



Streamlining Operations: One Platform vs. Multiple

SOLERAN.COM

Introduction

Advantages of One Integrated Platform (All-in-one)

Advantage 1	Integration Without Multiple APIs
Advantage 2	Data Consistency
Advantage 3	Cost Effectiveness
Advantage 4	Operational Efficiency
Advantage 5	Ease of Management & Training
Advantage 6	Innovation & Scalability

Disadvantages of One Integrated Platform

Disadvantage 1	Limited Flexibility
Disadvantage 2	Risk of Single Point of Failure
Disadvantage 3	Upgrade & Update Challenges
Disadvantage 4	Learning Curve & Adaptation

Conclusion

About the Author

Witnessing a paradigm shift towards one integrated software platform

In the last few years, technology's trajectory has exploded in just about every industry. One massive strategic shift in organizations nationwide is "cleaning house" on techstacks. Companies are taking inventory of what they are actually using and how much they are spending in the hopes of streamlining their techstacks into more concise, effective engines to fuel their company's growth and productivity. A [global survey of technology](#) leaders showed that the percentage of organizations that are integrated or fully digital nearly doubled over two years, with 67% of companies aspiring to make this shift.

Organizations face mounting pressure to optimize costs while maintaining operational efficiency. Sometimes this pressure is to use more technology to increase that efficiency. Companies often require multiple applications and software packages to meet complex standards. How does an organization solve this dilemma without busting the budget?

There are really only three choices:

1**Multiple Applications**

Purchase multiple applications to meet the needs of the organization

2**API Connection**

Purchase multiple applications and tie them together with an API connection (if available) to allow them to "talk" to one another/share data

3**Integrated Platform (All-in-one)**

Purchase a single software platform or enterprise system with varying applications built-in (or able to be added) that do not require an API connection, but instead automatically integrate.

The main shift has been to consolidate into one integrated platform (or enterprise solution with many different, integrated applications already tied together).

But can one platform cover all your specialized needs? This article explores both the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing one integrated platform versus multiple, disparate systems.

Advantages of One Integrated Platform (All-in-one)

A Cohesive Ecosystem

A tidy, all-in-one platform housing all your software needs sounds wonderful. The idea being to only make one major purchase with one provider for their platform which houses many different applications, creating this growing, living ecosystem for your organization. Ideally, you would choose a platform with useful benefits now, ones of near-future interest, and long-term, sustainable, scalable possibilities for consideration. One unified software platform consolidates multiple native applications and processes into this cohesive ecosystem, offering a wide array of advantages.



ADVANTAGE 1

Integration Without Multiple APIs

Integration means applications “talk” to one another to share data. How many of your organization’s applications are linked together through an API connection or better yet, are on the same platform and don’t need an API? If done well, they work together to seamlessly perform tasks and workflows. However, APIs are an extra incurred expense when linking applications during implementation.

In some cases, an API connection may not be available. Integration “levels up” your applications for the most efficient use of all your processes and workflows through the power of automation.

Managing multiple platforms often leads to compatibility issues, integration challenges, and a complex IT environment. Disparate systems may not communicate effectively with each other, requiring manual intervention, custom integrations, or data duplication. This complexity can hinder agility and increase the risk of errors and system failures.

Another benefit of integration is that integrated software platforms often leverage cloud-based or virtualized infrastructures, enabling organizations to scale resources dynamically based on demand. This elasticity eliminates the need to over-use hardware, ensuring cost efficiency while maintaining optimal performance.

ADVANTAGE 2

Data Consistency



Data consistency is the mecca where all organizations need to arrive in order to run effectively. It eliminates data silos. It provides a single source of truth, reducing the risk of conflicting or outdated information.

Data fragmentation makes it difficult to obtain a unified view. With centralized data storage and standardized data formats, organizations can access accurate and up-to-date information, fostering better decision-making and improved outcomes. However, a successful transition from disparate systems requires careful evaluation of organizational needs, a well-executed migration plan, clean data, and seamless data integration.

