

The AMS Transition Playbook

From provider change to value creation



Why AMS transitions matter now

The SAP ecosystem is entering a period of unprecedented AMS transition activity. During **2026–2027**, more organisations are expected to change AMS partners than at any point in recent years. This shift is driven by a convergence of forces across the SAP landscape:

- **S/4HANA transformation programmes**, where organisations realign AMS to preferred system integrators or migration partners.
- **The rise of AI-enabled SAP operations**, prompting some organisations to seek AMS partners with strong innovation and automation credentials.
- **Value reassessment of existing AMS contracts**, where enterprises look to unlock greater return on their SAP investment through deeper functional expertise, stronger governance, and more flexible commercials.
- **Cost-led optimisation strategies**, with many organisations moving to third-party AMS providers *without* migrating to S/4HANA, prioritising stability and efficiency over large-scale transformation.

In every scenario, one factor determines success or failure: **The quality of the transition.**

Reframing transition: From handover to value engine

Too often, AMS transition is treated as simple onboarding or worse, as a low-risk operational handover. This is a critical mistake. There is **no magic wand** in changing providers. Service quality does not improve automatically, and value does not appear by default. Without a structured, outcome-driven transition approach, organisations risk:

- Service disruption
- Loss of critical system and business knowledge
- Poor governance inheritance
- Delayed value realisation

A successful transition is **deliberate, disciplined, and collaborative**. Done well, it delivers:

- Stability from day one
- Effective knowledge transfer (technical *and* business)
- Clear governance and accountability
- Early value creation
- A genuine partnership mindset from the outset

Transition is not about changing service ownership. It is about **creating the foundation for long-term success**.

Principles of an effective AMS transition

An effective AMS transition should be:

Outcome-Focused – designed to deliver both immediate stability and future value

Governed – with clear roles, decision rights, and escalation paths

Collaborative – treating transition as a joint programme, not a supplier task

Business-Aware – anchored in end-to-end business processes, not just SAP modules

Value-Led – identifying optimisation opportunities without compromising go-live readiness

AMS transition governance model

Strong governance from day one is non-negotiable.

Mandatory roles

Transition Manager

Leads the transition end-to-end and owns delivery of milestones, risks, and outcomes.

Service Delivery Manager (SDM)

Actively involved from Day One not post-transition. Responsible for long-term service excellence.

Head of SDM / Head of AMS (Executive Sponsor)

Provides strategic oversight, removes blockers, and anchors the partnership.

Those accountable for your future success must be present at the start not introduced later.

The transition framework (what good looks like)

A successful AMS transition should include, but is not limited to, the following elements:

Structured transition programme

A collaborative project plan, owned jointly

- Based on a proven transition methodology
- Designed to support:
 - The current (as-is) landscape
 - The future (to-be) direction

Transition is a project treat it like one.

Access, connectivity & knowledge transfer

- System access and security provisioning
- Documentation review and validation
- Structured knowledge transfer covering:
 - SAP systems and integrations

- Custom developments
- **End-to-end business processes** that underpin operations

This goes far beyond SAP transactions, it is about how the business actually runs.

Operating model & CoE advisory

Guidance on:

- Target Operating Model
- Roles and responsibilities
- Governance structure
- Tools and automation opportunities

Transition is the ideal moment to reset *how*AMS operates not simply replicate the past.

Defined ways of working

Clear operating procedures, including:

- Rules of engagement
- Incident and ticket routing
- Transport and release windows
- Change Advisory Board (CAB) processes
- Escalation paths
- Hours of operation
- Named points of contact

Clarity here prevents friction later.

Governance cadence

Agree and lock in engagement rhythms:

- Weekly operational sessions
- Monthly service reviews
- Quarterly governance and roadmap reviews
- Annual strategic planning

Consistency drives trust and transparency.

Stakeholder integration

- Meet key business and IT stakeholders
- Face-to-face engagement wherever possible
- Tours of operational environments
- Early relationship building

You are forming **one team with a shared objective**.

Shared definition of success

Clearly document:

- What success looks like
- How it will be measured
- What good means for this organisation

This alignment is essential and often overlooked.

Early value identification

Identify:

- Short-term stabilisation and quick wins
- Medium-term optimisation opportunities

These are assessed but not allowed to derail transition milestones.

Transition acceptance

Formal sign-off

Mutual confidence that:

- Knowledge has transferred
- Governance is operating
- Both parties are ready

A symbolic and practical **handshake**.

Value creation during transition (beyond the basics)

A strong AMS partner continuously identifies improvement opportunities *during* transition while keeping service go-live on track.

Value-driven outputs at transition closure

Clearly prioritised optimisation opportunities

Business value assessment:

- Operational impact
- Financial benefit
- Risk reduction

Inputs that support internal business cases and investment decisions This demonstrates partnership not just delivery.

Optional value-add services (highly recommended)

When integrated thoughtfully into transition, these services accelerate value and reduce risk:

Security & vulnerability assessment

- Identifies gaps in the current landscape
- Reduces exposure to cyber risk
- Strengthens control maturity early

SAP Earlywatch alert (EWA) review

- Review of system health and risks
- Actionable optimisation recommendations
- Early insight without disruption

Performance & sizing assessment

- Infrastructure right-sizing
- System performance optimisation
- Archiving opportunities
- Reduced operating costs
- Lower data footprint and sustainability benefits

Done during transition, these activities deliver insight *before* service stabilisation is complete.

The economics of transition

A focused AMS transition typically represents:

An investment of ~1–2 months of AMS effort

When executed well, this investment is usually **recovered within the first six months** through:

- Improved stability
- Clearer governance
- Increased efficiency
- Early optimisation gains

Organisations that treat transition purely as a cost miss the bigger picture.

Those that approach it as an investment consistently see:

- Faster stabilisation
- Better service quality
- Stronger partnerships
- A more resilient AMS model

Final thought from Andy Bailey, AMS Technical Manager, TCT

“ Calling this phase a transition arguably understates its importance. In reality, this is where expectations are set, behaviours are established, trust is built and value creation begins. Handled well, it becomes the single most important predictor of long-term AMS success. Transition is not the warm-up. It is the first performance.



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