Process is Key:
Enhance your Digital Potential
via Enterprise Platforms

FEATURING RESEARCH FROM FORRESTER

Customers Illuminate The Benefits And Challenges Of Low-Code Development Platforms

Process is Key: Enhance your Digital Potential via Enterprise Platforms

While more and more digitalization tools are popping up and being adapted for all thinkable business cases, the need to streamline and link the existing IT landscape is increasing significantly as well. Low-code platforms which target business processes can be the key to achieving more digital efficiency.

The more digital tools and technologies are integrated into companies, the louder decision-makers also express concerns: high costs, rigid software and the associated effort for implementation, adaptation and maintenance have been at the forefront of digitization blockers ever since. These concerns are no coincidence. The beginnings of digital transformation are closely connected with the integration of isolated solutions for individual departments and with customized adaptations which could only be realized with great programming effort. The low employee acceptance as well as a rugged and overloaded IT infrastructure, inefficient processes and interim solutions were the result - and still show their aftermath today.

The worst consequence is when digital potentials remain unused for these reasons and the company stagnates. Fortunately, the rethinking of technology providers and decision-makers is becoming more and more visible: New solutions are to network the company and create added value across all areas - both for the status quo and in the future. Scalability, agility and low-code, these are the new digitization drivers. They push dusty one-trick ponies out of their niches and connect legacy systems to new business potentials.

DISCARD DOCUMENTS IN FAVOR OF DATA AND PROCESSES

Established companies in particular face the challenge of automating previously manually handled tasks and digitizing the associated processes, data and documents. Because: If one considers the legal capacity of a company, it is largely based on these three components. In digitization strategies, companies often concentrate heavily on their documents and fail to recognize processes as the basis for transformation: While every process can contain data and documents, documents do not necessarily have to be the starting point or goal of a process.

If a workflow is oriented to the document only, potential is lost. Processes and tasks do not run through seamlessly, intermediate steps cannot be comprehensively traced. Digital work thus becomes the digital management of individual tools. Due to the lack of networking between the structures, not only does corporate communication suffer; a significant and constantly growing potential of digital transformation remains untapped.

CONNECT EVERYTHING INSTEAD OF ADMINISTRATING

The platform approach ushers in a new era: Today, scalable platforms combine the functionality of ECM, workflow and data management, while AI and RPA components are increasingly driving the level of automation in companies. Open technologies and expandable interfaces help, for example, to synchronize data with existing ERP and CMS or to process tasks across departments.

Only this approach enables comprehensive transformation. If the responsibility of a system ends, the digitization platform used can take over intermediate steps and transfer data and documents to the corresponding processes, persons or applications. Overloaded processes or internally programmed, hardly maintainable solutions are a thing of the past.

FAST, FASTER– LOW-CODE

In addition to the acquisition costs of a highly customizable solution, the lack of know-how and resources for the implementation and adaptation of digital workflows has long been an obstacle. Closely linked to this was also the belief that ready-to-use applications promising little programming effort could not meet company requirements and that their performance was severely limited.

With technological progress, these concerns are disappearing. Digitalization sets standards and brings forth developments to which companies must react promptly. Agile and scalable platforms that can be quickly adapted are suitable for this. Low-code alignment allows even less experienced business developers to contribute directly to business transformation by creating and implementing processes, not just designing them. This reduces the administrative effort for individual employees and the company can comprehensively integrate the digital strategy into its structures. The results are usually very powerful process scenarios that are particularly well integrated into the existing IT infrastructure and are therefore quickly accepted by employees.

With this agile and simple process design, platforms reduce the complexity of the "island landscape" and create the flow of information throughout the entire company, while leaving room for digital change.

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Customers Illuminate The Benefits And Challenges Of Low-Code Development Platforms

Use Customers' Insights To Move Up The Low-Code Learning Curve

by John R. Rymer
January 23, 2018

Why Read This Report

More and more enterprises are adopting low-code development platforms to speed software delivery. Beyond the need for speed, the deeper benefits and challenges of low-code platforms are also coming into view. As part of our evaluation of low-code development platform vendors, Forrester conducted two online surveys of reference customers — one of application development and delivery (AD&D) pros, the other of business developers. They capture the wisdom of seasoned product users to find out what's working well for low-code customers — and what isn't.

