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RISE with SAP: The fast-track to intelligent supply chains

How companies in the Retail, CPG and Manufacturing industries accelerating essential AI-enabled supply chain modernisation with SAP and Cognizant

RISE WITH SAP | Validated Partner

Executive summary

The supply chain landscape is experiencing rapid disruption. Geopolitical shifts, rising customer expectations, and sustainability pressures demand a fundamental shift from traditional, siloed operations to AI-powered, cloud-enabled, data-driven supply chains.

These modernised supply chains will unlock crucial benefits – from enhanced resilience to increased agility, higher efficiency and improved compliance capabilities. But before these benefits can be realised, a major challenge must be overcome. Many organisations continue to be constrained by legacy ERP systems, fragmented data landscapes, and lack of real-time insights – all of which impede their ability to adapt.

To overcome these constraints, what's needed is a structured pathway to supply chain modernisation and business transformation. In combination with AI-driven analytics and cloud-based data platforms, this is what RISE with SAP and LEAP with Cognizant provides.

Top priority for supply chains? Modernisation

Confronted with the rapid pace of disruption – from geopolitical shifts to rising consumer expectations, sustainability demands and the impacts of climate change – Retail and CPG enterprise supply chains are under significant pressure.

Disruption is not the only challenge. With costs and margins under intense scrutiny, inefficiencies in legacy systems need to be urgently addressed. That means tackling siloed operations, a lack of end-to-end visibility and reliance on manual processes.

For all these reasons, supply chain modernisation holds the key to competitiveness for Retail and CPG companies. The challenge? In most organisations, this will call for a complex transformation that requires expertise beyond the capabilities of individual team members.

Our experience shows that achieving efficiency and marginal gains through coordinated actions can lead to significant results. With a modernised, integrated system at their core, supply chains will have the resilience and agility they need to adapt quickly to disruption, effectively manage inventory, and streamline warehouse processes – from receiving to shipping.

Business-drivers for supply chain modernisation

End-to-end visibility: Supporting real-time tracking of supply chain operations

Agility and resilience: Enabling a rapid response to disruptions through AI-driven insights

Data-driven decision-making: Harnessing predictive analytics for accurate demand forecasting and inventory optimisation

Cloud adoption and scalability: Implementing a flexible infrastructure to support business growth

Sustainability and compliance: Reducing carbon footprints and meeting regulatory requirements.

As well as improving on-time delivery, optimising shipping routes, and meeting sustainability goals, enterprise supply chains will be equipped to execute multiple actions efficiently, in sequence, to find marginal gains that, when repeated in continuous cycles, lead to exceptional outcomes.

Having evolved from analytical tool to indispensable co-worker, AI has a pivotal role to play in unlocking all these benefits. In this whitepaper, we explore how RISE with SAP, in partnership with Cognizant, helps organisations to fast-track their supply chain journeys to AI-powered, cloud-enabled, data-driven outperformance.

Moving beyond legacy ERP to an intelligent, connected supply chain

Organisations' supply chain modernisation initiatives can often be held back by fragmented systems, with limited integration, low visibility and on-premises ERP constraints. Using cloud solutions and services that simplify migration to SAP S/4HANA Cloud, Cognizant and RISE with SAP enable companies in the retail and CPG industries to overcome these challenges, delivering benefits including reduced total cost of ownership, improved innovation, and increased operational flexibility.

Since its launch in January 2021, RISE with SAP has helped companies in various industries to navigate significant global disruption by transitioning to cloud ERP. Most recently, this has been an essential enabler for the drive by companies to adopt AI and GenAI to better manage supply chain risks and support participation in partner ecosystems.

RISE with SAP enables companies to fast-track and facilitate adoption of these technologies with low-code development, advanced sustainability features, and AI capabilities like Joule, an integrated AI copilot that, by personalising user interactions, enhances productivity and democratises enterprise-wide AI access (see sidebar).

Meet Joule, the AI copilot

Joule, SAP's AI copilot, helps to elevate outcomes for end-users and businesses by generating insights grounded in business data, enriched by business context, and tailored to each end-user's role. It quickly sorts through and contextualises data from multiple systems to surface smarter insights. This democratisation of AI capabilities is a game-changer for businesses of all sizes.

As a Global Strategic Services Partner to SAP[1] and recognised global leader among RISE with SAP implementation partners[2], Cognizant partners with customers across industries (including the CPG and Retail sectors) in their journeys to cloud ERP. Drawing on industry best practices and preconfigured accelerators for S/4HANA, our solutions accelerate the move to RISE with SAP by up to 30%.

