Why Call Centers Can't Wait on S/4HANA — *And Don't Have To*

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Modern call centers aren't just answering phones -- they're expected to resolve issues instantly, personalize every interaction, and operate with ruthless efficiency. Customers demand seamless, real-time support across channels while agents require fast, accurate data to be effective. Leadership faces mounting pressure to reduce costs, improve KPIs like Average Handle Time (AHT) and First Call Resolution (FCR), and drive digital transformation.

For organizations running SAP ECC, meeting these goals is a challenge. The industry-wide push to migrate to SAP S/4HANA is ongoing, yet many companies are stuck in limbo. According to a [2024](#) [SAPinsider Benchmark Report](#), fewer than 30 percent of SAP customers have completed the move to S/4HANA. Meanwhile, [Gartner](#) estimates that full ERP transformations can take 3–5 years and cost more than $100 million. For call centers, that's too long to wait.

The good news: Transformation doesn't require a complete ERP overhaul. There are emerging methods that allow companies to unlock real-time intelligence from ECC, streamline workflows, and modernize customer engagement—without middleware, replication, or disruption. The key lies in enabling real-time execution of SAP's native processes and business logic in the systems that call center agents already use and are familiar with.

ECC to S/4HANA – Not Without Challenges for Service Centers

The move from SAP ECC to SAP S/4HANA is one of the most significant enterprise technology shifts in recent decades. Migrating to S/4HANA isn't just a technical upgrade—it's a strategic move that transforms how customer service is delivered. Call centers and customer service organizations that approach the transition as an opportunity to modernize and digitize service processes can unlock significant gains in efficiency, insight, and customer satisfaction.

However, while SAP S/4HANA represents a transformative leap forward, its delivery and adoption have not been without significant hurdles, both from SAP's side and the customer side. The promise of S/4HANA is clear—but the path to get there hasn't always been smooth. Enterprises with ECC have experienced missed timelines, poor customer readiness, and a lack of product maturity. More importantly, the bigger challenge has been that ECC is being phased out as SAP ends mainstream support in 2027, which was abruptly extended to 2030 for some customers recently.

For customer service, especially, the gains in responsiveness, personalization, and efficiency are compelling—but only if the underlying transition to S/4HANA is well-executed. In the interim, companies need to go in with realistic expectations, a clear roadmap, a trusted partner to guide them, and consider an alternate approach.

Reframing ECC as a Strategic Advantage

Still, SAP ECC powers over two-thirds of SAP customers. Its business logic is mature. Its data is reliable. The problem isn't what ECC can do—it's how accessible that capability is.

Disconnected systems often force contact center agents to swivel between applications, manually re- enter data, or wait for back-office support. This not only delays resolutions, but it also erodes the customer experience. By embedding ECC intelligence into the call center platform —whether Salesforce, ServiceNow, Microsoft, or proprietary CRMs—organizations can bridge this gap.

copying tables or returning raw data, this approach enables the orchestration of real-time SAP workflows within the call center interface. The result? Faster answers, less friction, and dramatically better agent and customer experience.

Real-Time ECC Execution Fuels Predictive Support

Modern support centers must move beyond reactive service. They must anticipate needs, reroute issues proactively, and personalize responses based on customer history and operational status. But predictive intelligence is only as good as the data driving it. If that data is trapped in ECC or arrives too late, even the best-designed workflows fall short.

Real-time SAP process execution can: 1) forecast staffing needs by aligning agent availability with live supply chain signals; 2) reroute incoming requests based on real-time order or delivery status; 3) identify emerging issues based on open orders or fulfillment bottlenecks; 4) surface performance gaps or training needs before they become problems. When SAP data flows freely and intelligently into call center operations, the entire team becomes more proactive and aligned.

Enhancing Agent Experience = Better Outcomes

At the heart of every great customer experience is a confident, capable call center agent. But even the most experienced teams are held back by systems that force them to toggle between screens, dig for answers, or operate in silos.

With direct access to real-time SAP logic, agents gain: 1) complete visibility into orders,

billing, inventory, and delivery schedules; 2) reduced reliance on back-end teams for basic inquiries; 3) one- call resolution without data rekeying; 4) easier onboarding and training due to intuitive workflows.

Even modest improvements can drive huge gains. Reducing AHT by just 30 seconds per call in a 100- agent environment can save hundreds of hours weekly -- time that can be reinvested in quality, coaching, or strategic support.

From Theory to Practice: Real-World Proof

Organizations across industries are applying this strategy to achieve material gains. For example, a global manufacturer recovered millions in revenue by resolving pricing discrepancies surfaced through real-time ERP data. A building materials company saved $400,000 by enabling customer self- service and reduced onboarding time by weeks. A steel producer increased digital order volume by 13 percent after improving production visibility and customer access. And a medical device company reduced order entry time by 70 percent, improved accuracy, and enabled faster agent ramp-up.

These aren't hypothetical. They're strategic templates proving that real-time ERP execution can unlock both efficiency and growth in service center applications.

Performance Metrics That Matter

Service center leaders are measured by outcomes, not effort. Real-time SAP process execution supports fundamental tasks in call center operations, such as higher first call resolution by helping agents resolve more issues the first time with accurate data. Or lowering average handle times by reducing the need to dig across systems or chasing updates in disparate places. It can improve customer satisfaction by supporting faster, more informed responses that build customer trust. And it helps to support better agent retention by reducing frustration that leads to more engaged, longer- tenured teams.

According to Call Criteria, call centers that modernize intelligently can see up to 20 percent gains in FCR and 15 percent improvements in CSAT. These are not incremental changes -- they are transformational at scale and can have a huge positive impact on a company's customer service.

A Smarter Path to S/4HANA

Modernizing ECC in the call center is not a dead end. It's a strategic bridge. By activating real-time workflows today, organizations can reduce the risk and cost of future S/4HANA migrations. In many cases, current investments in process virtualization can be carried forward.

There are many benefits, such as reusable integration patterns and logic post-migration, reduced downtime during cutovers, improved business alignment across digital systems, and faster ROI realization by shifting transformation from a capital project to a business driver.

In fact, many companies fund part of their S/4HANA journeys through gains realized by modernizing ECC workflows first.

Final Takeaway: Don't Wait to Transform

Call centers can't afford to wait. Business realities, customer expectations, and operational demands are moving too fast. The good news is that transformation doesn't have to wait either.

By unlocking SAP ECC through real-time process execution and intelligent integration, organizations can accelerate progress now -- without disruption, without overspend, and without waiting on the future state. It's a pragmatic path to performance today and a smarter runway to tomorrow for those operating call center and other service center operations.