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The Role of SAP Business Technology Platform in the Intelligent Enterprise: Developing and Applying an Intelligent Enterprise Capability Framework

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ABSTRACT

The rapid digitalization of enterprises has increased organizational dependence on cloud applications, distributed data, application programming interfaces, automation, and artificial intelligence. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this transition but also intensified a persistent architectural problem: digital capabilities frequently become fragmented when introduced as independent technologies. The challenge facing enterprises today is therefore shifting from digital adoption toward the integration and coordination of digital capabilities. This study examines SAP Business Technology Platform (SAP BTP) as an architectural foundation for the Intelligent Enterprise. Drawing on research in digital transformation, enterprise architecture, and digital-platform ecosystems, the paper proposes the Intelligent Enterprise Capability Framework (IECF). The framework evaluates five enterprise capabilities: Connectivity, Adaptability, Context, Execution, and Intelligence. To make the framework evaluative rather than purely descriptive, each capability is assessed using three predefined criteria: implementation maturity, breadth of deployment, and strength of documented outcome evidence. The framework is applied to three evidence sets: an SAP-sponsored IDC study of nine SAP BTP customers, Maersk's documented BTP implementation, and Hitachi High-Tech's side-by-side extensibility program. The resulting overall IECF scores are 3.93 for the IDC sample, 3.67 for Maersk, and 3.73 for Hitachi High-Tech on a five-point scale. All three exceed the study's exploratory threshold of 3.5 for meaningful demonstrated platform value, producing an aggregate score of 3.78. The analysis further shows that platform value is realized through different capability profiles: IDC demonstrates stronger Context and Execution outcomes, Maersk demonstrates strong cross-system Connectivity and capability coordination, while Hitachi High-Tech demonstrates particularly strong Adaptability and ERP-core decoupling. The study contributes a capability-centric method for evaluating enterprise technology platforms and argues that an Intelligent Enterprise should be understood not as the implementation of an individual technology but as an architectural capability created when systems, data, applications, automation, and intelligence operate together.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Enterprise information systems are undergoing a fundamental transition. Enterprise resource planning systems remain essential for finance, procurement, manufacturing, sales, human resources, and supply-chain execution. However, contemporary enterprise landscapes increasingly combine ERP with SaaS applications, custom cloud applications, APIs, data platforms, automation technologies, analytics, and artificial intelligence.

Digital transformation therefore extends beyond implementing individual technologies. [1] describes digital transformation as a process through which digital technologies trigger organizational responses and changes in value creation. [2] similarly distinguish digital transformation from basic digitization and digitalization and emphasize the organizational capabilities required to progress toward wider transformation.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated this process. [3] based on seven case studies, found that firms implemented digital technologies at emergency speed, often faster than organizational structures and processes could adapt. The resulting post-pandemic challenge is therefore not simply to deploy additional technology, but to convert accelerated digitalization into sustainable transformation.

Enterprise architecture becomes particularly important under these conditions. [4] using survey evidence from 414 senior practitioners, managers, and executives, found that enterprise-architecture-driven dynamic capabilities contribute to firms' ability to manage digital technologies and generate business value. [5] similarly identify enterprise architecture management as an important mechanism for supporting complex digital transformation.

This challenge is particularly visible in ERP-centric enterprises. An organization may simultaneously operate SAP S/4HANA or SAP ERP, cloud HR and procurement systems, CRM platforms, logistics applications, analytical environments, hyperscaler services, custom solutions, and legacy applications. Each may address a legitimate business requirement, yet their independent adoption can produce duplicated integration, inconsistent data, fragmented automation, and tightly coupled custom development.

Digital-platform theory provides a useful lens for understanding this problem. [6] conceptualizes technological platforms as relatively stable architectural foundations surrounded by complementary innovation. [7] further show that platform value emerges from interactions among platform owners, complementors, users, governance mechanisms, and technological components.

