

RISE with SAP - and now?

Why automation of
SAP operations is
essential before, during,
and after transformation.

WHITE PAPER

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Introduction

RISE with SAP - a big step, but not a sure-fire success

You hear it in almost every customer conversation these days:
"We're going to the cloud with SAP. We're doing RISE."

SAP RISE was introduced with the goal of simplifying corporate IT: one invoice, one provider, one cloud ERP solution. Software, infrastructure, and managed services in a single package – a concept that initially met with great approval, especially among finance managers. For many companies, it sounds like the logical next step: moving away from their own infrastructure and toward modern, flexible, and future-proof operations in the cloud.

And indeed, for many, RISE with SAP is the next, necessary step in their business transformation. SAP makes an attractive promise with RISE: less operational effort, less responsibility, and lower costs. A "no-hassle package" that takes the work off your plate. But it's not that simple.

A great journey that takes years

In reality, the path to RISE is a mammoth project for many companies, one that can take years. From the decision and planning to the migration and adaptation of processes, a significant amount of time passes – and this time is anything but trivial. Experience has shown that implementation is associated with a number of challenges that companies should consider during the rollout. These range from questions of service quality and the role of internal IT teams to dealing with automation.

Objective of this white paper

Over the past few months, we've held numerous discussions with SAP Basis administrators, IT managers, and those currently planning or implementing RISE projects. The same key questions were repeatedly raised:

- Which tasks does SAP perform as standard and which require additional, chargeable services?
- Which activities does SAP perform independently and which continue to require the active participation of the customer?
- Does SAP bear ultimate responsibility for the standard services provided with regard to security and compliance aspects?
- How can the business case for RISE be reliably calculated?
- How will future IT operating processes change and will internal SAP Basis know-how still be required?

These recurring questions make it clear: Transparency and standardization are essential for companies to operate SAP RISE efficiently and securely.

SAP RISE aims to simplify enterprise IT. However, its practical implementation reveals new challenges, including limited flexibility, complex service agreements, extended implementation times, and the risk of knowledge loss within the organization.

These challenges do not necessarily have to lead to disadvantages - provided that automation is consistently anchored as a central element of the operational strategy.

What this white paper is about

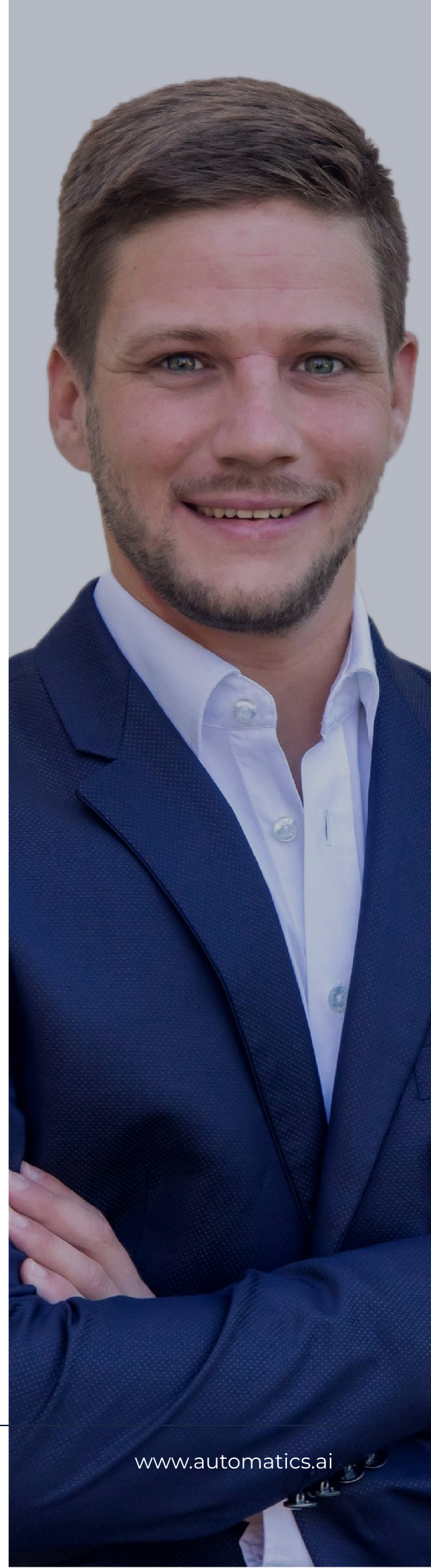
With this white paper, we would like to contribute to answering precisely these questions and focusing on the essentials:

- What tasks does SAP actually perform in RISE?
- Which tasks remain with the SAP Basis team?
- Why is automation of SAP basic operations more important than ever?
- How does automation help free up resources for the RISE transformation?
- Why does automation remain essential even after migration?

