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VIEW POINT

FROM LEGACY TO FUTURE-READY: TRANSFORMING IT FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE EXPANSION

Abstract

This Point-of-View talks about the complex elements of Program Management, and Delivery execution in a time-boxed, post-acquisition governed by Transition Service Agreements (TSAs), where we executed a full IT and business process separation and transformation for a specialty fine-foods distributor. We stood up a reusable New platform architecture on Azure; implemented Dynamics 365 Business Central with an F&B ISV (independent software vendor); uplifted networks, SecOps, EUC (Intune/Autopilot), O365/SharePoint, cloud printing, and Teams-based contact center telephony; coordinated multi-party dependencies; and stood up a new National Distribution Centre (NDC) ~10× the size of the previous central fulfilment depot, enabling national coverage and future acquisitions, all with continuity through TSA milestones.

Business Case Introduction

The acquired business ran on legacy, on-prem/hosted platforms tightly coupled to the seller: legacy ERP system, limited bandwidth and Wi-Fi, server-bound telephony and printing, and seller-imaged devices. TSA expiry windows made a clean, low-risk exit essential, while the growth thesis required scale, resilience, and repeatability for future acquisitions. The proposed solution was a cloud-first target state, SaaS ERP, Azure landing zones, secure connectivity, O365 tenant move, cloud printing, Teams telephony, and a structured OCM and SI&T plan, delivered via phased workshops and fit-gap rigor to minimize customization and accelerate time-to-value.

Application of Learnings from Prior Programs

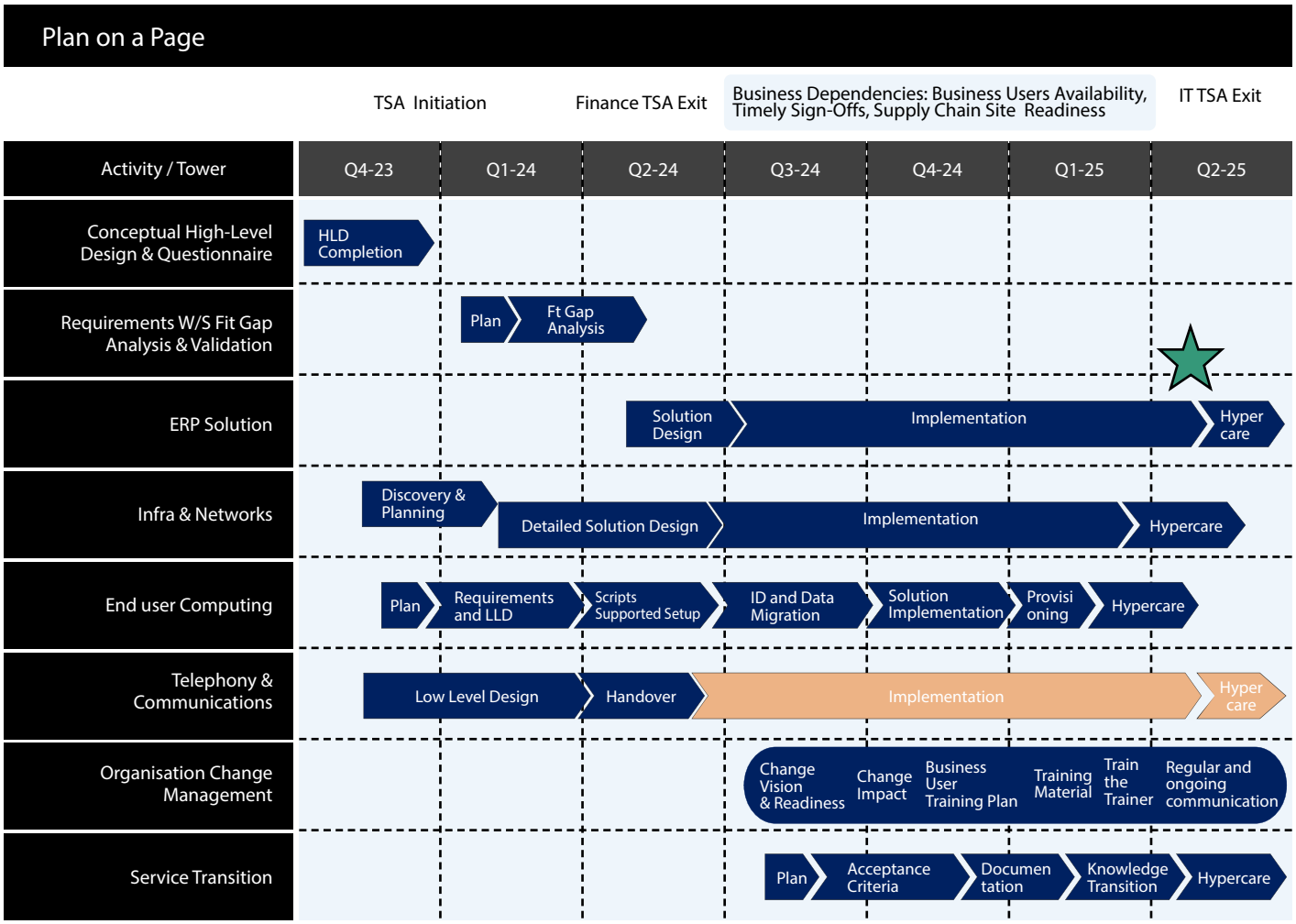
We reused proven patterns from earlier engagements: O365/SharePoint migration playbooks (BitTitan/Sharegate), a fit-gap canon and process maps that became reference points, and an Azure platform pattern expressly designed to onboard new acquisitions with minimal friction.