SAP Business Technology Platform represents one enterprise implementation of this platform model. SAP's cloud-platform strategy has evolved over approximately a decade, from SAP HANA Cloud Platform to SAP Cloud Platform and subsequently SAP BTP. The significance of this evolution for the present study is not the sequence of product names, but the widening scope of the platform. By today, BTP combines application development and extensibility, integration, data and analytics, automation, and AI capabilities. SAP Build was launched in November 2022, SAP Datasphere was introduced in March 2023, and SAP announced Joule in September 2023. AI and machine-learning capabilities were already part of SAP's platform strategy before the current generative-AI wave.

Central research question: How can SAP BTP support the transition from a fragmented ERP-centric technology landscape toward an integrated and intelligent enterprise?

Supporting questions:

a. RQ1: Which platform capabilities are required to support an Intelligent Enterprise architecture?
b. RQ2: How can those capabilities be evaluated consistently rather than described only qualitatively?
c. RQ3: What does the available enterprise evidence indicate about the value generated through SAP BTP?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

Research on digital transformation increasingly emphasizes that transformation involves more than technology acquisition. [8] describe digital transformation as an ongoing process of strategic renewal requiring dynamic capabilities and organizational agility. [9], based on research involving 25 established companies, distinguish between an operational backbone, which provides reliable enterprise transactions, and a digital services platform, which enables faster digital innovation.

This distinction is particularly relevant to SAP-centric landscapes. ERP can provide the stable operational backbone, while a surrounding platform can support cross-system integration, differentiated applications, data access, automation, and emerging intelligent services.

Platform research provides a complementary theoretical foundation. [6] emphasizes modularity between technological cores and complementary innovation, while [10] argue that digital platforms must be understood simultaneously as technological architectures and sociotechnical ecosystems.

Research specifically examining SAP's earlier cloud platform also exists. [11] conducted a longitudinal study of SAP's cloud-platform initiative and identified capabilities such as cloud-based platformization, open IT-landscape management, ecosystem orchestration, platform evangelism, and platform co-selling.

However, these studies primarily address how a platform owner establishes and governs a platform ecosystem. Enterprise architects face a different question: how does an adopting enterprise combine platform capabilities to produce measurable operational and architectural value?

Practitioner descriptions of SAP BTP frequently present Integration, Application Development, Analytics, Automation, and AI as separate capability categories. A catalogue of services, however, does not explain why their combination should lead to a different enterprise architecture or how the value of those capabilities should be evaluated.

This study addresses that gap in two ways. First, it proposes the Intelligent Enterprise Capability Framework (IECF), translating technology mechanisms into five enterprise capabilities and associated observable outcomes. Second, it introduces a transparent scoring method through which the strength of demonstrated platform value can be compared across different implementations.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a conceptual research design supported by structured secondary-evidence evaluation. The theoretical foundation draws from peer-reviewed research on digital transformation, enterprise architecture, digital platforms, and enterprise software ecosystems.

The IECF is subsequently applied to three evidence sets: (1) the 2022 IDC SAP BTP business-value study; (2) Maersk's documented 2023 SAP BTP implementation; and (3) Hitachi High-Tech's documented 2023 SAP BTP transformation.

The three sources provide different forms of evidence. IDC provides multi-company quantitative measures. Maersk provides detailed evidence of multiple BTP

capabilities operating within production business processes. Hitachi High-Tech provides evidence of architectural simplification and side-by-side extensibility.

The analysis does not treat these sources as equivalent to controlled experimental evidence. The IDC study was sponsored by SAP, while the Maersk and Hitachi cases were published primarily through SAP customer channels. They are therefore used as structured secondary evidence rather than proof of causality.

4. INTELLIGENT ENTERPRISE CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

The Intelligent Enterprise Capability Framework (IECF) is designed to address a simple question: has an enterprise merely implemented technology, or has that technology developed into a meaningful capability that produces observable value?

The framework evaluates three levels: Technology Mechanism -> Enterprise Capability -> Observable Outcome.

For example, Integration technology creates Connectivity, which should eventually produce observable effects such as cross-system processing, reusable integration, or reduced direct system dependencies. The same logic is applied across five dimensions.