Who is this white paper for?

This white paper is intended for:

- SAP Basis administrators and SAP Basis managers,
- Responsible for the technical operation of SAP systems,
- IT managers and decision-makers who are about to decide on RISE or are already in the middle of implementation and want to know what it really means for their daily work.





The role of SAP Basis operations today

Indispensable and often underestimated

Discussions about SAP usually focus on applications, business processes, and departments. What is often overlooked is that for these processes to function smoothly, a stable and secure technical foundation is needed. This is precisely where SAP Basis Operations comes into play – supported by specialized administrators who ensure continuity in the background.

These teams ensure that SAP systems remain available, performant, secure, and up-to-date – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Without their work, processing orders, preparing payroll, or procuring materials would not be possible.

Tasks and areas of responsibility of SAP Basis Operations

SAP Basis Operations ensures the technical functionality and stability of the SAP landscape, thus preventing downtimes in specialized processes. The tasks can be divided into central areas of responsibility:

Installations & Upgrades

- Installation of SAP systems and components
- Installing releases, support packages, enhancement packages

Backup & Recovery

- Ensuring data backup & recovery
- Disaster Recovery Plans & Tests

Interfaces & Integration

- Setting up and monitoring interfaces (RFC, IDoc, web services)
- Controller of background jobs & monitoring of data flows

Performance & Monitoring

- Analysis & optimization of system performance
- Capacity planning & resource management
- Eliminating performance bottlenecks

Security & Compliance

- User and authorization management
- Management & renewal of certificates
- Installing security patches
- Monitoring access rights & audit preparation

Housekeeping & Maintenance

- Cleanup of logs, temptables & jobs
- Client management
- Archiving of data

Additional areas of responsibility

In addition to these core tasks, basic teams in many companies take on additional activities, including:

- Planning and implementation of migration projects
- Operation of hybrid scenarios with on-premises and cloud environments
- Coordination of external service providers
- Creation and maintenance of emergency plans and organization of on-call services

Challenge: Manual processes

All of these activities are business-critical, but at the same time time-consuming, repetitive, and prone to human error, especially when performed largely manually. This situation clearly demonstrates the great potential for automation in SAP basic operations.

RISE with SAP - what's changing?

At first glance: the great relief

SAP RISE was introduced with the aim of simplifying corporate IT through an integrated package of software, infrastructure, and managed services. The model—one invoice, one provider, one central cloud ERP solution—was based on this. Many companies expected this to realize the typical benefits of modern cloud approaches, namely greater agility, greater flexibility, and better scalability of their IT landscapes.

If you listen to SAP, it sounds so simple:

With RISE with SAP, companies hand over the technical operation of their SAP systems to SAP, save resources, no longer have to worry about infrastructure and maintenance, and can instead concentrate on their business processes.

And yes - that's right.

RISE significantly reduces the workload in some areas that previously consumed a lot of your IT teams' time and energy.

For example:

- Hosting of the systems (including infrastructure & hardware)
- Installation and maintenance of the database platform
- Monitoring of physical servers & storage
- Installing support packages for the operating system
- Ensuring the availability of the cloud platform

That sounds like a huge relief - and it is.

At second glance: the open questions

But the closer you look, the clearer it becomes:

RISE provides relief in certain areas, but it does not take responsibility for everything.

And this is exactly where the challenges begin for many companies:

Should companies considering SAP RISE truly view the implementation as a plug-and-play project, or does it require a clear allocation of roles and responsibilities, the definition of realistic service levels, and a consistent focus on automation?

