

*From solution thinking to platform thinking*

# ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS

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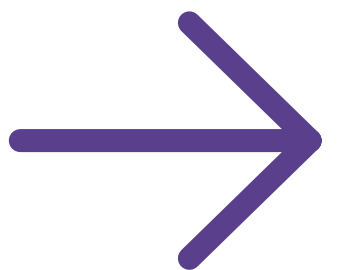
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***“Place the end-to-end process at the core, not the application”***

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**Has your organization completely eliminated the process of manually copying from one application to another? Are all your processes predictable? Do you always have the right people scheduled for the right departments? Are your client orders always shipped on time? And do you have no concerns about the reporting obligation in the CSRD because your software delivers the data in the blink of an eye? There is no need to keep reading.**

If, however, you are facing a challenge in (one of) these areas, this whitepaper will offer inspiration to think differently about your enterprise applications.







# 1

## *What are* **ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS?**

Enterprise applications facilitate core processes. Exactly which applications these are depends entirely on your organization. In most companies, the core consists of ERP and CRM, often supplemented by several more specific applications. Because while workforce management is a core task to project organizations, for example, warehouse and/or transport management is essential to logistics companies, and the Manufacturing Execution System (MES) is a key application for production companies.

## 1 What are enterprise applications?

*“The most important task of enterprise applications is to streamline processes”*

### *Streamlining processes*

**The most important task of enterprise applications is to streamline processes such that tasks are executed first time right and processes are predictable.**

In addition, they should support employees in an efficient way. This may include registration at the source, eliminating the need to retype information, and the use of task-oriented apps on devices appropriate to the work a person is doing at that time. Finally, enterprise applications must give management a 360-degree view of the business, in such a way that the impact of decisions in one domain on other domains becomes clear. Only then can you manage an organization cohesively and estimate in advance what the consequences of certain strategic choices are.

### *From putting out fires to governance*

**Organizations that manage to set up their application landscape in such a way will spend their time very differently.**

Most managers now spend 70 percent of their time working on operational issues - read: putting out fires - , 20 percent on tactical issues and only 10 percent on strategy. Real-time insight into predictable end-to-end processes allows you to focus on the exceptions. The one supplier who regularly fails to deliver on time, finding replacement personnel when the flu hits a particular department or informing the customer when a certain order cannot be delivered due to a production breakdown. The operation may require just 10 percent of managers' time.



A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, smiling warmly while looking at a smartphone held in his hands. The background is softly blurred, showing warm, bokeh-style lights. The image is partially overlaid by a purple graphic element on the right side.

# 2

*What do we mean by*  
**PLATFORM  
THINKING?**

Of course, the above sounds like a dream scenario. And yes, those who continue to look at software in a traditional way - in terms of solutions or applications - will never end up in this scenario. But when you put your processes at the centre and start thinking about a platform that supports those processes end-to-end, a whole new world reveals itself. Platform thinking does require strong leadership from the top of organizations. You do not want to automate each exception. Instead, you want to return matters to the standard where possible.



2 What do we mean by platform thinking?

*Ecosystem of applications that work as one*

The term platform refers to an ecosystem consisting of a core application (often ERP) surrounded by satellite applications seamlessly integrated with the core application.

The platform functions as one and feels like a single application to the user, while multiple applications may be involved in the background. The distinction between a platform approach and a traditional solution-oriented approach is that the platform revolves around end-to-end processes. Data flows through these processes freely, albeit orderly and singularly, with roles and permissions shielding who can see what, of course.

*Relating processes to each other*

Furthermore, a platform provides insight into how various process flows relate to each other.

Take receiving an order, for example. This event starts two process flows: picking the items and shipping the order (logistics tasks), and creating the invoice and receiving payment (financial tasks). While finance and logistics are two independent processes in a traditional application mindset, a platform makes it clear how these processes are related. This means, for example, that you can immediately calculate the financial consequences of certain logistical choices.





