as a pre-canned project plan, an exhaustive inventory of business processes (related to SAP module chains), and a large number of template forms and procedures. Further, ASAP is built as a Microsoft Office™ kit, including Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, MS Project plans, and PowerPoint slide shows. It is possible to tweak the method by either including other documents or revising those that are offered to suit your needs and context.

Once this methodology was released, consulting firms immediately raced to complete implementations faster and faster and the marketing world was dotted with ads and announcements like "Roadrunner Corporation Completes SAP Implementation During Long Lunch Break!." The five basic steps are:

1. Project Preparation
2. Business Blueprint
3. Realization
4. Final Preparation
5. Go-Live

The chart below provides a thumbnail estimate of the percentage of effort required for each phase.

Phase	Activity	% of Effort
Project Preparation	Scoping, staffing, team training, process fit	10%
Blueprinting	Enterprise modeling/business process design	25%
Realization	Configuration & customization / interfacing	35%
Final Preparation	Data migration, end user training	25%
Go Live	Cut-over and support	5%
		100%

Project elements that will accelerate an implementation:

1 Visible, measurable criteria for success
2 Mastery of scope
3 Transfer of SAP knowledge from consultant to client
4 ASAP - for its accelerator tools.
5 Knowledgeable management commitment

Note that 60% of the project is devoted to blueprinting and realization. In the blueprinting phase, a client and systems integrator collaborate to design the over-all enterprise model and then the business processes that will address that model. In the course of this work, there is usually a lot of debate between various client members as to the process design. These debates tend to include arguments such as "that's not how we do it here" answered with "but this is how we should be doing

it."

Clients who accept new business processes based on best industry practices can avoid these costly arguments and by consequence vastly reduce blueprinting. When best practices are adopted, configuration is also reduced since the best practice processes are already configured.

Consider the following scenario in which a firm largely adopts best practices but still has some tweaking:

Phase	Standard Cost	Accelerated Cost	Savings
Project Preparation	$50,000	$100,000	-$50,000
Blueprinting	$125,000	$50,000	$75,000
Realization	$175,000	$80,000	$95,000
Final Preparation	$125,000	$125,000	$0
Go Live	$25,000	$25,000	$0
	$500,000	$380,000	$120,000

Such adoption is usually far easier for small and medium enterprises and thus fully accelerated implementations occur more often in that arena.

In such a scenario, project preparation is more costly due to the process validation required to identify which processes can be fully adopted and which will require some process change.

By consequence, blueprinting costs are vastly reduced as are configuration costs since the best practice processes are pre-configured.

The result is a cost savings of 24% with a similar compression in the time to Go-Live.

In essence, the greater the adoption of best practices, the higher the savings. In many, many cases, clients have no blueprinting costs at all.

Says Mark Dendinger of VSS: "The reduction of blueprinting gives impetus to an implementation project. Clients love to see fast results from pre-configured business processes and the acceleration improves team morale."

You may ask, "Where do these best practices come from?" The answer is that they are culled from more than 30,000 clients across seventy industries. In other words, the trailblazing has long since been accomplished, so why would your firm feel the urge to get out machetes to hack new trails?

The bottom line is that adapting to best practices is not a "one size fits all" proposition but a "one way best fits most" proposition.

Benefit	Enabler
Reduced time & cost	Mastery of scope, the deployment of accelerators, and a reduction of business process design
Reduced disruption to the client's existing operations	Less client involvement in implementation and shorter duration of disruption.
Adherence to best practices	More disciplined adoption of best practices with less latitude for business process customization

SAP provides a frequently-updated chart regarding implementation duration. The most recent chart claims that 61% of all implementations are completed in less than 9 months with the majority of implementations for firms with <$200M in revenues being six months or less.

An SAP solution implemented with the SAP ASAP Focus methodology includes:

- A roadmap defining the shortest route to implementing a pre-defined solution.
- Pre-tested processes for specific business activities data conversion tools that allow the project team to validate the solution with your data.
- Ready-made documentation covering business processes and configuration. This documentation supports organizational change management efforts.
- Predefined reports, print forms, authorization roles, test scenarios, and a variety of templates that all help to accelerate your progress.

It is essential not to lose sight of the fact that the implementation should yield measurable business benefit and readers are strongly advised to precede any such implementation with a Value Engineering exercise that will help to isolate and quantify potential improvements in key performance indicators.

In past years, too many clients opted for accelerated implementations that, quite simply, skipped over organizational change management, foreshortened user training and other knowledge transfer, and raced through data migration with insufficient data cleansing...only to find their time and cost savings eroded by a faulty go-live.

In "SAP by the Numbers", Paul Reynolds presents findings from Performance Monitor's 2007 study of 301 SAP projects which included an inventory of the problems that arose in the course of those projects.

While four of the top six problems relate to the project at hand, the other two "insufficient knowledge transfer' and 'insufficient post-implementation planning,' have long-lasting consequences.

Thus, while this chapter provides an outline as to how an initial implementation will take place, the next chapter provides guidance in regard to what is in store after go-live.