It's important to note that, depending on the chosen edition and the individually selected options, certain responsibilities remain with the customer. The document "RISE with SAP S/4HANA Cloud, private edition and SAP ERP, PCE – Roles and Responsibilities" clearly defines which services are included as standard, which are excluded, and which can be provided by the customer themselves as optional or additional services or alternatively by SAP.

In theory, a RACI matrix is a valuable tool for clarifying roles and responsibilities, but in day-to-day business, it often reaches its limits. Particularly in critical operational situations, it becomes apparent that rigid responsibilities are difficult to consistently adhere to: decisions must be made quickly, escalation paths are shortened, and employees often take on tasks outside their defined role to prevent downtime. In addition, the ongoing maintenance and adaptation of the matrix to dynamic changes in the company is time-consuming, so in practice it often falls short of actual processes.

How can existing specialists be effectively integrated, and what role should external partners with experience in integration and automation play? Can they help evaluate contract and operational details, identify potential hurdles early on, and develop practical solutions?

In our discussions with SAP Basis managers, the same questions arise again and again:

- “How do I access all relevant information without having to submit additional requests and evaluate numerous PDF reports?”
- “Who analyzes and deploys the security patches (security notes) for the various SAP components?”
- “Who takes care of which certificates (server/client) and their renewal and distribution in all affected systems?”
- “Who ensures that interfaces and connections to critical peripheral systems run smoothly?”
- “Who analyzes availability, change, audit logs, and security events and consolidates them in a SIEM solution?”
- “Who ensures that we are auditable?”

These are not theoretical questions – these are precisely the issues that are on the grassroots teams' desks every day.

What does SAP do with RISE and what does it not do

SAP does not implement all patches

RISE with SAP inspires many with its all-from-one-source principle, but SAP's offering conceals significant questions of responsibility.

Despite the high level of standardization, customers have to deal with numerous additional tasks and the associated costs.

While SAP ensures smooth basic operations and implements system-critical patches, companies themselves are responsible for evaluating and installing a large number of less critical patches and updates, or for having SAP install them, depending on whether OS-level access is required in the individual case or not.

Dealing with security notes

Another critical aspect is security management.

Although SAP provides security notes, companies are largely responsible for evaluating the appropriate measures, making decisions, and implementing them in a timely manner.

In contrast to the previous operating model, where regular quality meetings are standard, such regular check-ups are missing at RISE.

Companies are therefore required to proactively address potential system issues. This requires specialized expertise, often involving additional staff or external partners.

Handling certificates

SAP is responsible for the security of SAP systems and SaaS applications as well as the underlying platform infrastructure within RISE.

This also includes the management of SSL certificates for SAP-owned domains, such as hec.ondemand.com. This service is provided by SAP Enterprise Cloud Services (ECS) as part of the standard security service.

Once customers use their own domains with RISE, the responsibility for procuring, providing, and renewing SSL certificates lies with the customers.

This particularly applies to external client certificates, which are required for user authentication, secure access to external systems via API, or integrations with third-party solutions.

Respond and Recover

In the area of threat detection, it is clear that SAP systems are often not sufficiently integrated into the overall cybersecurity processes.

SAP logs are rarely integrated into SIEM solutions, and threats from the SAP system itself often go undetected. A bidirectional flow of information is necessary: While Security Operations Centers (SOCs) detect general attacks, SAP Basis administrators provide the necessary expertise on SAP-specific threats.

For response and recovery, the expertise of SAP Basis teams is critical to ensure that countermeasures do not cause more damage than the incident itself.

Traditional SOC measures such as reinstalling systems are insufficient here, as attackers can operate deep within the SAP system using privileged accounts. Only through coordinated collaboration between SOC and SAP Basis teams can security incidents be effectively managed and business impact minimized.

A dangerous mistake

“We’re going with RISE – so we don’t have to worry about anything anymore.”

We hear this sentence often, and it is simply wrong.

Of course, RISE relieves you of some of the burden, but it doesn't relieve you of responsibility for the things that only you as a customer can manage - especially where your company's requirements are unique: users, processes, interfaces, authorizations, compliance.

Approximately 636 of the 983 tasks from the Roles and Responsibilities Matrix must be requested by the customer via a service request, meaning that approximately 64% of all activities - regardless of whether they are an additional chargeable service or not - must be proactively administered and requested in detail by the customer.