# 3

## *The importance of a Sector-oriented* **APPROACH**

The platform mindset is not so much about replacing particular software, but about an organizational change; about re-expressing processes in software. This can be new software or existing software. We redevelop processes based on a sector-oriented approach. Because many enterprise applications, such as SAP S/4HANA, Microsoft Dynamics or AFAS, have best practices that cover up to 80 percent of a company's processes in a given industry. After all, those processes are not distinctive and, in a standard setup, offer maximum effectiveness at a low risk of failure costs.



# BEST PRACTICES

*They also support the  
Best practices workflows*

The best practices are designed with the idea that information should flow freely and that information entered in one place can be reused in another. They also support best practices workflows. As a result, tasks are no longer left unfinished or forgotten, because employees are notified as soon as a task is ready for them.





## Different market demand

It is clear that the platform approach shifts the focus from applications to processes.

This affects how organizations should market a software request. They would be much better off describing how they differentiate themselves from the competition rather than working with endless lists of requirements. After all, you want to safeguard that distinctiveness and support it as best you can. All other processes can be supported with best practices. Most CIOs subscribe to this theory, but practice tends to be stubborn. Most companies are not too keen on changing their processes in a big way because they know it is not easy. Humans are creatures of habit. They like to linger in their familiar ways of working, even if a new way is more efficient or effective.

## Unique processes tend to lack efficiency

Moreover, when it comes to primary processes - procurement, production, logistics - every company likes to think of itself as unique.

The reality is that most 'unique processes' are not very efficient at all. They simply evolved over the years and people got used to them. The best practice in an enterprise application is almost always much more efficient. After all, those best practices were developed by software suppliers based on years of experience with thousands of customers. The question, therefore, should be what processes distinguish the company from its competitors rather than what processes are unique.

There are two exceptions to this rule: the HR process and the financial process. Most organizations realize that they cannot differentiate themselves with those processes in any way. These processes are, however, highly determinant of organizational success. For that reason, they are generally happy to apply best practices in those cases.



*“There are no bad enterprise applications, there are only bad processes.”*



# 4

## *Optimize,* **THEN STANDARDIZE**

Whereas organizations can draw on best practices in their enterprise application for most of their processes, the same is not true for the processes that set them apart. Those processes often need to be supported with customization, realized within or outside of the enterprise application, for example through a low-code app that integrates closely with the enterprise application. The challenge is to develop the distinctive part of the process in low-code and to apply the integration where the process returns to the standard.



## *Process mining*

**Before you can start automating these processes, you need to gain a good understanding of how they work in practice. Which is often different than on paper. In the past, it would often take many brown paper sessions to get agreement between all stakeholders on the 'as is' situation. And then, a discussion would arise about the 'to be' processes. Today, there is an easier method for finding out how processes actually run: process mining.**

Process mining bridges the gap between process descriptions on paper and reality. It makes organizations data-driven, can help monitor processes and provide recommendations for process improvement.

Process mining software unlocks the log data of your applications. That log data contains a time stamp, showing exactly what happened at what time. This brings the actual process flows into focus, in a visual way at that. You can now identify at a glance any detours in your process, regular hiccups, etc. You get a much better picture of the 'as is' situation, including all the short cuts employees are taking.



## 4 Optimize, then standardize

### Optimize

**The next step is to optimize the processes, i.e. design the ‘to be’ situation.**

We use Lean Six Sigma, among others, a method that focuses on reducing waste and creating value for the user or customer. The focus on value creation ensures that you keep the end-to-end processes in mind rather than focusing on a departmental process that is a part of a larger, overarching process.

### Standardize

**The final step is to capture the optimized process in software, so that all employees, branches or countries will work in the same way.**

The challenge in this part of the project is not so much in developing the software, but in implementing it. Which is, after all, an organizational change. The success of the software lies in change management.