Table 1. Technology Mechanisms, IECF Capabilities, and Observable Enterprise Outcomes

Technology mechanism	IECF capability	Typical observable outcomes
Integration	Connectivity	Cross-system processes, integration reuse, reduced direct dependencies
Extensibility	Adaptability	Faster development, fewer core modifications, lower upgrade dependency
Data & Analytics	Context	Data quality, semantic consistency, reporting and decision support
Automation	Execution	Reduced manual effort, fewer errors, shorter process cycle time
Artificial Intelligence	Intelligence	Prediction, classification, decision support, reduced manual review

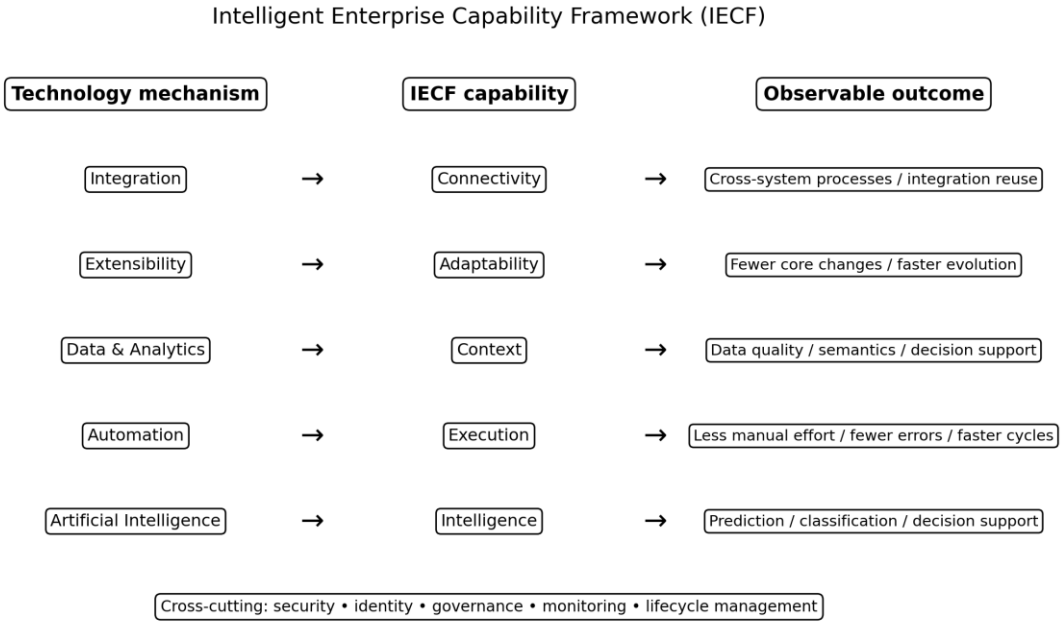


Figure 1. Intelligent Enterprise Capability Framework (IECF).
Source: Authors' proposed framework.

Security, identity, governance, monitoring, and lifecycle management operate across all five dimensions.

The five capabilities are interdependent rather than independent. In an AI-assisted operational process, Connectivity provides information from different operational systems; Context gives that information business meaning; Intelligence produces a prediction, classification, or recommendation; and Execution converts the resulting decision into workflow or transactional action. At the same time, Adaptability enables the applications supporting the process to evolve without requiring continuous modification of the transactional ERP core.

The framework therefore evaluates whether enterprise technologies are operating together as capabilities, rather than simply whether individual services have been deployed. Its central proposition is that enterprise-platform value increases when different capabilities reinforce one another within end-to-end business processes.

5. IECF SCORING METHOD

Each of the five capabilities receives a score from 1 to 5. The score is not assigned directly. Each capability is evaluated using three questions: Maturity - how mature is the implementation? Breadth - how widely is the capability deployed? Outcome Evidence - how strongly does the available evidence demonstrate a meaningful outcome?