Delivery of Reusable Conceptual Platform HLD & Acquisitions Questionnaire

We published a Conceptual Platform High-Level Design (HLD) covering ERP, integrations, cloud infrastructure, networks & SecOps, EUC, cloud printing, telephony, and data migration; plus, a practical acquisitions questionnaire to quickly profile target businesses and pre-size integration work.

Program & Delivery Management

Delivery ran through Kick-off → Workshops → Fit-Gap → Design → Build/Config → SIT (two passes) → Data migration iterations → UAT → Cutover → Hypercare, synchronized to the TSA initiation, Finance TSA exit, and IT TSA exit marking the Seller's TSA Exit. A PMO drove milestones, dependencies, vendor scorecards, and executive governance. Civil works delays for circuits were neutralized with satellite internet to protect test and cutover windows; peak trading windows were ring-fenced; and critical incidents were managed with war rooms and cross-vendor triage.



Finance TSA

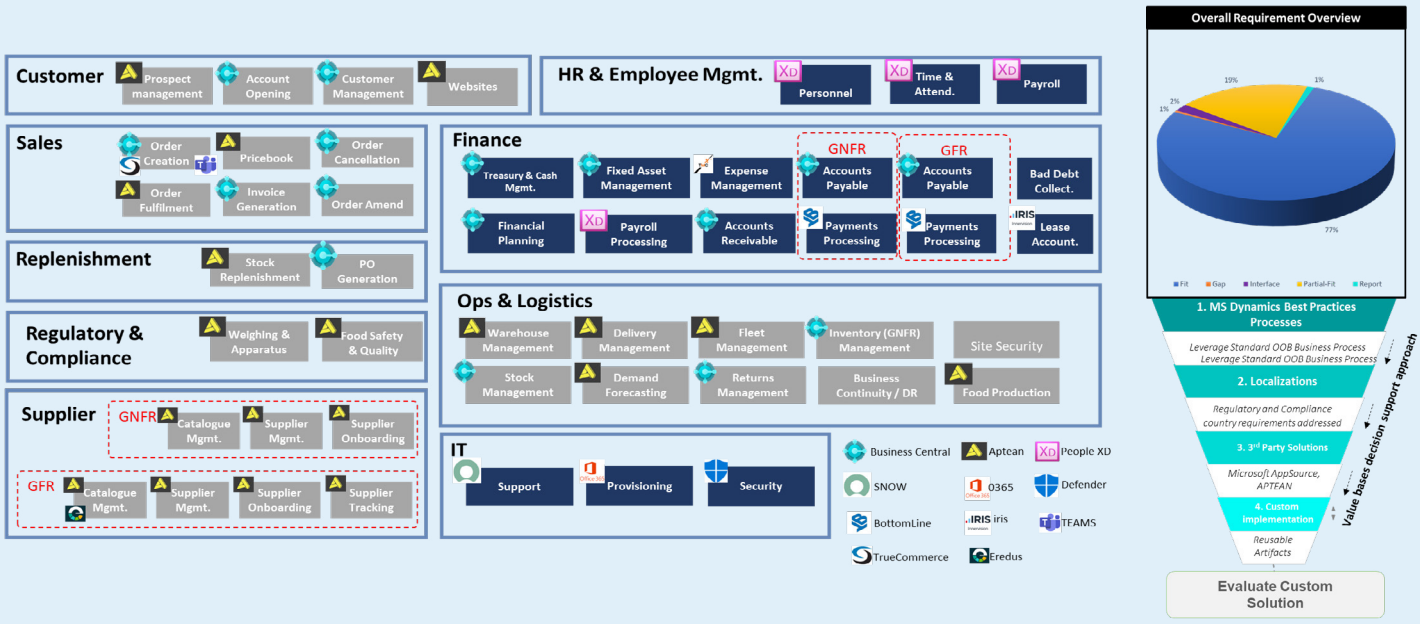
We sequenced the transition of finance flows (payments, banking rails, AR/AP) from seller-operated solutions to target-operated/retained platforms, ensuring continuity while decoupling identity, access, and data ownership ahead of final exit.test and cutover windows; peak trading windows were ring-fenced; and critical incidents were managed with war rooms and cross-vendor triage.