Key Takeaways

Debunking The Low-Code = Small Scale Notion
Enterprise applications are complex, large, and critical to business operations — and they're being built on low-code platforms. Customers report that most applications built via low-code are enterprisewide or scaled for multiple departments, while platform adoption spans across the entire enterprise.

Low-Code Platforms Help Alleviate AD&D Pain
Nearly all the customers in our survey indicated that low-code has succeeded in addressing their top application development and delivery challenges: slow app delivery, high costs, and low customer satisfaction with apps.

Paradox: Many Firms Require Pro Services
The declarative tools in low-code platforms make app development quicker and easier, yet many customers still seek help from professional services providers, including low-code vendors themselves. Why? Challenges in implementation and integration are the culprits for this paradox.

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by John R. Rymer
with Christopher Mines, Allison Vizgaitis, and Andrew Reese
January 23, 2018

Learn From Low-Code Platform Customers

Low-code platforms are hitting the mainstream as AD&D pros strive to keep up with the demands of digital business.[1] The clear value proposition these solutions present is fueling adoption, but to what extent do these platforms meet their potential? Reference customers offer the best insight into how well low-code addresses the important use cases, as well as potential obstacles and pitfalls.[2]

THE GOOD NEWS: LOW-CODE PLATFORMS MEETING EXPECTATIONS FOR SPEED

Customers in both business- and professional-developer roles were positive about the utility of low-code platforms and pointed to where they are particularly effective.

› **Low-code supports large-scale applications and wide adoption.** The skeptics' view that low-code means small scale fades in light of the evidence. Respondents in both role segments build applications that are either used enterprisewide, or used by multiple departments (see Figure 1). AD&D pros reported more cases of larger-scale applications than respondents in the nontechnical business-developer segment, but the difference is small. Surprisingly, nearly all business-developer respondents said at least two departments in their enterprise had adopted low-code platforms, and roughly one-third of them said the entire enterprise had adopted the platform.

› **Customers see faster software development, among other positive results.** AD&D pros were clear on their objectives for low-code platforms: speed and flexibility. Those are among the top challenges in application development and have become the central focus for many low-code end users. Almost all AD&D respondents reported notable or significant improvement in addressing these top challenges via their preferred low-code platform (see Figure 2).

Business developers also enjoy positive results. More than half said they achieved cost savings, improved customer satisfaction, and improved compliance in security within one to three months of adopting a low-code platform. All but five of these 26 respondents also noted that they were extremely likely to recommend their preferred low-code vendor to other firms.
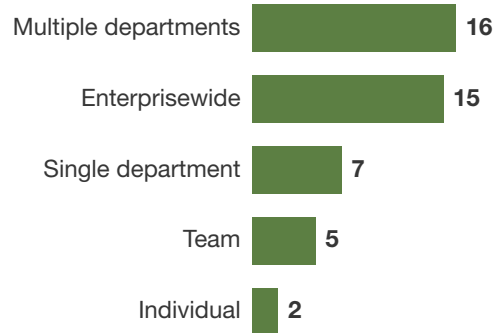
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› **Low-code empowers business developers.** Business developers can create real business value with low-code platforms by taking on tasks that professional developers typically perform. Providing business developers with more expressive power frees up AD&D pros and other traditional developers to focus on more demanding technical tasks, such as handling access controls and security, performing platform upgrades, and building large-scale applications.[3]

› **Process is a crucial use case for low-code.** The majority of AD&D pro respondents selected process modeling as the most valuable low-code capability for their organization. And process automation is a key set of use cases for digital businesses.[4]

FIGURE 1 Low-Code Development Platforms Support Large-Scale Applications In Both Market Segments