Table 2. IECF Scoring Criteria for Implementation Maturity, Deployment Breadth, and Outcome Evidence

Score	Implementation maturity	Breadth of deployment	Outcome evidence
1	Conceptual or not implemented	Isolated	No documented outcome
2	Pilot or experimental	One application/team	Benefit claimed but weakly supported
3	Production implementation	One process/domain	Clear qualitative benefit
4	Multiple production implementations	Multiple systems/processes	Quantified outcome documented
5	Strategic enterprise use	Enterprise-wide or cross-domain	Multiple strong measurable or architectural outcomes

Capability Score = Add the Maturity, Breadth, and Outcome Evidence scores, then divide the total by 3.
Example: Hitachi High-Tech Connectivity = (5 + 5 + 4) ÷ 3 = 4.67.

Overall IECF Score = Add Connectivity, Adaptability, Context, Execution, and Intelligence, then divide the total by 5.
Example: (4.5 + 4.0 + 3.5 + 4.0 + 3.0) ÷ 5 = 3.8.

Table 3. Classification and Interpretation of Overall IECF Scores

Overall IECF Score	Interpretation
4.00-5.00	Strong demonstrated platform value
3.50-3.99	Meaningful demonstrated platform value
2.50-3.49	Moderate or mixed demonstrated value
1.50-2.49	Limited demonstrated value
1.00-1.49	Minimal demonstrated value

The 3.5 threshold is used as an exploratory boundary for meaningful demonstrated value. It represents the transition between Level 3, where production capability and qualitative benefit are evident, and Level 4, where broader deployment and quantitative outcomes become visible. The threshold is a research decision rule rather than an established industry standard.

A lower capability score does not necessarily indicate poor performance. It can indicate that the published evidence is insufficient to justify a higher assessment. The IECF therefore measures demonstrated capability value, not presumed or undocumented capability.

6. EVIDENCE SET 1: IDC SAP BTP STUDY

IDC's September 2022 report, sponsored by SAP, was based on in-depth interviews with nine organizations using SAP BTP, conducted in June 2022. The study provides the strongest quantitative evidence considered in this paper.

Table 4. Reported Business Value and Performance Improvements from the IDC SAP BTP Study

Metric	Reported result
Three-year ROI	495%
Average payback period	6 months
Faster project completion	31%
Development-team productivity	19% higher
Reports with poor data quality	47% fewer
Business processes with errors	63% fewer
Automation time saving	21 hours per SAP user/year

Table 5. IECF Capability Assessment and Scoring Results for the IDC Study

Capability	Maturity	Breadth	Outcome Evidence	Capability Score
Connectivity	4	4	4	4.00
Adaptability	4	4	4	4.00
Context	4	4	5	4.33
Execution	4	4	5	4.33
Intelligence	3	3	3	3.00

Overall IECF Score = (4.00 + 4.00 + 4.33 + 4.33 + 3.00) ÷ 5 = 3.93.
Value Index: 78.6%. Classification: Meaningful demonstrated platform value.

The strongest IDC results occur in Context and Execution, supported by quantitative improvements in data quality, process errors, and automation. The Intelligence dimension receives a lower score because although the report discusses AI-enabled capabilities, it does not separately quantify AI-specific outcomes.

The IDC result should not be interpreted as a universal BTP benchmark. The sample consists of only nine organizations and the research was sponsored by SAP.

7. EVIDENCE SET 2: MAERSK

Maersk provides a different type of evidence. Its primary significance lies in combining multiple capabilities across production business processes rather than in extensive quantified performance measures.

In 2023, Maersk documented BTP use across Customer Credit Management, Vendor Account Reconciliation, Treasury Guarantees, Customer Cargo Release, and financial planning and analysis. The Customer Cargo Release process is particularly relevant to IECF.

The process combines payment information, invoice data, bill of lading data, and container-release events. These inputs are integrated, interpreted in business context, matched using machine learning, and passed into workflow and approval logic before cargo release. The implementation therefore provides a practical example of Connectivity -> Context -> Intelligence -> Execution.