Co-ordination with 3rd Parties and Incumbent Partners

The program coordinated a broad ecosystem, seller IT, EDI provider, payments partner, ISVs, carrier and telephony, network/security OEMs, satellite providers, and device supply, under a unified plan with dependency maps and scorecards.

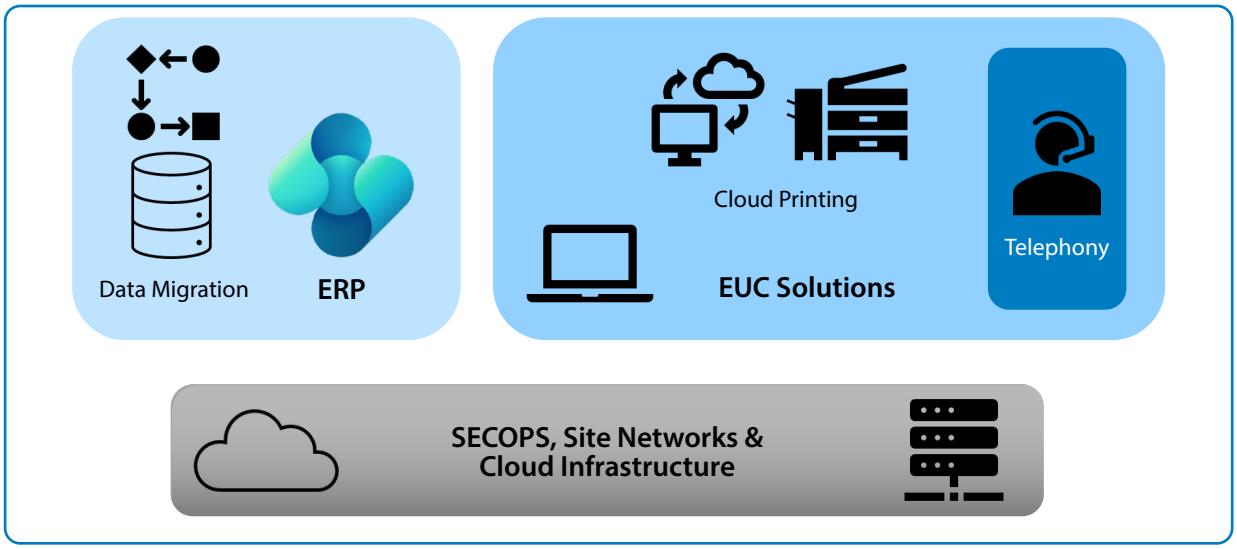
Fit-Gap Analysis

Workshops covered O2C, GFR/GNFR, customer onboarding, finance, HR, supply chain & warehouse, compliance, IT access/identity/hardware, master data, integrations, and data migration planning. Each requirement was classified as Fit / Partial Fit / Gap / ISV / Interface and evaluated through a configuration-first funnel.



