



**Reinventing
the Integration
Center of
Excellence**

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Integration Centers of Excellence: Perfecting a Great Idea

Integration centers of excellence have been around for decades, but so far they haven't delivered the benefits they promised. The hope was that integration centers of excellence would greatly boost efficiencies, streamline integration projects, and, as a result, drive business transformation.

What is an integration center of excellence (ICoE)? And how do enterprises ensure that these centers of excellence deliver benefits that are needed now more than ever?

Let's start with the basics.

A center of excellence is a team that provides centralized leadership and a mix of information, support, tools and training for a common practice across an organization.

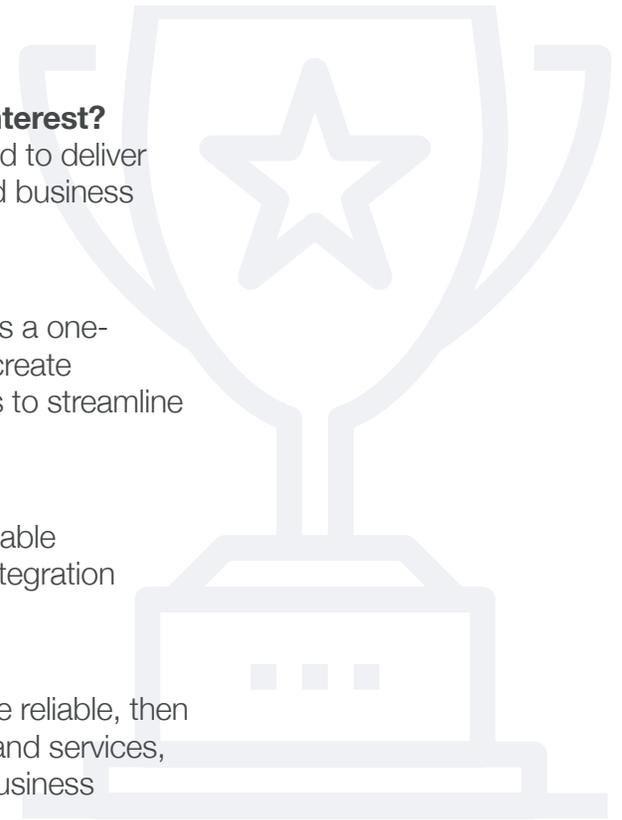
The first center of excellence in enterprise IT arose in manufacturing about 30 years ago. Drawing on that model, enterprises began creating centers of excellence in other areas, including integration.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, ICoEs were popular enough to be recognized as a trend by industry analysts. Enterprises began investing heavily in them about ten years ago.

What spurred enterprises' growing interest?

Integration centers of excellence promised to deliver important benefits to IT organizations and business units. These benefits include:

- **Standardization**
Instead of treating each integration as a one-of-a-kind IT project, the ICoE could create standards and reusable components to streamline development.
- **Operational efficiency**
By drawing on standards and repeatable processes, the center could make integration more cost-effective.
- **Business process optimization**
If integration became faster and more reliable, then IT could connect more applications and services, streamlining and automating more business processes.
- **Digital transformation**
Ideally, these capabilities would help an organization reinvent its business models, create new operational processes and launch innovative products and services.



Integration Centers of Excellence: The Shortcomings

Most ICoEs have have fallen short of their full promise. Because of this, larger businesses are struggling against the scale and complexity of today's growing integration demands. They are facing challenges on multiple fronts:

- Integration development **processes still aren't sufficiently standardized**. There's still too much custom coding and too many resources devoted to the maintenance of legacy custom code.
- Integration **projects still take too long and cost too much**. The business can't get the support it needs to evolve and innovate as technologies evolve.
- Lacking integration nimbleness, organizations **struggle to tame complex and disjointed business processes** and move towards automation.
- Instead of embarking on new transformative IT projects, businesses are **stuck supporting complex point-to-point integrations**.
- In some companies, most of the **IT budget is spent maintaining legacy applications** and old, complex integrations among legacy applications.

So what happened?

In part, it's an accident of history. ICoEs became popular in the heyday of service-oriented architecture (SOA) and on-premise middleware. Organizations hired or contracted — often at great expense — senior middleware programmers and system integration consultants. Those guns-for-hire built complex, one-off integrations connecting one application to another.