Table 6. IECF Capability Assessment and Scoring Results for Maersk

Capability	Maturity	Breadth	Outcome Evidence	Capability Score
Connectivity	5	5	3	4.33
Adaptability	4	4	3	3.67
Context	4	4	3	3.67
Execution	4	4	3	3.67
Intelligence	3	3	3	3.00

Overall IECF Score = (4.33 + 3.67 + 3.67 + 3.67 + 3.00) ÷ 5 = 3.67.
Value Index: 73.4%. Classification: Meaningful demonstrated platform value.

Maersk scores particularly strongly in Connectivity because the documented implementation spans multiple business systems and external information sources.

Its overall score is nevertheless lower than the IDC score because the available case evidence contains fewer quantified performance measures. This distinction is important: IECF rewards not only implementation breadth, but also the strength of documented outcomes.

8. EVIDENCE SET 3: HITACHI HIGH-TECH

Hitachi High-Tech demonstrates a third value profile centered on Adaptability and ERP-core decoupling.

The company used BTP as an integration and extension hub connecting S/4HANA environments with SAP Analytics Cloud, SAP BW/4HANA, CRM, MES, WMS, EDI, and other enterprise applications. The organization also adopted fit-to-standard and side-by-side development principles.

The 2023 customer documentation reports more than 9,000 legacy ERP extensions, reduction to 22 ERP-core add-ons, fewer than 600 customizations even when APIs and custom CDS artifacts are included, and 98 extensions implemented on SAP BTP. The available case evidence also reports a significant improvement in upgrade agility compared with the legacy ERP environment.

Table 7. IECF Capability Assessment and Scoring Results for Hitachi High-Tech

Capability	Maturity	Breadth	Outcome Evidence	Capability Score
Connectivity	5	5	4	4.67
Adaptability	5	5	5	5.00
Context	4	4	2	3.33
Execution	4	4	3	3.67
Intelligence	2	2	2	2.00

Overall IECF Score = (4.67 + 5.00 + 3.33 + 3.67 + 2.00) ÷ 5 = 3.73.
Value Index: 74.7%. Classification: Meaningful demonstrated platform value.

The score profile illustrates an important feature of the framework. Hitachi receives 4.67 for Connectivity because the available evidence demonstrates broad production integration across multiple major enterprise systems. It receives 3.33 for Context because the source provides considerably less measurable evidence concerning improvements in data quality, semantic consistency, or analytical performance.

This does not mean Hitachi performs poorly in data management. It means the reviewed evidence does not meet the same criteria required to justify a score of 4 or 5. Similarly, Intelligence receives a score of 2.00 because AI is not a mature or central element of the documented transformation.

9. CROSS-CASE RESULTS

Table 8. Cross-Case Comparison of IECF Capability Scores and Value Indices

IECF Capability	IDC	Maersk	Hitachi High-Tech
Connectivity	4.00	4.33	4.67
Adaptability	4.00	3.67	5.00
Context	4.33	3.67	3.33
Execution	4.33	3.67	3.67
Intelligence	3.00	3.00	2.00
Overall IECF Score	3.93	3.67	3.73
Value Index	78.6%	73.4%	74.7%

Average IECF Score = (3.93 + 3.67 + 3.73) ÷ 3 = 3.78. Equivalent Value Index = 3.78 ÷ 5 × 100 = 75.6%.