Solution Architecture

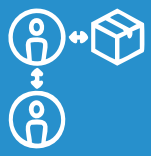
A cloud-first target architecture combined SaaS ERP, Azure platform, zero-trust aligned identity & access, network segmentation and IPSec, and device/cloud service management, uniform across depots to simplify operations and scale.



Capability	Pre-TSA / Legacy Solutions	End-State Solution
Identity & EUC	Legacy AD; limited cloud management; ad-hoc device provisioning; interim access paths to legacy systems.	All users cloud-managed under Azure AD; Intune + Autopilot for standardized device lifecycle; role-based access across personas (Ops/Admin/Managers/Field).
ERP	Legacy ERP (e.g., BCP Accord) used for history; bespoke processes; limited modern reporting.	D365 Business Central + ISV F&B; standardized modules; opening balances & open transactional data migrated; historical retained read-only in Accord.
Integrations & EDI	Fragmented/missing integration coverage in SIT; manual exchanges; print server dependencies.	Standardized BC APIs/REST; Externally Provisioned EDI for B2B; cloud printing via External Partner; reusable patterns across acquisitions.
Infrastructure & Security	On prem/legacy network dependencies; unclear integration expectations; sporadic VPN planning.	Azure landing zone for retained apps; dual UTM firewalls (HA) + Site to Azure IPSEC VPN; Cisco Umbrella for web filtering; internet first access; Customer governance.
Telephony	Planning not fully aligned to overall milestones; discovery gaps; variable support expectations.	Consolidated scope aligned to ERP/EUC; defined workshops & sizing; support model options (24x7 vs 8x5) with BAU handover.
Data & Reporting	Data cleansing issues; limited analytics; reliance on legacy reports.	BC standard reports + Power BI; governed migration; BCP Accord retained read only; defined data ownership.

ERP – Business Central

We implemented D365 Business Central (SaaS) with an F&B ISV to cover finance, sales, purchasing, inventory, warehousing, and reporting. Two-pass SIT, iterative data rehearsals, and phased cutover underpinned a clean go-live. We implemented D365 Business Central (SaaS) with an F&B ISV to cover finance, sales, purchasing, inventory, warehousing, and reporting. Two-pass SIT, iterative data rehearsals, and phased cutover underpinned a clean go-live.



3rd-Party Integrations

We retained/uplifted EDI patterns and payments/banking integrations, plus technical product data and peripherals (e.g., scales/time systems), with hardened interface contracts and synchronized vendor test cycles.

Cloud Infrastructure

We deployed an Azure landing zone (core & subscriptions) with infrastructure-as-code, policy/compliance controls, DR posture, and cost-optimized resource patterns, positioned explicitly for repeatable onboarding of future acquisitions.

Networks & SecOps

We moved from low-bandwidth wired links and sparse Wi-Fi to secure internet breakout, S2S/IPSec, pervasive enterprise Wi-Fi, and policy-driven egress controls. Where fiber was delayed, satellite backstops kept sites productive.

Office 365 / SharePoint Migration

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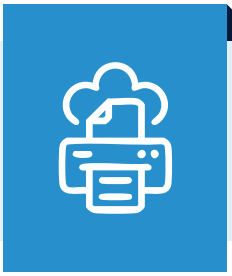
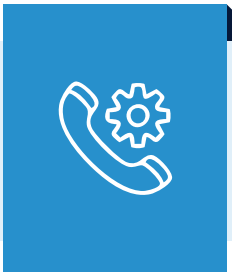
End User Computing — Intune & Autopilot

We rolled out Autopilot for zero-touch provisioning and Intune for device posture/management, retiring seller-imaged hardware and delivering better UX, stronger security, and lower run-costs.



Cloud Printing

We replaced on-prem print servers with a solution provisioned through external partners for driverless, centrally-managed printing across offices and warehouses, a cleaner security and support model.

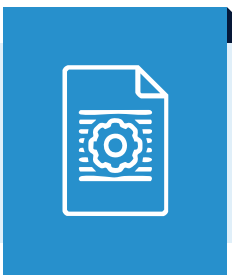


Telephony

We designed Microsoft Teams Phone + Contact Center; implementation was executed with a carrier partner. We sequenced number porting, licensing, handsets/headsets, call-flow design, and training to land concurrent with identity changes and site cutovers.

