

A guide to choosing an SAP NetWeaver® Managed Support Service

Ensure continuity of your business critical systems at a fixed annual cost

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1. What is an SAP NetWeaver managed support service?

An SAP NetWeaver managed support service involves the complete outsourcing of the technical management of your SAP systems using a specialist external provider.

This can include any combination of application, database or technical infrastructure services, with related day to day management transferred to the service provider. The external provider takes responsibility for the services as defined in service level agreements (SLAs) and ownership of software and equipment is typically retained by the client.

A managed service offers significant advantages through flexibility, reliability and guaranteed response levels, all delivered at a fixed annual cost.

2. What are the benefits?

Due to the complex nature of SAP, keeping on top of application services, support and maintenance can be a major challenge. Add to this the rest of your IT landscape, WAN/LAN/IT infrastructure, telecommunications, collaboration, file and print and it is hardly surprising that local IT teams are stretched.

Common issues facing internal IT teams include cost management, accountability, predictability, maintaining consistent quality of support, operability, demand for change and scalability.

The SAP system is critical to the efficient and effective operation of your business, therefore it is essential you have assurance of continued system performance and availability, alongside delivery capability to react to evolving business needs. With pressure on internal resources, many businesses are choosing to transfer this work to an external managed service partner, with SLAs that ensure predictable costs and accountability.

Under this model the service provider takes responsibility for managing your SAP infrastructure but you retain ownership. Duplicated effort is removed, streamlining of your SAP landscape is ensured and it becomes far easier to monitor your support costs. Your internal IT team is freed up to focus on activities which contribute to the achievement of your business objectives.

Benefits at a glance

- Workforce optimisation
 - Focus on the business of running the organisation, rather than system maintenance and monitoring
 - Reserve functional expertise for innovation
- Guaranteed reliability
 - Avoid lost productivity by minimising unscheduled downtime
 - Consistent resources – no staff scheduling requirements
- Enhanced control and planning
 - Identify and address potential issues early
 - Aid future planning
 - Predict system growth and plan changes early
- Cost control or reduction
- Application of best practice
 - Take advantage of breadth of expertise from an external provider to improve your system now and in the future

3. What to look for in an SAP NetWeaver managed support service partner

SAP expertise

Ensure that your partner has accredited SAP partner status in the country in which you operate.

Look at their skills profile and verify that this meets your requirements. Also enquire about their investment in staff training. Do they invest in keeping SAP technical and functional skills up to date? Are their consultants trained in the other generic consulting skills such as effective communication and documentation?

Companies that commit to their staff often sustain low staff turnover which you can take advantage of as you can form relationships with their consultants who grow to know and support your business year on year.

Check that your partner has achieved SAP Partner Centre of Expertise accreditation for SAP support. This shows the business meets SAP's rigorous requirements and is committed to providing high quality, consistent and high value SAP support services.

Find out how satisfied existing customers are by taking up customer references.

Breadth of skill and experience

A partner with a breadth and depth of skill and experience will be able to draw on this knowledge to make suggestions on best practice for your system going forward. Check whether the partner you are considering has experience of supporting small, medium and large systems, and whether they work across multiple platforms and products.

Evidence of compliance

Look for commitment to meeting industry standards for the requirements relating to quality, information security and IT service management systems applicable in certificates such as ISO 27001 and ISO 20000. This means that the SAP provider directs and controls their activities and resources to design, transition, deliver and improve their services. Partners must also have measures in place to protect your data and information at all times.

Shared objectives

It is important to ensure that the support and maintenance of your SAP system is delivered to an agreed set of measures. Service Level Agreements should be aligned with your own business objectives. Your chosen partner should be able to demonstrate its track record for meeting SLAs.

Location of service

Offshoring managed services can seem like an attractive, cost effective proposition; however, it can be fraught with challenges relating to cultural and language differences and the timing of service delivery.

Using a locally based support partner means you can avoid these pitfalls and offers you peace of mind that your system is in safe hands. A UK-based partner is better placed to communicate effectively with your organisation, facilitating efficient response rates and high quality delivery. You also benefit from the availability of onsite support at short notice. Working with a UK based partner who understands your system and its history means you can establish long-term relationships, which add value for you through the years.

Longevity and stability

It's important to select a partner that is well-established and presents the lowest risk to your organisation. Look for information on the company's track record and relationship with existing customers. Check their financial record and make sure you are comfortable they can deliver what you are asking of them.

4. How to get the most from a managed service contract

- Adopt a managed service that detects problems quickly and resolves them before they take effect.
- Secure a proactive service that mitigates against performance problems and unscheduled downtime by identifying and correcting potential issues before they become more serious.
- Take advantage of your partner's SAP expertise. Work with them to produce roadmaps and plan for system changes and upgrades. Agree maintenance plans in advance and review these regularly to ensure they are being followed.
- Ensure your SAP system is in safe hands with automated monitoring 24x7x365.
- Ensure timely alerts can be generated and quickly processed with remedial action taken to rectify problems.
- Acquire remote access to the monitoring system to review the status of your systems and alerts at your convenience.
- Check reporting capabilities – make sure that you have a clear view of how your system is performing and a clear measurement of performance against agreed objectives. This will allow you to assess the effectiveness of the service you are receiving.
- Consider the support transition phase - whatever partner you select should have processes in place, which will allow them to familiarise themselves with your systems and business processes prior to taking on the management of your SAP application. This will make the transition to your new partner as smooth and seamless as possible, ensuring business continuity and continued productivity.
- Insist upon a dedicated account manager and support contact to facilitate effective communication and good relationships.

Absoft's offering

Absoft offers a comprehensive NetWeaver managed support service that combines automated monitoring with proactive issue resolution and additional value-added services to keep your SAP landscape in shape.

We can maintain and manage your entire SAP landscape remotely, no matter where your SAP solution is installed.

Our service is delivered using SLAs for clear accountability and can be provided for a fixed annual cost, offering complete predictability and peace of mind. It includes the following:

- 24x7x365 automated monitoring
- Alert handling
- ITIL aligned support centre
- ISO 20000 certified (Service Management)
- ISO 27001 certified (Information Security)
- SAP Partner Centre of Expertise
- Service level agreements (SLAs)
- Dedicated support desk
- Technical support
- Transport management
- System patching and support pack application
- System refreshes
- Analysis and trending

Having worked with SAP software since 1991, we pride ourselves on being large enough to meet the demands of clients of all sizes, yet small and agile enough to be responsive and flexible to meet your needs. We pay particular attention to the transition between your current and new support arrangements, as this is critical to a successful partnership and delivery of a high quality service.

Absoft is a leading independent supplier of SAP solutions and services in the UK and is an SAP Gold Partner. We have a growing SAP consultancy practice and offices in Aberdeen and London.

We offer a complete range of SAP NetWeaver support, ABAP development, and functional support for all core modules including Finance, Supply Chain, Plant Maintenance, HR and Payroll including Employee and Manager Self-Service, reporting and analytics.

Our support service can be delivered in a number of ways:

- Front office
- Back office
- Combined front and back office support
- Managed service

Call Absoft on +44 (0)1224 707088 or visit www.absoft.co.uk for more information.

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