And this is exactly where gaps often arise.

We see it again and again: Customers who are already on RISE are faced with the same questions as before – only under the pressure of the complexity increased by the hybrid landscape (RISE + on-premises + cloud services).

Why is automation more important than ever

The limits of manual operation

There are still some SAP Basis managers who are convinced they can continue to handle the increasing demands manually. This attitude may be understandable given the past, but in today's reality, it clearly reaches its limits.

SAP landscapes have grown significantly in recent years, complexity has multiplied, and expectations for availability and security are higher than ever. At the same time, companies are under intense cost pressure and have limited human resources.

Manual operation under these conditions means:

- High susceptibility to errors
- Permanent overload of teams
- Lack of capacity for strategic projects
- Increased risk in audits and compliance checks

Especially in the context of RISE, hybrid scenarios, and tightened security requirements, it is clear: a purely manual approach is no longer a viable option.

Increased efficiency through time savings and resource conservation

Today, the majority of SAP Basis teams' working time is taken up by recurring routine tasks, such as:

- Monitoring system configurations, interfaces and logs
- Installing patches and security notes
- Management of clients and users
- Renewal and distribution of certificates

These activities are continually repetitive and tie up valuable resources that are urgently needed for strategic projects. With consistent automation, these processes can run reliably in the background. Tasks that previously took hours or days can now be completed in minutes, error-free and reproducibly.

Quality assurance through **standardization**

Every manual intervention carries the risk of errors - be it an overlooked certificate, a forgotten background job, or a typo during a cleanup.

The consequences range from system failures and security incidents to massive performance problems.

Automation sustainably reduces these risks and brings significant benefits:

- **Standardization** of processes
- **Reproducibility** of results
- **Traceability** for audits and compliance

In short: those who automate build quality directly into the processes - instead of having to check it afterwards.

Reliably ensure **security and compliance**

Companies are increasingly under pressure from regulatory requirements and internal audits. These require that SAP systems be operated not only stably, but also securely and in a way that complies with audit requirements. Manual operation has clear limitations in this regard: processes are often neither transparently documented nor consistently traceable.

Automation as the key **to audit readiness**

Automation allows security and compliance-relevant requirements to be systematically covered:

Traceability:

All processes and changes are automatically logged and can be audited at any time.

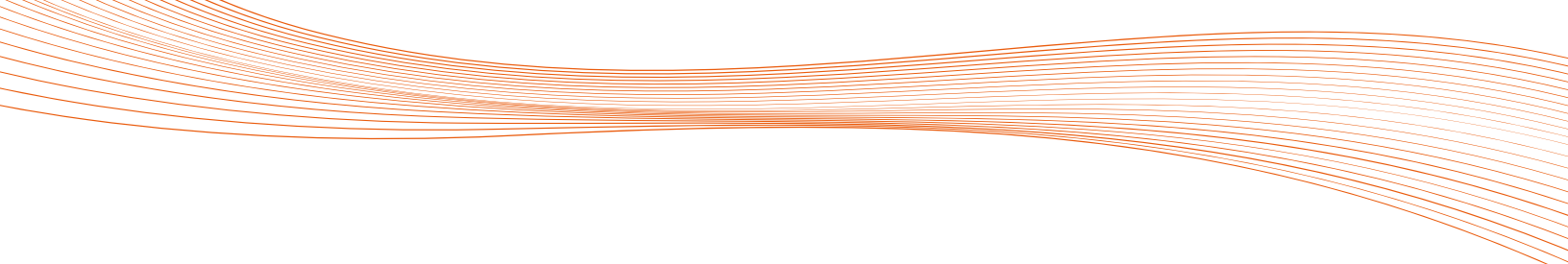
Currentness:

Security patches, authorizations, and certificates are implemented reliably and on time.

Continuity:

Logs, housekeeping tasks and maintenance processes run automatically and without manual intervention.

The result: Companies are permanently audit-ready while minimizing the risk of security or compliance violations.