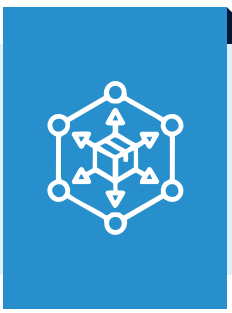
Organization Change Management

We applied a seven-pillar, people-centric framework: case for change; stakeholder engagement; change impact & role mapping; persona-based learning journeys; business readiness tracking; adoption KPIs; and lessons-learned loops.



Service Introduction & Transition

We operated a Transition Mode of Operation (TMO) for coexistence during TSA. Principles: work around TSA dates & ownership, minimize user/customer impact, phase onboarding, fail-fast/learn-quick. We handed over service catalogs, RACI, SOPs, KBs, test evidence, and BAU support alignment.



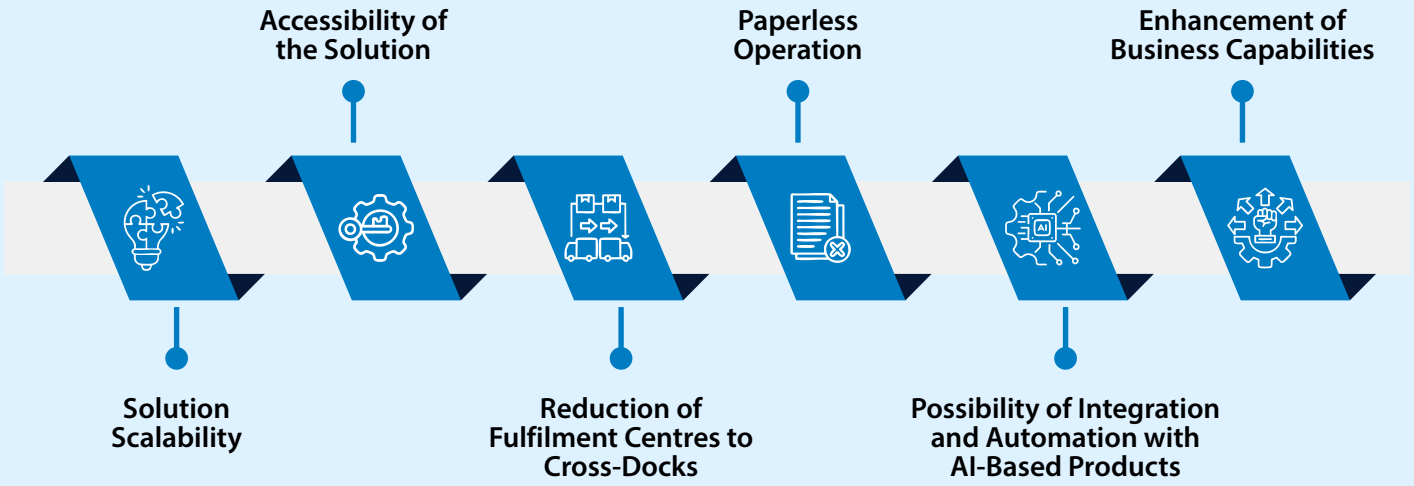
Depot Extraction & NDC Launch

Executing a full extraction while operating from the seller's premises required careful identity sequencing, access routing, device refresh, and interim connectivity. The new NDC (~10× larger than the prior depot) demanded capacity-grade connectivity, resilient security, handhelds/scanners, label print, and re-calibrated bin strategies to support higher SKU velocity and movement capacity.

Problems and mitigations

Connectivity/civil work delays mitigated via satellite internet provisioning; peripheral integration defects resolved through two-pass SIT; peak-season constraints handled with freeze windows and contingency plans; training saturation addressed via micro-learning and floor-walking.

Business Value Unlocked



1. Solution Scalability

The integrated IT solution is architected for seamless scalability, supporting business growth toward the 2030 vision of £100 million in annual revenue. Modular infrastructure and cloud-native services enable rapid onboarding of new business units, product lines, and geographies without major rework or disruption. This ensures the platform can flexibly accommodate increased transaction volumes, user counts, and evolving operational requirements.

2. Accessibility of the Solution

A cloud-first, mobile-enabled approach ensures that business users, partners, and customers can securely access core systems from any location and device. This accessibility underpins agile decision-making, supports remote and hybrid work models, and enhances collaboration across the value chain. The solution's intuitive interfaces and role-based access controls further drive adoption and productivity.