### Mammoet Improves project planning with platform approach

*One example of a company that employs the platform mindset is Mammoet. This world market leader in heavy and complex lifting and transport jobs is a typical project organization. The quality of their project planning determines how much money is made at the end of the day.*

*Moreover, the impact of good planning will only increase in the coming years due to the scarcity of human resources. Mammoet wants to deploy its personnel and equipment as optimally as possible. If a project requires a specialist to be flown in by helicopter last minute, part of the profit evaporates in the blink of an eye. If that specialist was working on another job on the other side of the world at the time and that job is temporarily halted as a result, the costs add up even faster. Not to mention customer satisfaction. Because customers are only interested in one thing: that the job gets done on time and on budget.*

*Which is why Mammoet launched the Sherpa program, aiming to look at processes from a holistic perspective, optimize them and standardize them worldwide. Because one of the challenges*

*Mammoet encountered in integrated planning was that all locations had their own operating procedures. As a result, real-time and comprehensive insight was lacking. How do you optimize your planning in a situation like that?*

*Six Conclusion companies, each based on their own expertise, collaborated in defining new processes and then automating them. The newly designed platform consists of multiple applications that work together as one. Where standard software didn't fit, custom software was developed using a low-code platform.*

*Much time was allocated for implementation. Although software implementation is not quite the right word in this context; it is more about guiding the process change. Because every Mammoet branch has to start working in the same way. This, of course, is no easy feat. It is a journey where Conclusion's process consultants work closely with Mammoet's project team and with the local branches. The result of this approach is that Mammoet is able to plan more accurately and has better insight into the availability of equipment and personnel. With that improved understanding, equipment utilization rates and employability can be increased while reducing overhead costs.*



A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a blue blazer, is smiling and looking down at a tablet computer she is holding. The background is blurred, suggesting an office or modern interior setting.

# 5

## FOCUS ON *Personalization*

One topic that plays an important role in the platform mindset is personalization. Whether it be in communication with the customer or the work environment of your employees, you do not want to exhaust them with all sorts of features they don't use. Instead, you want to provide them with an experience that feels tailored. There is no actual customization going on in the back end, of course. It is a standard environment able to adapt to the user's needs.



# Work with personas

**The best way to accomplish this is to work with personas: groups of employees or customers with similar needs.**

We will focus on employees in this whitepaper, since the majority of the application ecosystem is intended for them. Based on the process mindset, we can distinguish between processes that every employee interacts with, such as HR-related issues, and processes for specific groups of employees. Once you have an overview of all the processes in your organization, identify for each job group what processes they interact with and in what ways software can support them. You will notice a considerable distinction between employees. Some sit at their desks all day and prefer to work with two large screens so they can keep track of all tasks; others work on the go and prefer to use task-oriented apps on their smartphones.

***Based on the process mindset, we can distinguish between processes that every employee interacts with, such as HR-related issues, and processes for specific groups of employees.***





## **Facilicom Group** **supports field staff with task-oriented apps**

**Facilicom Group, a facility services provider operating in the Netherlands and Belgium, is making a transition to a data-driven operation. What the company means by that is: a current understanding of developments in the world, in their own operations and in customer requirements. In addition, the tight labour market is forcing Facilicom to improve the support provided to their employees.**

*The company chose Conclusion as its permanent partner to direct the entire IT chain. This helps Facilicom avoid a solution-oriented approach and embrace the platform mindset.*

*Based on an enterprise architecture, it was determined which processes and functions will be performed by what platform. The gaps that arose were bridged with low-code custom solutions. This process-oriented approach allowed for considerable downsizing of the application landscape. Which is important because the more applications, the more interfaces and the more complex the environment becomes from an IT perspective. In addition, employees don't want to work with different applications at all; they want an environment that provides exactly what they need to do their jobs.*

*The process-oriented approach led to many improvement opportunities being discovered. Often improvement opportunities where Facilicom is able to make multiple goals go hand in hand. Take daily occupancy monitoring, for instance. It allows for staff to be deployed more efficiently - unused spaces don't need to be cleaned - and Facilicom is able to advise clients to refrain from turning on the heating or air-conditioning in certain areas. Predictive maintenance for assets such as lifts, escalators and automatic revolving doors or access gates are another example.*

*Sensor-based monitoring allows for smarter scheduling of preventive maintenance, resulting in improved deployability of maintenance workers and no downtime of these assets at peak hours.*

*A third example is a low-code task-oriented app developed for time and travel expense tracking, used for as many as 25,000 employees. Employees can submit their expense claims more easily and quickly, resulting in faster reimbursement. In addition, the process is now almost entirely automated and error-free, as opposed to the large amount of manual work and accompanying errors in the past. The software architecture of these low-code custom applications provides flexibility for all the different schemes of today, while being adaptable in the future, for example, if a new collective bargaining agreement comes along or an acquisition is made.*