Preparing and supporting the RISE transformation

Even though RISE with SAP takes on numerous tasks, the transformation itself is like a marathon. Careful preparation is crucial for success. Automation plays a key role, making your system landscape "RISE-ready" and supporting a smooth migration.

Specifically, this means:

- Complete transparency across the entire system landscape, including BTP, data sets and application interfaces
- Automated and documented processes that can be transferred directly to RISE
- Minimizing sources of error through standardization
- Clear and audit-proof documentation
- Freeing up resources needed for the actual migration

Furthermore, even after go-live, numerous critical tasks remain the responsibility of the customer organization. These activities can be automated in advance and seamlessly transferred to RISE operations.

Scalability and future-proofing

SAP landscapes are constantly evolving – through new applications, SaaS solutions, interfaces, and hybrid scenarios. Processes that seem manageable manually today will become a risk factor tomorrow.

Automation offers a decisive advantage here: It enables processes to be flexibly adapted to new requirements – without having to factor in additional personnel resources or regular overtime.

Best practices for the path to RISE

The actual migration phase is only one part of the transformation process. Many companies underestimate the effort involved in the preparation phase, as well as the responsibility that remains with their own team during and after the RISE implementation.

Our project experience shows that the most successful companies take a structured, step-by-step approach with a clear focus. This leads us to five key best practices that have proven successful in practice.

Five key areas of action for a successful RISE transformation

1. Clean current state

Before you begin your journey to RISE, you need clarity about your current situation. Many SAP landscapes have evolved over the years—with legacy issues, redundant clients, or overdue patches.

Recommendation:

Conduct a complete inventory, clean up logs and database objects, deactivate obsolete systems, and standardize processes. A clean current state reduces risks and accelerates future value.

2. Automate routines

Your core teams are already heavily utilized. Adding the migration and subsequent operations to the mix manually is a recipe for overload and errors.

Recommendation:

Automate recurring tasks like job monitoring, housekeeping, certificate management, interface monitoring, authorization management, and patching. This reduces the workload on teams, saves time, and increases operational reliability.

3. Clarify responsibilities

A common problem with RISE: confusion about responsibilities. Who is responsible for certificates, interfaces, or faulty jobs?

Recommendation:

Clearly define responsibilities, for example, using a RACI matrix. Coordinate with SAP early on regarding scopes of services and communicate internally which tasks remain with your own team. This will avoid misunderstandings later on.

4. Ensure audit and compliance readiness

Even under RISE, your company remains responsible for regulatory requirements. Your team must be able to demonstrate at all times that systems are operated securely and processes are documented.

Recommendation:

Leverage automation with integrated logging and reporting. Create a readily available audit trail and firmly embed compliance requirements in your operational processes.

5. Free up resources for the future

SAP operations are not an end in themselves. Your team should have freedom to work on projects that support innovation, optimization, and the business units.

Recommendation:

Use automation to eliminate monotonous routines, reduce errors, and ease workload, freeing up valuable time for strategic initiatives.

Conclusion

Set the right course now

RISE with SAP is far more than a technical project. It's a strategic initiative with significant implications: the opportunity to modernize SAP landscapes, streamline processes, and sustainably align IT for the years to come.

But this transformation isn't a foregone conclusion, and it's not a path SAP can take on your behalf alone. RISE relieves many areas of responsibility, but it doesn't relieve companies of responsibility. Your SAP Basis team remains the heart of your systems. Individual requirements, compliance specifications, performance issues, and interfaces will continue to be your responsibility, with the only difference being that expectations for stability, efficiency, and traceability will continue to rise.

Automation as **key**

The most effective countermeasure is obvious: automation.

It's not an additional tool, but a strategic safeguard against overload, errors, and downtime. Automated processes create transparency, reduce risks, and free up teams to focus on value-added tasks.

Automation is therefore not just an efficiency boost, but an investment in the future viability of your SAP organization. Every hour automated today directly contributes to the ability to act tomorrow.

The mandate for action

The responsibility lies with you: Set up your SAP Basis team so that it can master today's challenges, confidently manage the transformation to RISE, and be sustainably positioned for the future.

The future doesn't wait.
Neither does your SAP
landscape.

We are ready,
if you are.

automatics
SmartSecOps Platform

Automated.
Protected.
Smart.