SAP® MANAGED SERVICES

Your Must Have Handbook to Basis Support in the Cloud Era

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Your SAP landscape is made of different modules, which accomplish different tasks within a business. Those modules rest on a common database and operating system, and work together to run day-to-day business operations. SAP Basis is the set of tools that link the software together, ensuring your SAP landscape can function as an effective whole.

Ready for a deep dive into SAP Basis? Let's dig in. Or if you're just skimming, you can use the links below to navigate to the various sections of this article:

- SAP Basis in the Cloud Era
- The Basis Disconnect
- What Does an SAP Basis Administrator Do?
- SAP Basis and Upgrades
- What is the State of My Current SAP Basis Program
- How to Build a Better Basis Team
- SAP Leaders Are Industry Leaders

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SAP BASIS IN THE CLOUD ERA

In the cloud era, businesses aren't generally aware of what's going on in the backend in most off-the-shelf applications, including many ERP utilities. Your main concerns are functional and practical — you choose software for its features, integration with your tech stack, ability to address particular use cases, cost effectiveness and so on. Outside of development, what goes on behind the scenes doesn't generally matter to decision-makers (assuming it doesn't affect security, performance or stability.) Your SaaS provider handles provisioning, routine service and upgrades so you don't have to.

SAP ERP and SAP HANA demand more of you than cloud SaaS. You (or your managed services provider) are responsible for configuring the software, performing daily maintenance, provisioning resources as your landscape grows, and planning and executing upgrades. The software vendor doesn't run your particular landscape — you need an effective SAP Basis team for that.

Why does Basis require all this extra work? It's the price you pay for the flexibility and power of SAP. While SaaS applications generally have a stock featureset and a fairly narrow range of configuration options, your SAP landscape can be engineered to fit your exact needs.

You can use an optimized business flow, rather than trying to shoehorn your processes into whatever boxes a SaaS provider has. You can use the SAP modules and third-party tools that are most effective for each department, and adopt the features you need, rather than assemble your enterprise landscape from a small set of stock tools. You can configure your landscape to meet complex security, compliance, performance and backwards compatibility needs, in a way that isn't possible with off-the-shelf solutions. On top of that, you have an almost unlimited range of analytical and reporting tools available, combined with real-time monitoring and reporting in HANA.

SAP Basis (and the administrators who run it) is what makes this all possible.

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THE BASIS DISCONNECT

Unfortunately, many companies don't fully understand the importance of Basis. Many companies think of SAP administration like they'd think about, say, facilities maintenance — it's mission-critical, but it isn't strategic. From this perspective, Basis administration is treated as a utility, more or less — a standardized service which can be obtained at roughly the same level and reliability from any number of providers. The imperative is to obtain adequate service at minimal cost. Then you can dedicate resources towards more strategic issues, like adopting new technologies or streamlining business processes.

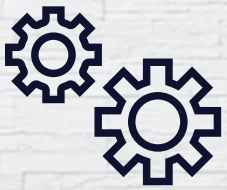
And yet for the vast majority of companies using SAP, Basis administration does not function as a utility should. Many of them have struggled to find an adequate replacement when a trusted Basis asset leaves the company or even goes on vacation. Most have had performance degradation at some point, and many have even suffered service outages related to SAP administration issues.

When they need to upgrade, organizations may face delays, cost overruns and excessive downtime or disruptions. With all these issues, too many organizations struggle merely to keep their SAP landscapes in good working order, and never meet the strategic IT goals that could give them a competitive advantage.

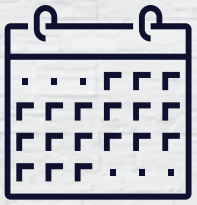
Companies need to realize that SAP Basis administration is a strategic operation, not a simple utility. Both day-to-day stability and performance, and long-term technological leadership depend on an effective Basis team.

WHAT DOES AN SAP BASIS ADMINISTRATOR DO?

SAP Basis administrators are responsible for a wide range of tasks, from daily monitoring and maintenance, to planning and executing major projects. Here are a few of their key responsibilities:



Maintaining system availability and performance:
SAP Basis administrators are responsible for monitoring and tuning the SAP landscape to keep the system online, and performing at peak efficiency. This involves a wide range of daily tasks, including reviewing logs, load balancing, backup management and various troubleshooting activities.



Scheduling background jobs:
Background jobs are routine tasks that the SAP landscape carries out automatically. For example, if you're running SAP BW, your landscape needs to pull data from various sources and commit that data to your business warehouse each day, a process called ETL (Extract, Transform and Load). Background jobs like ETL demand a lot of system resources, so they need to be scheduled carefully. The Basis admin will ensure these jobs run during periods of low demand, so they don't impact end users.

