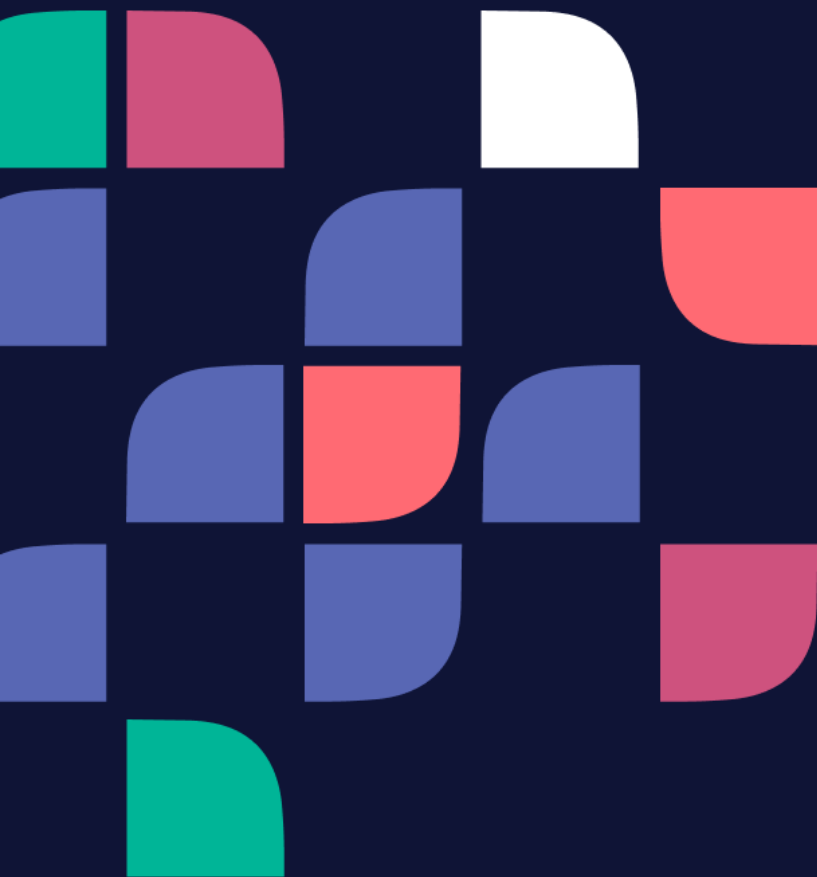


Maximising value from SAP in life sciences & healthcare

How to move beyond system maintenance and unlock
business performance





Introduction

For many Life Sciences and Healthcare organisations, SAP sits at the heart of the business. It supports planning, manufacturing, procurement, supply chain operations, finance, quality management, and regulatory processes. Significant investment has often been made over many years to build a platform capable of supporting growth, compliance, and operational efficiency.

Yet despite this investment, many organisations find themselves asking an important question:

Are we getting the full value from SAP?

The reality is that achieving go-live is only one stage of the journey. Many organisations implement SAP successfully but fail to realise the operational improvements, efficiency gains, and business benefits outlined in the original business case. Processes remain inefficient. Manual workarounds increase. Reporting challenges persist. User adoption stalls. Opportunities for optimisation are missed.

Over time, what was intended as a platform for transformation can become little more than a system that keeps the lights on. The organisations achieving the strongest return on their SAP investment take a different approach. They view SAP not as a project that ended at go-live, but as a business capability that requires continual improvement.

This guide explores how Life Sciences and Healthcare organisations can move beyond system maintenance and unlock greater business value from their SAP environment.

The go-live myth

For many organisations, go-live is treated as the finish line. In reality, go-live should be viewed as a starting point. The period immediately following deployment is often when organisations begin to understand:

How users interact with the system

Which processes are working effectively

Where inefficiencies remain

What additional opportunities exist

As business requirements evolve, systems must evolve too. Organisations that treat SAP as a static environment often struggle to keep pace with changing operational needs. Those that embrace continuous improvement are more likely to achieve sustained value from their investment.

Why SAP value often diminishes over time

Most SAP environments do not become inefficient overnight. The decline is usually gradual. A workaround is introduced to solve a short-term problem. A manual process remains in place because no one revisits it. Reporting requirements evolve faster than system capabilities. Business processes change, but the supporting technology remains unchanged.

Over time, organisations often experience:

Increasing manual intervention

Reduced process efficiency

Declining user adoption

Growing support requirements

Inconsistent data quality

Limited reporting visibility

These issues may develop slowly, but they can significantly affect business performance.



The signs your SAP environment may be underperforming

Every organisation is different, but several indicators appear consistently.

Excessive spreadsheet dependency

Teams rely heavily on offline reporting and manual analysis.

Duplicate processes

The same activities are performed multiple times across different teams.

Low user adoption

Employees develop their own workarounds rather than using standard processes.

Inconsistent data

Critical information varies between systems and departments.

Planning challenges

Supply chain and operational teams struggle to trust forecasting and planning outputs.

Increasing support demands

Internal teams spend more time resolving issues than improving performance.

These symptoms often indicate untapped opportunities for optimisation.

The five foundations of SAP value realisation

1. Align SAP with business objectives

One of the most common mistakes organisations make is focusing on technology rather than outcomes. The real question should never be:

"What can SAP do?" Instead, it should be: "What does the business need to achieve?"

Examples may include:

Improving forecast accuracy

Reducing inventory

Strengthening compliance

Improving manufacturing efficiency

Enhancing customer service

Increasing supply chain visibility

Technology should support business objectives, not define them. The strongest organisations continually assess how SAP contributes to strategic goals.

2. Improve process efficiency

Many businesses inherit processes that have evolved over time. Some remain effective. Others become unnecessarily complex.