1-1   Business developers

"What is, or will be, the scale of applications your organization develops using your low-code platform?"
(Select all that apply)

|	
Multiple departments	16
Enterprisewide	15
Single department	7
Team	5
Individual	2

Base: 26 business developers using low-code platforms

Source: Forrester's Q4 2017 Global Low-Code Development Platforms Forrester Wave™ Customer Reference Online Survey

1-2   AD&D pros

"What is the scale of applications your organization develops using this/these platform(s)?"
(Select all that apply)
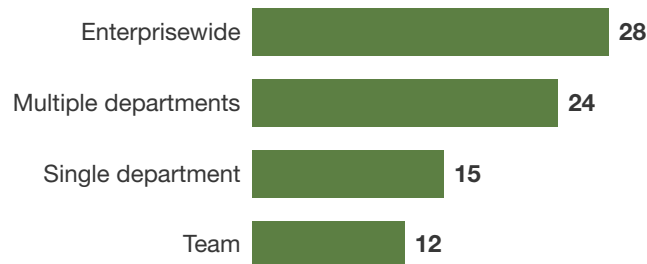
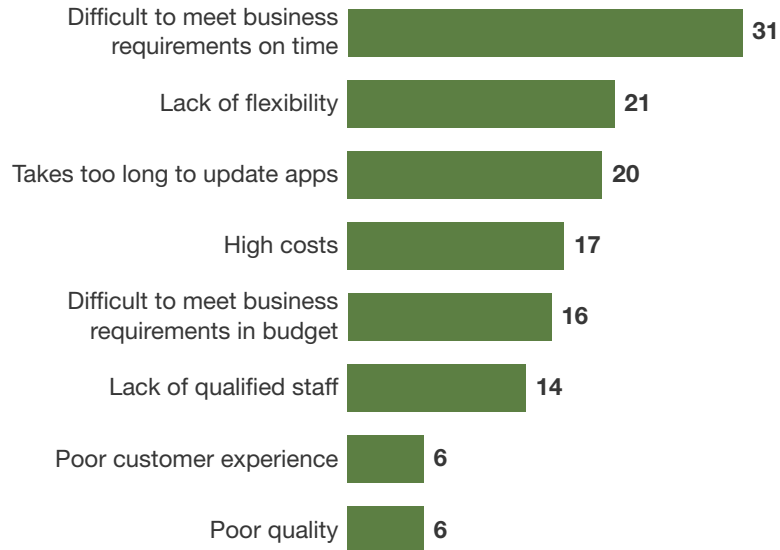|	
Enterprisewide	28
Multiple departments	24
Single department	15
Team	12

Base: 41 AD&D leaders using low-code platforms

Source: Forrester's Q4 2017 Global Low-Code Development Platforms Forrester Wave™ Customer Reference Online Survey

FIGURE 2 Low-Code Platforms Are Addressing AD&D Pros' Pain Points

2-1 **"What are the challenges your organization faces in building custom applications using traditional coding with programming languages, frameworks, and middleware?"**
(Select all that apply)

Difficult to meet business requirements on time	31
Lack of flexibility	21
Takes too long to update apps	20
High costs	17
Difficult to meet business requirements in budget	16
Lack of qualified staff	14
Poor customer experience	6
Poor quality	6

2-2 **"Have low-code development platforms addressed these issues?"**

Significant improvement	21
Notable improvement	19
Marginal improvement	1

Base: 41 AD&D leaders using low-code platforms

Source: Forrester's Q4 2017 Global Low-Code Development Platforms Forrester Wave™ Customer Reference Online Survey

EXPERIENCED CUSTOMERS ALSO SEE THE LIMITS OF LOW-CODE PLATFORMS

The promise of shrinking app delivery times and empowerment of nontraditional developers compels AD&D leaders to hop on the low-code bandwagon — but with new power come new responsibilities. Customers flagged gaps in low-code development that require extra scrutiny:

> › **Focus on process requires integration, which often requires coding.** Low-code tools are often used to automate business processes, which in turn requires integration with a variety of databases and applications. Low-code platforms address integration, but many respondents reported having to resort to coding to satisfy integration requirements, anyway. Why? Low-code platforms are best for newer apps with standard integration interfaces. Integration had the lowest level of satisfaction among business developer respondents compared with six other criteria. Customizing user interfaces also often requires coding.