Planning system updates and upgrades:
As your business grows, your SAP landscape will require increased resources to meet growing demand. SAP and third-party software vendors will also release patches (for example, to correct a potential security issue), and occasional major upgrades. Your SAP Basis administrator should play a major role in planning these upgrades.

That includes:

- Monitoring trends in resource consumption, and provisioning new resources before system performance is affected
- Maintaining up to date software, and prioritizing critical patches
- Ensuring upgrades are performed efficiently, with minimal disruption and downtime

Manage Transports:

Transports are SAP update packages. Because your SAP landscape is complex and unique, every update needs to be thoroughly tested to ensure it works correctly with your system as a whole. Additionally, your landscape can have complex dependencies, so transports need to be installed in the correct order. Your Basis admin must review and approve transport requests, test the transports and make needed changes, get approval from relevant administrative personnel and install transports in production.

Ensure disaster readiness:

Basis admins are in charge of disaster recovery and high availability. In many organizations, that simply means running daily backups, but a backup alone isn't enough to guarantee your organization is ready for an actual disaster. Your Basis asset (or third-party provider if you outsource DR) needs to make sure the landscape is prepared to quickly transition to your backup system at any time, while meeting all KPIs. That should include regular testing and occasional tweaks to your DR procedures as your business and SAP landscape grow and evolve.

Putting out fires:

If something breaks, it's the Basis team's job to fix it. A proactive Basis team won't usually have need for heroics because they'll provide necessary tuning before your system starts to malfunction. However, because your whole business depends on SAP, it's crucial that your Basis team is able to respond quickly, day or night, just in case.

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SAP BASIS AND UPGRADES

In SAP HANA migrations and other upgrades, your Basis admin plays a key role. Your administrator has in-depth knowledge of your system. They bring an understanding of how your system is configured, its history and growth and the limits posed by your current landscape. They can help set goals, anticipate challenges and plan for a successful migration. Your admin will have crucial insights into whether to move to Suite or S/4HANA, where to host the new system and how to minimize disruption during the process.

During project execution, the Basis administrator is a key stakeholder. They're responsible for keeping the old landscape running, and will work with the migration team throughout the process, from planning to post go-live tuning.

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WHAT IS THE STATE OF MY CURRENT SAP BASIS PROGRAM?

Inadequate Basis support is obvious when it impacts landscape performance. However, lack of adequate Basis resources may cause other issues in your organization that are less apparent. Here's how to evaluate your Basis program:

Is my production environment healthy?

Have you had frequent performance degradation or unplanned downtime? Are end users having intermittent problems accessing resources that they need? If your landscape is not performing as it should, it may be a sign of inadequate Basis resources.

Are my admins regularly applying patches?

SAP is very good at hunting down and patching security vulnerabilities. That's great for security in companies with strong SAP administration, but if you don't have adequate Basis resources it can actually be a liability. As soon as SAP releases a patch, the bad guys will start looking for a way to exploit the vulnerability. If your team takes six months or more to apply patches, you're at risk of being targeted, once they figure it out.

Do I have a dedicated Basis team?

In many companies, Basis administrator is just a hat worn part time by the security chief, or someone on the development team. This makes a certain amount of sense — for an SME, Basis maintenance generally isn't a full time job, and you may have assets on staff with a reasonable SAP background.

However, this approach also comes with serious drawbacks and risks. Your developer/admin probably does not have the SAP administration experience of a Basis professional. They're not going to be as skilled at spotting and fixing problems before end users are impacted. They also may be involved in projects with aggressive deadlines, interfering with their ability to schedule adequate Basis maintenance. This tends to increase the frequency and severity of performance issues, as well as the likelihood of unplanned outages.

Additionally, someone working Basis as a side job can't be on call, the way a Basis admin needs to be. SAP system health issues tend to progress quickly if they aren't addressed promptly. However, if your Basis asset is there primarily as a developer or security consultant, they'll typically only look at system health once a day. That leaves a lot of time for things to go downhill before the next health check.

Am I having issues with IT retention or productivity?

Overloading your IT staff with supplementary duties like administration isn't good for morale or productivity. Not only does it take time away from the projects you originally hired them for — it also tends to increase turnover, and may lead to poorer results. Development, security and SAP administration are all difficult jobs that require a lot of mental energy. Getting extra work out of your team by assigning them extra duties may appear to save money on paper, but usually the actual losses outweigh the gains.