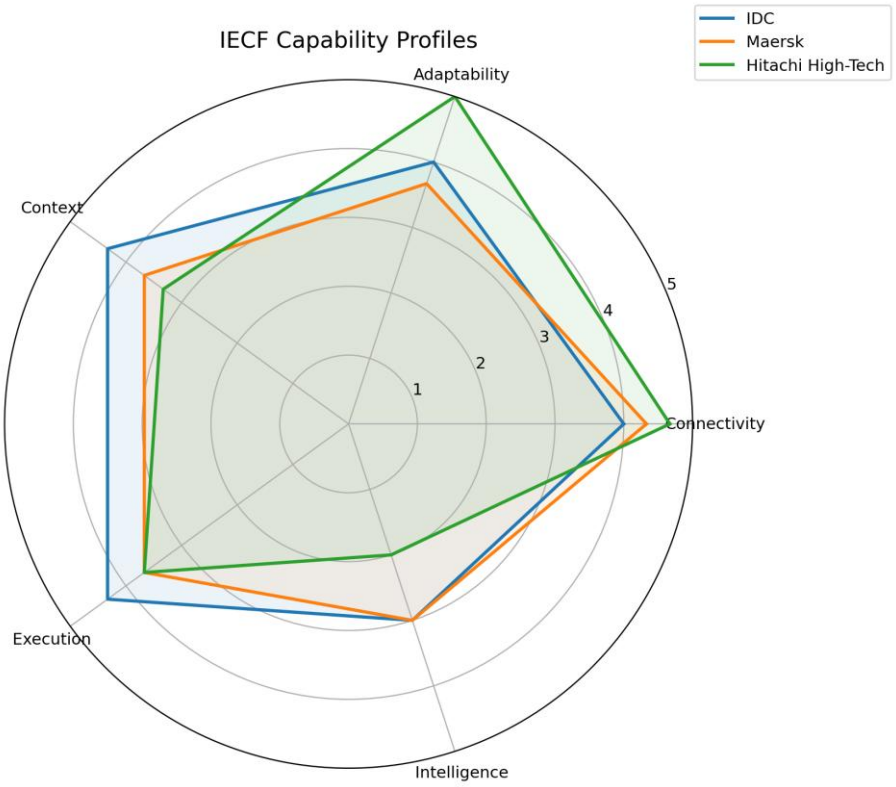


Figure 2. IECF Capability Profiles Across the Three Evidence Sets.
Source: Authors' analysis based on [12], [13], [14].

Figure 2 shows that the overall IECF score alone does not fully explain platform value. Hitachi High-Tech peaks in Adaptability and Connectivity, IDC shows stronger Context and Execution evidence, and Maersk presents a comparatively balanced profile centered on Connectivity. Different organizations therefore derive value from different combinations of platform capabilities.

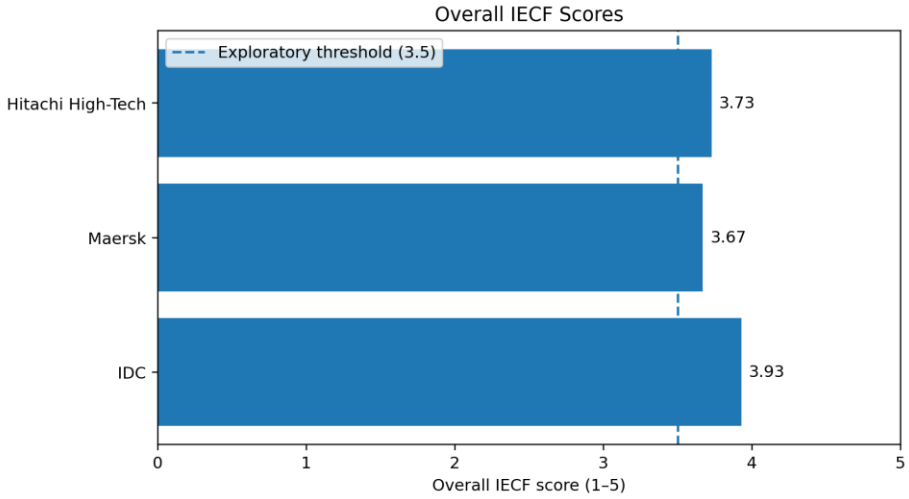


Figure 3. Overall IECF Scores and Exploratory Meaningful-Value Threshold. All three evidence sets exceed the exploratory threshold of 3.5.

Source: Authors' calculations based on the IECF scoring method.

All three evidence sets exceed the exploratory threshold of 3.5. This produces the principal cross-case finding: across the three evaluated evidence sets, SAP BTP demonstrates meaningful platform value under the IECF criteria, although the capabilities through which that value is realized differ substantially.