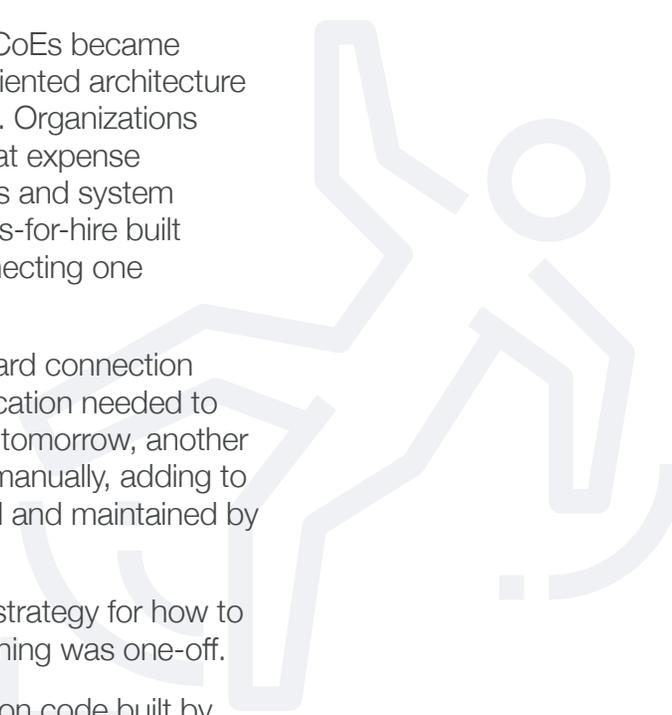
They rarely created a single, standard connection for an application. And if that application needed to connect to yet another application tomorrow, another integration would have to be built manually, adding to the tangle of code to be debugged and maintained by the integration team.

There was no overarching plan or strategy for how to manage all the integrations. Everything was one-off.

And because much of the integration code built by these specialists is complex, only senior programmers can work on it. If business users — even technical business users — participate in integration projects, it can only be at the periphery.

Officially, an enterprise might have adopted a cloud-first strategy, but with this model, its operations are still mired in a tangle of spaghetti connections from obsolete integration code run by legacy on-premise applications.

So far, the center of excellence concept has turned out to be not so excellent or even satisfactory for improving enterprise integrations.



Reinventing the Integration Center of Excellence

The need for ICoEs is more pressing than ever.

To remain competitive, enterprises need to integrate all sorts of new technology, including cloud applications, cloud storage, mobile devices, the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence and machine learning.

But applying old hand-coding integration techniques to the world of SaaS, IoT and AI is a recipe for exorbitant expenses and ever-receding completion dates.

Enterprises need to reinvent their ICoEs, addressing three key areas:

Technology

Critical to making ICoEs work like they should is “low-code” integration development. Custom, manual coding is simply not scalable across an enterprise.

Luckily, low-code development – hand-in-hand with cloud computing – can greatly speed integration projects and make it easy to collaborate across the organization, eliminating traditional barriers to sharing ICoE resources. By running low-code, drag-and-drop development environments in the cloud, it is far easier for organizations to centralize and share integration code, libraries and tools.

People

Enterprises need to move much of the integration workload from scarce coding specialists to less technical staff. By making it easy for junior IT staff and business users to implement a large portion of the integration work, the new wave of ICoEs can dramatically reduce project costs and ongoing operational expenses.

With a new integration platform as a service ([iPaaS](#)), an ICoE can apply its people and resources – including development standards, data governance, security guidelines and other business knowledge – to democratizing integration. This approach frees senior developers to tackle more complex, strategic projects and removes bottlenecks to resourcing integration projects.

Processes

Integration should be a cross-departmental discipline, involving not only developers but also business users, operations engineers, security experts, compliance experts and data stewards. An integrated development environment (IDE) for your ICoE shouldn't be an esoteric tool that only dedicated specialists can use or understand.

With your ICoE run by an [integration cloud](#) and driven by a low-code development environment, a far greater breadth of personnel can easily view and control integration processes, regardless of where they run in your enterprise, eliminating geographic and organizational boundaries to more efficiently and cost effectively manage your holistic integration strategy.



Dell Boomi: The Platform for the Modern Integration Center of Excellence

Dell Boomi provides a cloud-native, high-productivity platform that easily and efficiently supports all enterprise application and data integration needs across hybrid IT landscapes.