1   https://www.cognizant.com/us/en/services/enterprise-platform-services/sap-solutions
2   https://www.cognizant.com/us/en/services/enterprise-platform-services/sap-solutions/rise-sap-capabilities

Powering data-driven decision-making – the key to intelligent supply chains

All business decisions need to be grounded in integrated, accurate and timely data. But this is particularly true for supply chain decision-making in Retail and CPG companies. For these organisations, competitiveness hinges on the ability to consistently anticipate and deliver on customer needs. And without connected processes powered by real-time customer and sales data, that's not possible.

Seamlessly connected processes are also key to enabling flexible, sustainable value chains and supporting the agility and future-readiness that are so key to adjusting rapidly to change, at scale.

Through SAP Business Data Cloud[3], RISE with SAP customers can put in place the trusted data foundation they need to fast-track progress to these critical outcomes, with seamless access to mission-critical data from their ERPs and from third-party sources. This supercharges availability of impactful insights and supports more informed decision-making across the organisation.

This is backed by SAP Analytics Cloud for planning, which empowers supply chain leaders to enhance their financial planning, budgeting, and forecasting using data drawn from the entire system landscape

Also included in the RISE with SAP premium edition, SAP Business Network supports streamlined supplier collaboration by creating a networked ERP with a supplier portal. This helps supply chain teams to simplify spend compliance, improve cash flow, and drive business value by facilitating closer collaboration with suppliers and automating procurement and invoice transactions.

To help companies access all these features and benefit from them, Cognizant offers a personalised onboarding process that ensures a smooth transition to cloud ERP.

How RISE with SAP helps companies address supply chain challenges

- Accelerating and de-risking cloud migration to boost flexibility

- Providing a scalable digital core through SAP S/4HANA

- Enabling a truly connected enterprise built on the SAP Business Technology Platform (BTP)

- Supporting AI-driven analytics via SAP Analytics Cloud (SAC) and Datasphere

- Powering end-to-end visibility through SAP Digital Supply Chain solutions

- Enabling sustainable and resilient operations with integrated ESG compliance tools

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3   https://news.sap.com/2025/02/sap-business-data-cloud-databricks-turbocharge-business-ai/

RISE with SAP – advantages for supply chain

RISE with SAP enhances supply chain agility, automation, and cost efficiency. Specific advantages and their impacts on the supply chain are summarised in the table below.

RISE with SAP advantages	Impacts on a modern supply chain
Simplified adoption: RISE with SAP offers a simplified and integrated approach to cloud adoption. It provides a comprehensive package that includes infrastructure, software licenses, and managed services, reducing the complexity of implementation and ongoing management.	Reduces IT complexity and enhances resilience, but may restrict businesses relying on specialised infrastructure (e.g. edge computing for manufacturing).
Scalability and flexibility: Selected infrastructure resources are scalable and flexible depending on business needs and availability of systems. Enables seamless integration with other cloud services and applications (like BTP), providing the agility needed to underpin future business growth.	Improves supply chain responsiveness and demand-driven execution, but companies with time-sensitive scaling requirements may face delays.
Automation and innovation: Advanced technologies like AI, ML and data analytics on cloud provide enhanced agility for automation and innovation, with the business empowered to make data-driven decisions and drive digital transformation.	Enhances real-time decision-making, stock optimisation, and logistics efficiency, but businesses needing specialised AI-driven insights may face limitations.
Lower TCO: Subscription-based services and pricing model help to eliminate additional infrastructure costs and predictable operational expenses. Costs and manual effort associated with system maintenance activities (upgrades, updates etc) are reduced, resulting in lower TCO over time.	Provides financial flexibility for IT investments in robotics, IoT, and advanced analytics, but cost benefits depend on current cloud strategy.
Customisation & Clean Core constraints: Standardised processes improve system stability and long-term upgradeability.	Helps streamline supply chain operations by enforcing best practices, but may limit businesses with unique workflows like just-in-time production or SKU-intensive retail.
Interoperability: Seamless integration with SAP Business Technology Platform (BTP) and SAP-native applications.	Enhances end-to-end supply chain visibility within SAP, but requires additional work for companies with third-party logistics, legacy WMS, or specialised ERP extensions.
Vendor lock-in & infrastructure limitations: Simplifies vendor management with SAP as the primary cloud service provider.	Ensures consistency in supply chain data and processes but restricts multi-cloud strategies that could enhance resilience and performance.
Total Cost of Ownership (TCO): Reduces IT maintenance costs by offloading upgrades, patches, and security to SAP.	Frees up IT resources for innovation in logistics and production but may not justify migration for organisations already running SAP efficiently.