Successful organisations regularly review areas such as:

Procurement

Planning

Manufacturing

Inventory management

Quality processes

Finance operations

The objective is to identify opportunities to streamline activities, reduce manual effort, and improve consistency. Process optimisation often delivers some of the fastest and most measurable business benefits.

3. Strengthen data quality

SAP environments depend on reliable information.

Poor data quality can affect:

Forecasting accuracy

Inventory management

Reporting

Regulatory compliance

Operational decision-making

Common challenges include:

Duplicate records

Inconsistent master data



Limited governance

Incomplete information

Organisations that prioritise data quality create a stronger foundation for operational excellence. Trust in business processes often starts with trust in the data.

4. Increase user adoption

Even the most sophisticated SAP environment will struggle to deliver value if people do not use it effectively. Many organisations underestimate the relationship between user adoption and business performance. When users lack confidence in the system, they often create alternative processes.

This can lead to:

Duplicate work

Reduced visibility

Inconsistent reporting

Poor data quality

Successful organisations invest in:

Training

Process education

User engagement

Ongoing support

Technology creates potential. People create value.

5. Establish a continuous improvement mindset

SAP optimisation is not a one-off initiative. Business requirements evolve. Regulatory expectations change. Market conditions shift.

The most successful organisations review their SAP environment regularly and ask:

Where are inefficiencies emerging?

Which processes need improvement?

How can we simplify the user experience?

Are we delivering the benefits we expected?

Continuous improvement enables SAP to remain aligned with business priorities over time.

Why life sciences organisations face unique challenges

Life Sciences and Healthcare businesses operate in highly regulated environments. This creates additional complexity.

SAP environments often support:

Batch traceability

Quality management

Regulatory compliance

Product lifecycle management

Controlled manufacturing processes

Supply continuity requirements

As organisations grow and regulations evolve, maintaining alignment between business requirements and system capabilities becomes increasingly important. Optimisation is not simply about efficiency. It is also about protecting compliance and supporting operational integrity.

Moving from support to business value

Many organisations view application support as a reactive function. Issues occur. Tickets are logged. Problems are resolved. While support remains essential, leading organisations are increasingly shifting towards a more proactive model.

Rather than simply maintaining the environment, they focus on:

Process improvement

User adoption

Business performance

System optimization

Capability enhancement



This creates a stronger connection between SAP investment and measurable business outcomes.

The role of Application Management Services (AMS)

Application Management Services are often associated with support activities. However, modern AMS models can deliver far more value.

Effective AMS functions help organisations:

Identify improvement opportunities

Optimise business processes

Enhance user experience

Maintain data quality

Reduce technical debt

Support strategic initiatives

The objective is not simply stability. It is continuous value creation. Organisations that view AMS as a strategic capability often achieve greater long-term returns from their SAP investment.

Unlocking more value from planning processes

Planning remains one of the areas where SAP can deliver significant business impact.

Life Sciences organisations frequently face challenges relating to:

Forecast accuracy

Inventory optimisation

Supply continuity

Demand variability

Manufacturing constraints

By improving planning processes and enabling better visibility across supply and demand, organisations can make more informed decisions and improve operational performance. Small improvements in planning accuracy often generate significant value across the wider business.

Measuring SAP performance

To improve value, organisations need meaningful measures.

Examples include:

User adoption rates

Process cycle times

Forecast accuracy

Inventory performance

Service levels

Data quality measures

Support volumes

Process automation levels

These indicators provide insight into whether SAP is delivering the outcomes the business expects. If performance is not measured, it becomes difficult to improve.

Common barriers to SAP optimisation

While most organisations recognise the importance of optimisation, several obstacles often emerge.

Competing priorities

Day-to-day activities consume resources that could be focused on improvement.

Technical debt

Historic decisions create complexity within the environment.

Resource constraints

Internal teams lack capacity to drive optimisation initiatives.

Change resistance

Established processes become difficult to challenge.

Lack of ownership

No clear accountability exists for continuous improvement.

Recognising these barriers is an important first step.



What high-performing organisations do differently

Organisations extracting the greatest value from SAP often share several characteristics. They:

Treat SAP as a business capability rather than a system.

Focus on outcomes rather than functionality.

Invest in data quality.

Drive user adoption.

Pursue continuous improvement

Align technology with business priorities.

Most importantly, they understand that value realisation does not happen automatically. It requires ongoing attention and deliberate action.

Looking ahead

The Life Sciences and Healthcare sector continues to evolve. Supply chains are becoming more complex. Regulatory demands are increasing. Planning requirements are becoming more sophisticated. Data volumes continue to grow.

In this environment, organisations need SAP environments that support agility, visibility, and better decision-making. The businesses that continuously improve will be better positioned to adapt to future challenges and opportunities.

Final thoughts

SAP is one of the most significant investments many Life Sciences and Healthcare organisations will make. The question is not whether the system is operational. The question is whether it is delivering measurable business value.

The organisations that achieve the strongest results move beyond maintenance and support. They focus on optimisation, adoption, process improvement, and continuous enhancement. By aligning SAP with business objectives, investing in data quality, improving user adoption, and embracing a culture of continual improvement, organisations can unlock significantly greater value from their investment.



The most successful SAP environments are not simply maintained. They are continually improved.

About TCT

At TCT, we help Life Sciences and Healthcare organisations maximise value from their SAP investments through consultancy, Application Management Services (AMS), planning expertise, operational readiness, and business process optimisation. We work alongside business and technology teams to improve performance, strengthen adoption, and ensure SAP continues to deliver measurable business outcomes long after go-live.

Looking to unlock greater value from your SAP environment? Speak to TCT about how our consultancy, AMS, and planning experts can help you optimise processes, improve adoption, and drive continuous improvement.



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