“They want an environment that provides exactly what they need to do their jobs”





# 6

## *Data-driven* **OPERATIONS**

The platform approach acts as tailwind for data-driven operations. After all, the company already possesses a lot of data that new insights can be drawn from. Just not organized in a way that allows you to actually go ahead and do that. The platform mindset unlocks the ability to utilize already captured data in any other conceivable way. Because the platform is based on registration at the source and reuse of data. As a result, data flows through the application landscape with no friction at all.



*“The platform mindset unlocks the ability to utilize already captured data in any other conceivable way.”*

## *Integration platform*

**This sounds nice, but it does pose a considerable technical challenge.**

Especially since the old way of integrating applications - through traditional point-to-point interfaces - is becoming increasingly ineffective. Because the amount of data has increased significantly in recent years and the types of sources have changed. In addition, developments such as AI and ML increase the need for a convenient way to aggregate data. You can try to create one-to-one links, but you will soon find yourself dealing with hundreds of interfaces. This is why we prefer to work with an integration platform.

An integration platform forms the glue, so to speak, between the various applications and allows data to flow freely (albeit orderly and singularly), protected, of course, by roles and permissions.



# Master data management

Those who want their data to flow do need to think carefully about the design of master and reference data (data used to classify other data) in advance.

What application will hold the master data and what other applications are permitted to use this data? A clear overview of master and reference data is a prerequisite for data-driven operations.

# Tailwind

The fact that data can flow through the application landscape without friction acts as tailwind for all kinds of AI applications.

After all, easier data aggregation also makes it easier to analyze data in context and discover trends as well as deviations from those trends.

In addition, generative AI is making its way into the marketplace: a chatbot can be deployed to answer questions for your staff, preventing them from having to search various applications themselves. The chatbot will simply provide the answer. Microsoft Copilot is the most well-known example.

## CSRD reporting automated fill

A lot of data will be reused in adjacent processes. But data captured for one purpose can also be applied in an entirely different process. One example is sustainability monitoring. Under the CSRD, large companies are already required to report on their human, environmental and climate impacts; smaller companies will follow at a later stage. Much of that data is already recorded somewhere, such as energy consumption broken down by different assets, emissions involved in transporting goods by road, rail or boat, or the remuneration of employees in similar positions. By automatically channelling information captured in an application into CSRD reporting, you avoid burdening entire departments with data collection.



7*Role*

# CONCLUSION

**Conclusion is a dynamic ecosystem of over 25 expert companies working together on business transformation and IT services. Through close mutual cooperation, we offer clients a one-stop shop for all their issues.**

**Four companies in the Consortium are engaged in process design and support:**

- **myBrand Conclusion**, a specialist in implementation, maintenance and management of SAP solutions and a developer of software based on the low-code development platform OutSystems;
- **Conclusion MBS**, a specialist in implementation, maintenance and management of Microsoft Dynamics 365 ERP and CRM software. Conclusion MBS also uses the low-code Microsoft Power Platform and the AI platform Microsoft CoPilot;
- **Conclusion AFAS Solutions**, a specialist in maintenance and management of AFAS software;
- **Conclusion Lowcode Company**, a specialist for creating and maintaining fit-for-purpose (core) applications throughout the entire life cycle based on the leading low-code enterprise application platform Mendix.

In addition, the ecosystem includes specialists in other areas such as integration (Virtual Sciences Conclusion) and analytics (Hot Item Conclusion and Conclusion Mediaan).

We approach every client request from the perspective of the ecosystem: which company or combination of companies can best address their needs? This approach gives clients the benefit of a one-stop shop combined with in-depth expertise on sub-topics. We serve our clients with a high degree of specialization combined with a broad spectrum of services. The result is that Conclusion is able to realize a platform that is standard where possible and distinguishing where necessary, in addition to offering advice on the platform mindset.

# CONTROL THE PROGRESS, BEFORE IT CONTROLS YOU

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