The Boomi platform's low-code, drag-and-drop interface and ready-to-use application connectors help organizations quickly build integrations and data transformations. Integration projects that would have taken weeks or months can now be completed in days or hours.

Because integration is streamlined, business users and others can step in as "citizen integrators," applying their knowledge of business processes to tailor integrations to address ever-changing business requirements. Instead of worrying about resource-intensive integration projects that seem to take forever, business leaders can focus on strategy and innovation.

Boomi makes integration accessible to business users, not just developers. Once built in Boomi, integrations are tested and upgraded automatically by the Boomi platform. IT workloads and maintenance costs decline, while business agility and the pace of innovation increases.

Boomi's flexible architecture makes it easy for enterprises to deploy Boomi's run-time Atoms wherever needed: in the cloud, on-premise and across hybrid systems. Fast, efficient integration and data transformation can run wherever needed and can be scaled easily to meet business needs.

A modern, cloud-first platform, Boomi makes it possible for enterprises to "future proof" their integration

investments. And as a unified integration development environment, Boomi supports the full range of enterprise integration needs, including application connectivity, API and EDI management, data governance and workflow automation.

Boomi Benefits for the Integration Center of Excellence

The Boomi integration platform provides a broad mix of benefits for building and running a best-practices integration center of excellence.

- **Rapid coding**
Boomi's low-code interface, library of ready-to-use connectors, and community-contributed data mappings all help accelerate the building and deployment of integrations.
- **Dramatically lower costs**
Because development time is radically reduced, the Boomi platform makes integration work much more efficient and cost-effective.
- **Greater agility**
Rapid integration delivers greater business agility. New applications and services can be quickly bought online. Workflows can be automated, while organizations can continuously improve their business processes.
- **Empowered Business Users**
Boomi removes the IT bottleneck from integration development. Business users are able to directly apply their knowledge of business processes and take on basic integration tasks, as well as understanding how integrations are built.

Delivering Integration Excellence at Novartis

To appreciate the benefits that the Boomi platform provides ICoEs, consider the results that Novartis achieved once it adopted Boomi as its integration platform.

Novartis, the world's second largest pharmaceutical company, was looking for an alternative to two legacy on-premise middleware integration systems that were expensive to maintain and insufficiently flexible. The company needed to make rapid progress on its new mobile and cloud initiatives. Its old, complex integration tools wouldn't work.

The Novartis integration team faced multiple challenges:

- Its legacy middleware integration tools were expensive to maintain and lacked the flexibility business units required
- Implementation times and expenses associated were out of step with IT budgets and project plans
- The IT organization needed to dramatically accelerate its integration work, shrinking implementation times from months to weeks or even days

[Novartis adopted the Boomi platform](#) and as a result, exceeded all its goals.

The Boomi integration cloud delivered these results:

- Greatly reduced the time required to build integrations, by as much as 12X
- Dramatically lowered the total cost of ownership for maintaining integration, reducing server requirements by 50%
- Radically lowered project costs, delivering a savings of 73%

For Novartis, Boomi supported the promise of the ICoE: rapid development, reduced IT costs and business transformation.

Boomi can deliver these same benefits for any organization developing or reinventing an ICoE.

“With Dell Boomi integration, the proof of concept was completed in 25 hours... Boomi delivered costs savings around 73% when compared to existing on-premise solutions.”

– Saurabh Sharma

Principal Analyst, Ovum Technology

[Case Study: “Adoption of Dell Boomi AtomSphere iPaaS by Novartis”](#)

Conclusion

In this age of rapid innovation and distributed services, integration is more important than ever. It's a capability that enterprises need to get right, and an integration center of excellence is the means to making that happen.

Boomi gives enterprises a powerful, comprehensive and easy-to-use platform to support the mission of their ICoEs.

Using Boomi, an ICoE can finally:

- Easily share integration components, tools and knowledge
- Accelerate integration development dramatically, improving business agility while reducing costs
- Centralize integration, API management, data governance and workflow management in a single platform
- Leverage the expertise of non-developers in application integration and workflow automation
- Align integration development with operations, data governance, security and other interdepartmental functions
- More quickly leverage new technologies such as AI and IoT to support digital transformation initiatives

To learn more about how Boomi can help your organization transform its integration center of excellence, [contact a Boomi integration specialist today.](#)