

**Selecting an SAP Change Control  
and Automation Solution:**  
Getting the Big Picture, Setting  
Requirements and Gaining  
User Buy-in

# Executive Summary

Selecting key component ALM tools in systems running SAP software, as in any Enterprise IT environment, requires care. This whitepaper offers a realistic best-practice approach to evaluating possible SAP change control solutions, with an eye toward maximizing stakeholder buy-in and minimizing actual Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) over the operating life of a proposed solution.

One key to successful appraisal of potential solutions is to understand an organization's actual, systemic needs and the issues at play. ALM components interact in complex ways and so it is crucial to include all key IT players on the evaluation team. A set of insets in this whitepaper identifies key players and describes their stakes in the outcome.

Given key players' insights, managers can develop a "big picture" from which to zoom in to specific issues and deal with them, rather than reacting to pain points of the moment. The entire team can develop a set of real-world requirements for a successful SAP change control automation solution.

Specific issues to consider are suggested, as well as factors affecting actual TCO. The requirements document is proposed as a gauge to assess the eventual implementation.

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# Introduction

Organizations running SAP software have a range of tools and processes to introduce changes without disrupting operations.

Most mature SAP-centric organizations utilize a combination of available SAP ALM applications and third-party ALM technologies for key change process components like Testing, Service Desk, Impact Analysis and Change Control Automation. These mixes generally work via familiar interfaces that users understand and accept.

It is crucial for any new change control and automation technology to integrate tightly with existing ALM technologies. The shift toward DevOps approaches underscores the importance of smooth component integrations.

The global SAP ecosystem offers mature, tested third-party ALM tools, whose mix creates unique change control automation needs for every organization. Understanding the organization's unique needs is crucial to developing and keeping a competitive edge.

A key factor often overlooked is the user perspective, but any successful change control automation strategy depends on user buy-in. Implementation invariably brings process and enforcement changes, for excellent reasons including faster software delivery times, improved quality, increased security, better compliance, and achieving DevOps goals. These changes will affect users in various ways; it would be a mistake to ignore their effects.

When you include all key stakeholders (see insets to right), they can offer important insights. When changes are needed, they will understand why. Given their buy-in, they become "change evangelists" who can communicate the value, not just for the organization, but for users in their own departments.



## SAP COE Director

I support the Business with SAP IT services and am responsible for system stability. The buck stops at my desk if things go wrong, so I need to be there from the start.



## SAP Architect

I am responsible for the development effort of SAP systems solutions and remain involved throughout the balance of the project – if our change control solution isn't flexible and adaptable, it will cripple me.



## Security Lead

SAP has many strengths including speed of data access, but it becomes a weakness if I'm left out of important change control and automation tool decisions.

# Why Change Control Has Become So Important

Major analyst firms concur that integrating ALM tools must be high on the CIO agenda, with or without current DevOps initiatives. Change control interacts with established processes in a dual or two-way manner that has brought it into the CIO crosshairs as crucial to good governance, reliability and risk control.

With today's larger, more complex SAP infrastructures, managers must approach change control tool selection decisions with a system-comprehensive view. The decision process needs to be much more than scanning checklists of desired features.

“ Whether solving process issues or designing a DevOps initiative, you need more than old-fashioned check lists of component features.

It can be difficult to change familiar third-party tools. There's no way to simply "swap out" well established processes and system interactions without modifying functionality and processes that currently work. The unintended consequences can add up to many consulting hours and long potential delays in delivering new systems or processes. Such incidental costs and delays add to a TCO that can quickly balloon into a much higher price tag than originally expected or promised.

A CIO with a mandate to do "more with less" must therefore evaluate more than a tool's up-front cost. TCO must also count the cost and time to implement, the ease or difficulty of use, difficulty of maintenance and reconfiguration, user training needs, administrator and contractor resources required, and more.

Change control is the hub where all system and process modifications converge, so the first and most important assessment step is to understand the specific change control needs of your key players. A selection team that represents all key stakeholders will maximize success and prepare you well for tomorrow's business challenges.



## Audit Manager

I prepare for and manage mandated software audits. I'd like a change control solution that can increase my performance and reduce my audit time requirements.



## Project Management Officer

I define the management standards for all SAP projects across all business units, so my ideal change control solution will afford me the visibility I need and enforced process compliance.



## SAP Project Manager

Of vital importance to me is managing the scope of work and on time delivery. I need a change control solution that provides real time project status and to assist in managing scope change.

# Some Team Members Need A “Big Picture” View

Some tool selection team members need a broad, “Big Picture” perspective from which to zoom down to relevant details or pain points. This perspective enables them to understand real systemic issues that are the actual cause of particular pain points or problems.

Given an accurate “Big Picture,” your whole team can now define specific requirements, assess alternatives, and select the technology that best meets your needs. The resulting business benefits will often include elements such as clean audits, higher productivity, faster response to business requests, improved system stability, and other measurable IT ROI goals.

Some “Big Picture” areas to consider:

- **Business environment:** Is it stable or changing rapidly? Can you anticipate changes accurately enough to plan for stable, non-reactive business evolution?
- **Regulatory environment:** Are you tightly regulated or fall under SOX or similar oversight constraints? Consider the most stringent regulatory mandates when setting requirements for governance and policy enforcement.
- **Your organization’s reach:** If you operate across multiple regions or globally, how well can a change control technology manage parallel team development across time zones or business units?
- **Release management needs:** Do you support a dense flow of transactions, as in financial enterprises? Do you face quickly evolving business situations? Can the technology support multi-track release strategies?
- **Seasonal requirements:** Does business volume increase at specific times of the year? Are there financial periods when you need to restrict change?