ADVANTAGE 3

Cost Effectiveness

Purchasing enterprise applications from a single software provider usually results in a significant discount, making it more cost-effective than buying multiple, separate software applications from different providers at full price. It allows for consolidating software licenses, reducing procurement, and maintenance expenses associated with multiple systems. Each separate system may have its own set of support requirements, leading to additional overhead costs. Furthermore, the lack of integration between systems often necessitates manual data entry, resulting in time-consuming and error-prone processes. Negotiating separate licensing agreements and managing renewal cycles can be time-consuming and resource-intensive for organizations. Maintaining separate servers, storage systems, and networking equipment for each system can be costly and inefficient. Managing multiple support contracts, conducting system upgrades, and addressing compatibility issues can lead to escalating maintenance costs over time.

One platform minimizes the need for dedicated hardware, infrastructure, and support teams, resulting in substantial cost savings. Additionally, expanding the use of an existing enterprise solution is often more cost-effective and quicker to implement than adopting a new one.

Things to Consider

- *Conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to determine the financial implications of implementing one software platform versus multiple providers.*
- *Consider factors such as licensing, infrastructure costs, ongoing maintenance, training, and potential productivity gains with one software platform versus multiple.*
- *Assess the return on investment (ROI) and long-term cost savings associated with both.*

ADVANTAGE 4

Operational Efficiency

With any software application, there are bells and whistles you may not be utilizing or possibly don't even need that are included in your software package. Or worse – your company already has a duplicate application. In those cases, you paid twice!

One integrated platform makes workflows and processes more efficient. Redundant tasks are minimized, leading to reduced errors and improved overall productivity. Employees no longer need to navigate or log in through multiple systems or duplicate efforts. The platform provides a centralized hub that enables seamless collaboration, data sharing, and real-time communication. By eliminating manual data entry, automating workflows, and offering intuitive user interfaces, organizations can boost efficiency and enhance employee productivity.

Disparate systems often result in fragmented workflows, inefficient data exchange, and redundant tasks. Inefficiencies arise when employees must switch between different systems to access and analyze information, leading to decreased productivity.

[An American Psychological Association study](#) found that experiment participants lost time when they had to switch from one task to another (multitasking). As tasks got more complex, participants lost more time. The time costs were greater when they switched to unfamiliar tasks and the time costs were less when they switched to familiar tasks. Multitasking between disparate systems causes time inefficiency for users.

One unified platform offers centralized access to comprehensive data, providing a holistic view of the organization's operations. This enables data-driven decision-making, allowing organizations to identify inefficiencies, optimize resources, and make informed strategic choices.

Additionally, one unified platform often provides robust analytics and reporting capabilities, enabling organizations to gain valuable insights into their operations, especially when coupled with data consistency. These insights can drive process improvements, identify cost-saving opportunities, and support proactive decision-making.

Things to Consider



How many systems does your team login into on any given day?



How many systems does your team use even though they are no longer useful?

ADVANTAGE 5

Ease of Management & Training

One integrated software platform simplifies managing maintenance by centralizing updates, patches, and upgrades. Consolidating support efforts onto a single platform eliminates the need for dedicated support teams for each system. That means less time on email or the phone when in need of software assistance. Organizations can streamline their support contracts and leverage vendor relationships more effectively.

A single platform, especially one that personnel are already familiar with, streamlines the learning process. Because the user interface and functionality is typically similar, there is a more cohesive and efficient training experience as employees learn and adapt to only one system's intricacies, leading to quicker mastery and faster training. An organizational best practice is to have a team expert who trains the other employees on the software and any updates or changes made to the platform. Training costs also decrease as employees become trained on one system rather than multiple, which in turn shortens training duration.



ADVANTAGE 6

Innovation & Scalability

Obsolete systems are huge hurdles to getting ahead as an organization. Old ways or systems get comfortable and can make teams complacent. Instead, be willing to look objectively at the tools your organization uses and if they are still being effective and meeting all your current, plus growing, needs. If your current provider isn't innovating and able to handle all your needs, your organization could be left in the dust.