> › **Weak reporting features require customer creativity.** Respondents in our AD&D pro-developer survey say reporting and analysis requirements often exceed the features of low-code platforms and require at least some direct programming.

> › **Customers turn to vendors and systems integrators (SIs) to overcome challenges.** More than half of the AD&D respondents reported that they used a third-party firm or their low-code vendor's professional services to implement their solution. Overcoming integration, reporting, and user-interface challenges is a reason to engage pro services in low-code adoption. Services firms — including the low-code platform vendors themselves — also help with initial apps and scaling adoption, including implementing effective governance.[5] Carefully evaluate a vendor's pro services before committing to a platform provider — you might be stuck with that firm for a while.

What It Means

Low-Code's Impact On Application Strategy

It's no longer a question of whether low-code development platforms will be a factor in application strategy, but rather it's about how AD&D leaders will apply these products. We expect these platforms to shape the way AD&D leaders think about software development. Our survey findings suggest that:

> › **Low-code is a potential remedy to software shortages.** As businesses' demand for software continues to grow, low-code is a potential disruptor within AD&D.[6] Not only do these platforms allow developers to build software more quickly, they are also expanding the number of people that can contribute to software development. As organizations find ways to leverage business developers, a wider talent pool takes on tasks typically associated with traditional developers, and the gap between software supply and demand closes.

› **Process will emerge as a key value.** Low-code platforms that target process apps are disruptive as well, providing an attractive alternative to traditional business process management (BPM). Digital transformation is driving the need for process automation, making business processes a particularly valuable context for low-code development platforms.

› **Low-code platform users need support.** Low-code platforms are not a silver bullet. Achieving success requires support, especially when it comes to integration, reporting, security, and scaling. Adopting these platforms at scale requires careful attention to organizational structures and cultural norms.

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Supplemental Material

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Forrester fielded its Forrester's Q4 2017 Global Low-Code Development Platforms Forrester Wave™ Customer Reference Online Survey to 41 AD&D professionals who use a low-code development platform evaluated in the Forrester Wave evaluation. Vendors recruited these respondents to complete a survey about their satisfaction and use of low-code platforms.

Forrester fielded the survey from July 2017 to August 2017. Respondent incentives included a summary of the research results when the Forrester Wave was published.

Forrester fielded its Forrester's Q4 2017 Global Low-Code Development Platforms Forrester New Wave™ Customer Reference Online Survey to 26 business developers who use a low-code development platform evaluated in the Forrester New Wave evaluation. Vendors recruited these respondents to complete a survey about their satisfaction and use of low-code platforms.

Forrester fielded the survey from August 14, 2017 to August 31, 2017. Respondent incentives included a summary of the research results when the Forrester New Wave was published.

Endnotes

[1] See the Forrester report "Vendor Landscape: A Fork In The Road For Low-Code Development Platforms."

[2] We conducted two surveys as part of the recently published low-code development platform Forrester Wave evaluations. We surveyed 41 AD&D pro customer references and 26 business developer customer references to gain insight into how well low-code is addressing some of the important use case scenarios and uncover potential obstacles and customer hesitancies.

[3] Please see the Forrester report "The Forrester New Wave™: Low-Code Platforms For Business Developers, Q4 2017."

[4] Within the next two years, the primary goal of BPM will be to drive digital transformation initiatives. To learn more about this transition, please see the Forrester report "Traditional BPM Gives Way To Digital Process Automation."

[5] To learn more about how to harness the energy and smarts of nontraditional developers, please see the Forrester report "How To Harness Citizen Developers To Expand Your AD&D Capacity."

[6] For more on how low-code, continuous delivery, and artificial intelligence are disrupting established jobs in AD&D while introducing new roles and skills, see the Forrester report "How The AI Era Will Hollow Out Software Development."

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