Your list will depend on your industry and your ALM strategy and may change over time, but will always impact the “Big Picture” that allows your assessment and requirements to be more than just reactive or driven by the pains of a moment.



## SAP Functional Lead

I handle a lot of configuration. I need visibility of changes into DEV and QAS status so I can resolve problems. If the change tool doesn't deliver, that's a serious problem.



## SAP Developer Lead

I want to provide my developers with a working environment where they “can't go wrong” – where the right people are accountable and where processes are automated and enforced.



## SAP Basis Lead

I configure, monitor, and troubleshoot the SAP technical environment. Auto-migration of transports and flexible release management are crucial to me.

# Transforming Business Goals Into Requirements

With the “Big Picture” in mind, the full team can now create a real-world requirements strategy that addresses any current business-side issues. The more thorough your requirements, the better you can assess a proposed solution’s ability to deliver.

System specifics to consider:

- **Current process bottlenecks:** Can cause slow response times.
- **Needed degree of automation:** SAP sets a goal of no more than two full-time employees per shift for shepherding changes, but no two companies are the same. Better automation will reduce the required staff.
- **Integration into current processes:** A solution that fits current processes will cause fewer disruptions and improve user buy-in.
- **“Pinch points” and in-process changes:** Do you use different tiers of authorizations or do all changes funnel through a single manager or office? How can you relieve “pinch points”?
- **“Pivot points” that magnify the effects of change:** For example, overwriting of BAU changes can disrupt a system with a high volume of transports.
- **Change documentation:** Incomplete documentation causes audit exceptions and can impede development. Example: A staff change leaves you struggling to figure out why and how something was done.
- **Policy enforcement:** Staff members may resort to work-arounds to avoid bottlenecks, developers may “piggyback” unauthorized, on-the-fly changes onto transports created by others, and systems can diverge from the documented state. Problems become increasingly difficult to troubleshoot.
- **Where can automation help?** Manual procedures carry risks of human error. Consider automation to ameliorate resulting problems.
- **Access to vital information:** How much digging does it take to identify who requested a change, why, when, and where a current change transport may be (DEV, QAS, PRD)?
- **Risk reduction:** Does a candidate solution check required approvals before moving changes forward? Can it send alerts when problems occur?
- **Exceptions:** Can a solution deal gracefully with exceptions as well as with expected events?

- **Time/cost to implementation + ongoing maintenance:** Will it take a year and a million dollars? A month plus two million dollars annually for continuing maintenance? Can you redeploy people to higher-value tasks, increasing their productivity and improving your ROI? Are expensive specialists needed to administer the solution?
- **Support:** Will your tool administrator have access to responsive and effective vendor support?

The answers will disqualify approaches that are less capable or less flexible than you need. The right solution won't leave you scrambling to solve unanticipated problems. Be very specific about what you need *before* you make your selection.

During implementation, keep your requirements document close at hand. It provides a gauge of how well a strategy has performed. If you contract for implementation support by a consultancy or other outside expert, your requirements document will ensure the solution is properly configured and will eliminate questions about the scope of the project.

## Conclusion

This whitepaper draws on Revelation Software Concepts' 17 years of experience simplifying SAP change control and automation. Our flagship product, Rev-Trac, allows rapid implementation, training and configuration out of the box, so your people can *manage change* rather than "doing change management".

The right solution will address the needs of all key stakeholders and will help Dev and Ops teams to work more closely together. It will provide real-time information about process changes and change clusters. Users can find out how close requested changes are to completion and can provide feedback to fine-tune changes early in the process. Developers can quickly identify their work in progress, tracking it through testing and approvals. Basis team members can quickly identify and resolve migration-related issues, and can move from managing transports to truly managing change.

When all key players help define requirements, you will know how well proposed solutions can deal with the underlying issues your team discovered. Your users will understand "what's in it for them" and will give you faster, more problem-free buy-in at the operating level.

# Additional Resources

All companies need confidence in a new solution's ROI. We've developed an [ROI Guide](#) to help you capture the most important ROI points the "Big Picture" people will need to see after implementation. When you deliver hard data, you will look like a hero.

Any of the following may help you set realistic project requirements:

- [SAP Change and Release Management: A Multi-track Approach to Continuous Delivery](#)
- [The Fully Automated SAP ALM "Factory": The Benefits of Change Control Software as Integration Facilitator](#)
- [Automating SAP Change Control Audit Compliance](#)
- [Key Points for Senior SAP IT Management: Crafting a Fully Automated SAP Change Release Strategy](#)
- [Rev-Trac Consulting: Risk, Complexity and Budgeting for a Rev-Trac Implementation](#)

## About the Author



As Vice President Business Development, Rick Porter is responsible for RSC's sales and marketing strategy and for sales of RSC products and services. This includes researching and understanding the change control challenges faced by SAP IT teams and the broad range of solutions available, including how best to position RSC's change control software products.

If you find this whitepaper helpful, you might wish to subscribe to the [SAP Change Control Blog](#) where he regularly contributes.



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