IDC provides the strongest evidence in Context and Execution, supported by measurable improvements in data quality, development productivity, and automation. Maersk demonstrates particularly strong Connectivity and cross-capability coordination. Hitachi High-Tech demonstrates particularly strong Adaptability, where side-by-side extensibility and fit-to-standard architecture substantially reduced direct ERP-core customization.

The analysis therefore suggests that there is no single universal BTP value profile. Different organizations generate platform value from different combinations of capabilities.

10. EVIDENCE CONFIDENCE

The numerical IECF score should be separated from the quality of the underlying evidence. A company can receive a relatively high capability score based on detailed implementation evidence even when that evidence is not independently audited. The study therefore reports evidence confidence separately.

Table 9. Evidence Confidence Assessment Across the Three SAP BTP Case Studies

Evidence source	Confidence	Reason
IDC	Moderate	Structured multi-company quantitative research, but SAP-sponsored and n=9
Maersk	Moderate	Detailed named-customer implementation evidence, but primarily SAP-published
Hitachi High-Tech	Moderate	Detailed architecture and customer-attributed metrics, but primarily SAP-published

None of the three evidence sets constitutes high-confidence independent experimental validation. The results should therefore be interpreted as preliminary convergent evidence.

This distinction also prevents a lower capability score from automatically being

interpreted as weak enterprise performance. In some cases, the lower score may simply reflect weaker or less complete published evidence.

11. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The IECF scoring framework is newly proposed and has not yet been statistically validated. The 3.5 threshold is an exploratory analytical rule rather than an established industry benchmark.

The evidence sample is also small. IDC's study includes nine organizations and was sponsored by SAP, while the Maersk and Hitachi evidence is primarily documented through SAP customer channels. The findings therefore do not establish that SAP BTP independently caused the reported business outcomes.

Additional factors - such as process redesign, organizational change, governance, fit-to-standard implementation, skills, and management practices - also influence enterprise-transformation outcomes.

Future research should apply IECF to a larger independent sample and investigate whether higher capability scores correlate with measurable outcomes such as application-development lead time, integration reuse, ERP-core customization, upgrade effort, process cycle time, automation rate, error reduction, and business-user productivity.

Longitudinal studies could also examine how IECF capability profiles change as organizations mature. For example, enterprises may initially develop high Connectivity and Adaptability scores while integration and extension foundations are established, followed later by stronger Context, Execution, and Intelligence scores as data, automation, and AI capabilities mature.

The framework could additionally be applied to enterprise technology platforms beyond SAP BTP to determine whether the five capability dimensions remain useful across different technology ecosystems.

12. CONCLUSION

The post-pandemic enterprise does not suffer from a shortage of digital technology. Its greater challenge is making different technologies operate coherently.

The Intelligent Enterprise Capability Framework proposed in this study evaluates this challenge through five enterprise capabilities: Connectivity, Adaptability, Context, Execution, and Intelligence. Each capability is assessed using implementation maturity, deployment breadth, and documented outcome evidence.

Application of IECF to three evidence sets produced an overall score of 3.93 for IDC, 3.67 for Maersk, and 3.73 for Hitachi High-Tech. The aggregate score is 3.78 out of 5, equivalent to 75.6%. All three evidence sets therefore exceed the study's exploratory threshold of 3.5 for meaningful demonstrated platform value.

The more important finding, however, lies beneath the overall scores. IDC demonstrates stronger Context and Execution outcomes. Maersk demonstrates cross-system coordination of integration, data, intelligence, and workflow. Hitachi High-Tech demonstrates particularly strong Adaptability and architectural decoupling from the ERP core.

This indicates that BTP does not create value through one dominant capability. Rather, the value of an enterprise technology platform emerges when its capabilities are combined in ways that address the specific architectural and operational requirements of the enterprise.

The Intelligent Enterprise should therefore not be understood simply as an ERP migration, an AI implementation, or adoption of a particular platform. It is an architectural capability created when systems, data, applications, processes, and intelligence operate together within a governed and adaptable enterprise environment.

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