With one integrated or unified software ecosystem, organizations can more easily integrate new technologies, modules, or features into their existing platform. This flexibility allows for seamless adaptation to evolving business needs and industry trends. Scalability is also enhanced, as organizations can scale resources and functionalities within the unified platform, accommodating growth without significant disruptions or costly migrations. The trick is to think three steps ahead and look for a platform that can grow with your organization's foreseeable future needs.

Disadvantages of One Integrated Platform

Limitations of One Cohesive Ecosystem

Although one cohesive software ecosystem sounds ideal, it can also have its own set of disadvantages. While integrated one platform offers numerous benefits, including streamlined processes and centralized data management, it's important to consider the potential disadvantages. Understanding these limitations is essential for making an informed decision that aligns with long-term goals and operational needs.

DISADVANTAGE 1

Limited Flexibility



Integrated platforms may not offer the same level of specialization or customization as individual software solutions tailored for specific business functions.

You'll want to look for a vendor that specializes in your industry and then evaluate their applications to confirm they provide the tools your organization requires. There are some fully integrated platforms that specialize in different industries.

If you can source that for your industry, that would be the ideal solution for flexibility and customization.

DISADVANTAGE 2

Risk of Single Point of Failure



Reliance on a single system increases the risk that issues with the platform (such as outages or security breaches) could impact the entire organization. Be aware of security measures and data storage options in a sole software provider.

A cloud-based offering has the potential to be more reliable than a server-based offering. With that being said, you only have to work with one provider, versus several, if something were to occur to fix any issues.

DISADVANTAGE 3

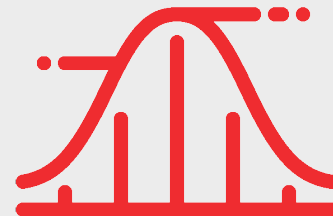
Upgrade & Update Challenges

When an entire organization relies on a single platform, updating or upgrading the system can be a significant undertaking, requiring extensive testing to ensure compatibility and functionality across all business areas.

Although, in some cases, it is actually easier than having multiple updates and upgrades happening across many different applications. Finding out how updates and upgrades work with your vendor is important. But, if your integrated platform is a SaaS solution, you'll likely not be responsible for any updates, and you won't notice when there is an update.

DISADVANTAGE 4

Learning Curve & Adaptation



While training is streamlined, the initial learning curve for a comprehensive platform can be steep, especially for employees accustomed to simpler or different systems.

Discuss with the software vendor what the initial training duration is for their particular platform. However, it is important to note that once an initial large training is done, the follow up training is usually minimal, or can be done internally.

The advantages of one integrated platform outweigh the disadvantages. Taking a swing at an enterprise system that suits your organization's needs not only leans toward longer sustainability but also time and cost savings now and down the road.

The one-time, foundational investment of your software (or the one platform provider) will be in large contrast to the unknowns of never-ending direct and indirect costs incurred operating multiple, separate systems even if integrated through API connections. Once you are past the initial investment and the initial implementation is complete, it becomes lightyears easier to quantify ongoing costs.

Besides possibly adding additional applications to the platform, ongoing investments are:

- Training select employees as certified experts or power users. They become your in-house resource for the rest of the team.
- Setting up custom workflows and processes to organizational needs.
- Formalizing a central & single data source.
- Reducing support resolution times as users become more familiar with the software and how to navigate it.

The in-house possibilities not only become incredible cost savings but valuable assets internally. Just having less to log into and maintain will create less stress and simplicity which is invaluable to employees' job satisfaction. While the initial investment might be higher, the long-term savings in operational costs, combined with the gains in efficiency and productivity, make a compelling case for the superiority of an integrated approach over multiple integrated platforms.



About the Author

Jill Allen is the Vice President of Marketing at Soleran, Inc. Jill is a marketing & communications professional with demonstrated experience in digital marketing, strategic marketing & public relations planning, internal & external communications, event management, project management, social media, content creation, copywriting/UX copywriting/editing, media relations, and sales. She writes for the "Closing the Loop" blog hosted on Soleran's website as well as helped publish several facility compliance-related pieces in Health Facilities Management magazine.