



The Proof of Concept Upgrade - A Small Investment Today, for Significant Savings Tomorrow

One piece of advice I offer to customers as discussions of an upgrade start taking place is, before you even start writing your upgrade project plans, strongly consider executing a Proof of Concept Upgrade project. This is a low cost and extremely effective means to properly plan for and execute an SAP upgrade. In the numerous upgrades I've been involved in managing, the projects that start off with a Proof of Concept upgrade having already taken place are almost without exception the smoothest and most predictable.

A proof of concept upgrade project consists of copying your productive environment to a new system(s), performing the technical upgrade on that system, and initial functional testing taking place. Use of software testing tools can be used in conjunction with this effort as well.

No two SAP systems are "the same". Your SAP system is comprised of your servers, software, configuration, data, and connecting systems. Your SAP system will always be unique to your environment. Due to this, no two SAP upgrades are the same, and the key here is that you're gleaning as much information as possible about the total effort involved in your upgrade, before committing to a timeline, methodology, or budget.

I normally recommend a Proof of Concept upgrade take place 6 months prior to the planned start of an upgrade project. This accomplishes several things.

1. It identifies any technical dependencies that your Basis group will need to be prepared for during or before the upgrade cycle. Often times, dependencies on software versions, pre-existing issues with your SAP system (which may have been lingering unseen since your last support pack project, upgrade, or possibly, your initial installation), or possible compatibility issues with connecting systems get overlooked until you've reached the upgrade timeline. Any one of these issues could quickly turn into a timeline consuming, costly, and game changing project issue if they're not discovered before you're on a critical timeline.
2. Better prepares your functional, security, and ABAP teams for necessary changes by giving them additional insight into the changes that will be necessary during the upgrade. Once again, this information is critical for properly planning the actual upgrade timeline.
3. Identifies and familiarizes your team with new features of the software that may be of interest for implementing.

The Proof of Concept upgrade should ideally consist of a copy of your productive landscape. While many companies may find it too costly to exactly reproduce all systems involved, the closer this can be done will greatly help identify compatibility issues. Whatever the case may be, this landscape should be isolated from your actual productive landscape, and ideally, your actual upgrade timeline.



Plan on using a full database copy of your production data for the system. This will better ensure that data-related issues during the actual upgrade process are replicated during the sandbox phase, as opposed to during the critical path of your actual upgrade project timeline.

All in all, keep in mind that there is a tremendous amount of change during any SAP upgrade process and the changes involved will impact all areas of your SAP team. The more you can know early on, before going into the project, will only help you keep your project on-time, on-budget, and successful.

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About the Author

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