3. Reduction of Fulfilment Centres to Cross-Docks

By transitioning from traditional fulfilment centres to a cross-dock model, the business achieves significant reductions in inventory holding costs, lead times, and operational complexity. The IT platform supports real-time inventory visibility, automated routing, and integration with logistics partners, enabling efficient cross-docking and rapid order fulfilment. This operational shift aligns with the business's lean, scalable growth strategy.

4. Paperless Operation

The solution is designed to enable a fully paperless operation, digitizing all core business processes, from procurement and sales to warehouse management and invoicing. Automated workflows, electronic document management, and digital signatures eliminate manual paperwork, reduce errors, and improve compliance. This not only supports sustainability goals but also accelerates process cycles and enhances data accuracy.

5. Possibility of Integration and Automation with AI-Based Products

The platform's open architecture and robust APIs facilitate seamless integration with automation tools and AI-driven products. This enables the business to leverage advanced analytics, intelligent forecasting, and Sales Order Processing Optimization, while also laying the groundwork for future adoption of machine learning capabilities, such as CoPilot integration, for continuous process improvement. As a result, the organization can proactively respond to market changes, optimize resource allocation, and unlock new revenue streams.

6. Enhancement of Business Capabilities

The transformation delivers enhanced capabilities across all business functions. Real-time data insights empower informed decision-making, while standardized processes and best-practice workflows drive operational excellence. The solution's flexibility supports ongoing innovation, enabling the business to rapidly launch new services, adapt to customer needs, and maintain a competitive edge in a dynamic market.

Lessons Learned

1. Governance & Leadership

- Assign a dedicated Program Manager from initiation to closure within the Business to avoid confusion and ensure accountability.
- Strengthen governance with clear escalation paths and decision forums for change requests.
- Early stakeholder mapping and introductions are critical for building rapport and collaboration.
- PMO oversight is essential for coordination and timely updates, especially for cross-functional streams like telephony.

2. Scope & Requirements Management

- Finalize scope and design early with stakeholder alignment to prevent delays and rework.
- Involve users from every business unit during requirement gathering to avoid missing critical needs.
- Thorough requirement capturing and clarity are needed to minimize late-stage changes.

3. Resource Planning & Skills

- Prepare BAU teams with the right skillsets and transition plans for post-go-live support.
- Resource availability should be balanced across all IT and Business workstreams to avoid prioritization issues.

4. User Involvement & Change Management

- Engage the OCM team and business leads early to manage change and communication.
- Early user involvement and hands-on training are crucial for building confidence and reducing resistance.
- Empower change champions and ensure site/module-wise ownership for smoother adoption.

5. Communication & Collaboration

- Transparent dialogue builds trust and reduce resistance to change.
- Cross-team collaboration and open conversations are vital for project success.
- Collaboration with third parties should be planned and monitored to avoid delays.

6. Execution Discipline

- Mock runs, detailed reviews, and project logs help reduce rework and improve readiness.
- Splitting SIT into two phases and engaging test managers with business leads improves coverage.
- Dry runs and mock sessions validate readiness for cutover and go-live.

7. Training & Enablement

- Identify and engage with Change Champions as Super Users as Trainers for initiating the training.
- Blend classroom-based and virtual training, with hands-on practice and early access to systems.
- Documentation should be available at the time of training, and trainer enablement sessions should be conducted before rollout.
- In-person support and sufficient licenses are necessary for effective UAT and go-live.

8. Integration & Technical Planning

- 3rd Parties, Infrastructure and ERP teams must plan integration together from the outset.
- Application stack requirements and hardware device readiness should be defined early.
- Use templated solutions from previous engagements where possible.

9. Cutover, Go-Live & Hypercare

- Combined business and technical cutover plans, with clear ownership and dry runs, are essential.
- Hypercare governance should be extensive, with strict readiness and risk log criteria.
- On-site presence of ERP and support teams during cutover and hypercare improves issue resolution.

10. Continuous Improvement

- Feedback loops, regular reviews, and project log trackers help adjust deliverables and fit evolving needs.
- Assertiveness in decision-making and risk communication should be encouraged.
- Dedicated governance calls for change requests and commercial discussions improve responsiveness.

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