Making the strategic leap to an AI-powered, intelligent supply chain

Any enterprise transformation requires considerable investment – in financial expenditure, skills development, and change management. And the supply chain is no exception. In fact, supply chain modernisation can be especially challenging: the combination of high costs, complexity and legacy issues can wear down even the most robust and established enterprise.

This is why leveraging RISE with SAP can be such a game-changer, enabling competitive advantages that far outweigh the initial investment of funds and resources. Crucial to a successful implementation? Relying on experienced, multidisciplinary teams with proven field experience. Their exposure to and familiarity with numerous different scenarios and the application of established methodologies and frameworks not only minimises transformation risks, it also significantly enhances results.

The gateway to multi-agentic AI

Looking ahead, RISE with SAP will play a vital role by enabling organisations to harness the benefits for their supply chains of ongoing breakthroughs in AI. Bringing a whole new level of automation and efficiency, these are pushing the boundaries toward the development of autonomous supply chains that can benefit from the application of multi-agentic AI – advanced systems that act as independent 'agents' to solve problems or achieve specific goals, without human guidance.

RISE with SAP represents a vital strategic step for any enterprise seeking to integrate AI into mission-critical processes. These could be in procurement, where AI selects the most capable supplier to fulfil a given order while optimising for production lead times and desired inventory levels. Or it could be in transportation and logistics, where AI takes over selection of carriers for the transportation of raw materials, parts, assemblies, and finished goods – with the ability to change routing on the fly in response to unexpected events such as extreme weather, labour actions, and multiple other sources of supply chain disruptions.

Equipped for whatever lies ahead

Whatever your motivation for adopting RISE with SAP for supply chain modernisation, Cognizant is here to make your journey a successful one – preparing the enterprise for challenges in today's markets, as well as making it competitive, agile and equipped for whatever lies ahead.

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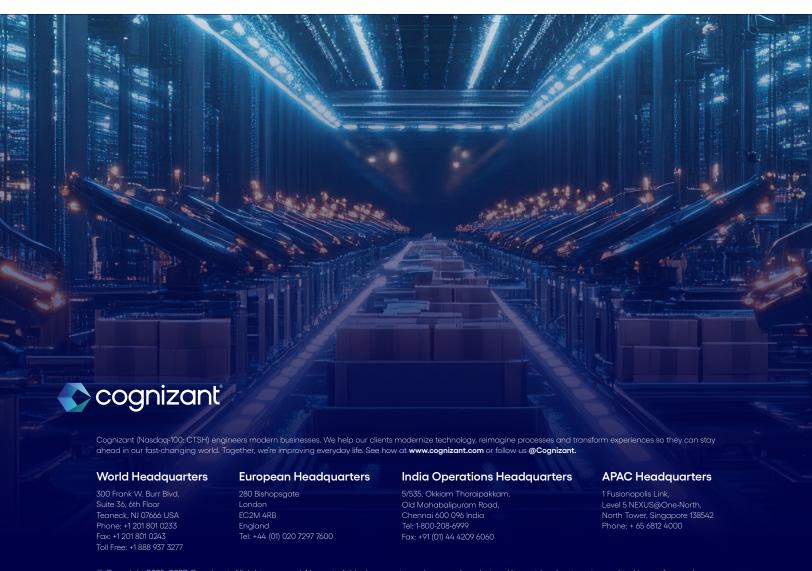Enterprise Platform Services,
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About SAP x Cognizant partnership

As a select SAP GSSP partner, Cognizant delivers innovative, tailored solutions to customers to help them accelerate their intelligent enterprise journey. Through our joint innovation and development programs with SAP, customers unlock significant business value and achieve their sustainable goals, so they can get ahead—and stay ahead. **Find out more**

RISE with SAP Validated Partner

Cognizant is recognized as a RISE with SAP Validated Partner for its expertise in RISE with SAP transformations, highlighting our commitment to accelerated cloud transformation, a structured approach with clear milestones, and innovation readiness. With deep industry knowledge, reduced project risks, and predictable timelines, we enable seamless SAP cloud adoption, risk-mitigated implementations, and access to SAP resources—helping clients unlock efficiencies, accelerate growth, and achieve high-quality transformation outcomes.

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Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) engineers modern businesses. We help our clients modernize technology, reimagine processes and transform experiences so they can stay ahead in our fast-changing world. Together, we're improving everyday life. See how at **www.cognizant.com** or follow us **@Cognizant.**

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