Am I ready for 2025?

With support for SAP ERP ending in 2025, the S/4HANA future is fast approaching — whether you're ready or not. Even if you haven't yet moved to HANA, you should have a plan and a timetable in the works. If you're struggling just to keep up with the daily care and feeding of your SAP landscape, it's time to bring in some extra help.

Am I thinking about these issues for the first time?

In most companies, SAP administration is still treated as an arcane, technical pursuit, walled off from business concerns. This undermines your ability to modernize your approach to IT strategy. You can't plan for growth if you only find out about resource shortages when the system starts to slow down. You can't create a usable technological transformation plan if you don't know what upgrades you'll need in advance.

Even technically skilled Basis teams often fail at communicating with business stakeholders, simply because most executives would rather not spend time on IT management, and vice versa. But with the rapid pace of IT transformation, this status quo is unsustainable. If your executives and your IT team don't talk, it's worth bringing in an SAP managed service partner to help modernize your approach — even if you're otherwise happy with your Basis support.

HOW TO BUILD A BETTER BASIS TEAM

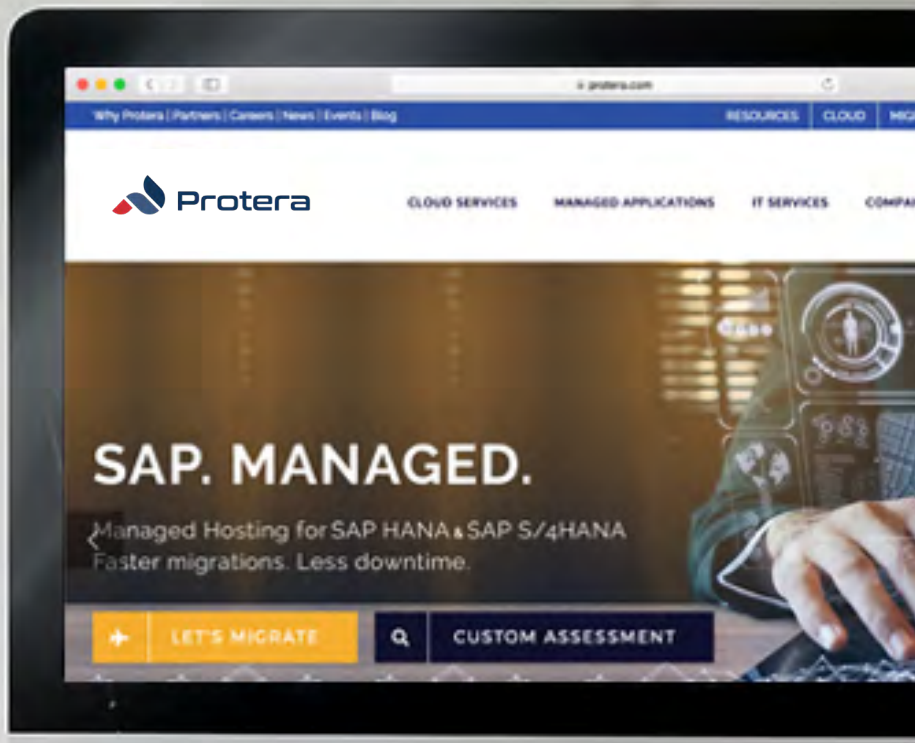
The first step to building truly excellent SAP support is rethinking how you see Basis. Your admin team isn't just there to keep the machines running — they also need to align your SAP landscape to your operational needs and strategic goals. An effective Basis team needs to be able to provide:

- Around the clock monitoring and quick response
- Proactive tuning that ensures consistent performance and uptime
- Effective communication skills and the ability to coordinate business and IT stakeholders
- Strong planning and project management experience to execute your IT strategy
- Scalable, cost-effective support, from day-to-day operations to major projects
- Cutting edge upgrades and migrations, accelerating technological transformation while minimizing disruption and controlling cost.
- Engage a third party Managed service provider to take over the day to day tasks to free up your in-house resources to engage with the business on strategic initiatives.

SAP LEADERS ARE INDUSTRY LEADERS

It's a time of rapid transformation for SAP users. Companies that have built up their SAP landscapes over decades are now faced with the prospect of moving to a new database, with all the disruption and uncertainty that entails. For organizations that rise to the challenge and are able to modernize their approach to SAP administration, the transition to HANA will be easier and the gains more substantial.

Try our Migration Assessment Report to gain insight into your current landscape, and start building a more effective, strategic approach to SAP with expert managed services from Protera.



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