eBook

Enhancing SAP Production Report Workflow and Distribution

symtrax

DOCUMENTS & REPORTING
SOLUTIONS

Enhancing SAP Production Report Workflow and Distribution

Background

Each SAP module contains hundreds of predefined production reports. Many of these are either underused or not used at all: this can be because they are unavailable in the desired format, poorly formatted, or unable to be broken into smaller reports or delivered to the appropriate users automatically and securely.

Traditionally, converting these documents into the correct format or making them accessible from mobile or cloud applications has required the time and skill of ABAP programmers. Ongoing changes in corporate needs often lead to constantly evolving requirements, creating a bottleneck within IT departments. Skilled IT resources tend to be scarce and report modification often gets overlooked.

By providing their IT teams with efficient solutions for managing and distributing reports, lists, and forms, businesses can satisfy user requests more frequently while using fewer resources. This eBook is a guideline for improving a complete SAP document output management system's rendering and efficiency. We will discuss how to leverage the value of your existing production reports, and how to deliver timely, properly-formatted results while managing governance.

Implement a Document Output Management System

In terms of architecture, the SAP application is more efficient for delegating and controlling an external Output Management System (OMS) rather than embedding ever-changing graphics and distribution features in ABAP code. This is a reason SAP created BC-XOM (Business Communication eXternal Output Management) and RFC (Remote Function Call) protocols.

Output document management systems not only burst and route output files to selected printers based on set criteria; they also offer multiple ways to leverage their content and ease distribution concerns. You are often better served delivering reports electronically in PDF, Excel, or XML formats, distributed by email or on smartphone devices, and secured by a safe repository such as SAP Cloud Platform or MS SharePoint.

End user technologies such as Email and PDF content, or 3D Barcodes, and distribution techniques, such as SOAP, REST, and cloud repositories, evolve faster than common business practices. In contrast, purchase order procedures and customer balance reporting tend to remain stable over time. Supporting these technologies from a centralized ERP structure that cannot be easily upgraded is a difficult, time-consuming effort. Configurable external document workflow management solutions are well-suited to interact with these ever-changing technologies and are often a better option, providing interoperability and traceability.

Valuing Existing SAP Reports vs. Building New Ones

Most existing production reports, created in real time by transactions or background jobs, contain a wealth of detailed and valuable information. In many cases, these documents include all of the data necessary to support their associated business functions. It is their structure and format that make them inefficient for direct utilization.

Sorting, reformatting, bursting, and automatically delivering document content are the missing ingredients. Even if you did spend the time and resources necessary to code ABAP functions, you would still face the challenge of automating and adapting them to new technologies.

Allocating ABAP or Smartform development resources to adapt to changing report requirements is often not the most efficient approach. Before creating new OTF, SMART, or LIST spool files from scratch, consider levera-ging existing ones with new technologies. Advanced document workflow management systems are designed to handle these types of requests and have proven to be efficient means for IT teams to satisfy the evolving needs of end users.

Enforce Report and Document Governance

Distributing reports or documents to entitled users only is a major concern for IT managers. Controlling report distribution requires a certified and secure process from the SAP output device releasing the file to the mobile device displaying the content.

A SAP-certified BC-XOM Connector combined with the ability to embed document metadata in a delivered report adds traceability. SAP spool attributes and processing information become part of the document, creating a true ID card. When PDF or Excel reports reach a user, their ID Card is embedded within a document's properties, revealing its origin.

The ability to automatically protect a report PDF with a digital signature and further safeguard it with a password increases security.

Delivering an encrypted document URL grants an exclusive list of eligible users unique access to the desired report. Once multiple reports are generated, a URL bucket sent by email or SMS invites users to connect to a secured SAP Cloud Platform using their credentials.

Such advanced features of the output document management workflow are combined and tailored to establish document governance with ease and confidence.

Empower Reports with Content Analysis

The ability to analyze page content and address each Unicode character by line and column position demonstrates the power and flexibility of a document workflow management system's reformatting features. To burst a single report into parts, this system requires conditioned processes based on identified variables in the document.

Including an RFC to add content to documents with missing information, such as an email address, can be critical, especially during distribution.

Leveraging New Means of Communication

The old process of distributing reports as email attachments is fading. In its place, users can save a report in an intranet or cloud repository and submit their encrypted URL either via email or SMS. The benefits of this shift are numerous and include saving broadband, avoiding reports lost in the spam folder, and distinguishing report versions to avoid confusion, among others.

Routing reports through a document workflow for verification or approval speeds up controlled distribution. With a digital signature and time stamp applied, you have the ability to secure and protect confidential or sensitive reports.

Valuing SAP Cloud Platform, Amazon Web Services, and Microsoft SharePoint for safe report repository and universal access can help inform workflow decisions. Whether meant for corporate users or business partners, sharing and controlling read access to SAP reports has become straightforward.
Adding business content such as graphics, 3D barcodes, or hyperlinks,turns a simple PDF report into an enriched document while preserving SAP data integrity.

Selecting a Scalable Workflow Management System

Some production reports or documents can be very large (up to 1,000 characters in width) or very long (containing over 100,000 pages). Consider reformatting these kinds of documents via a document workflow management system. Solutions that offer buffering techniques and BC-XOM protocols allow access to the SAP spool system and can handle the job well.

Production reports, whether created by batch or interactively, may be numerous at some pick times. Output document management capabilities must involve multiple parallel processing, as well as load balancing, to address volume.
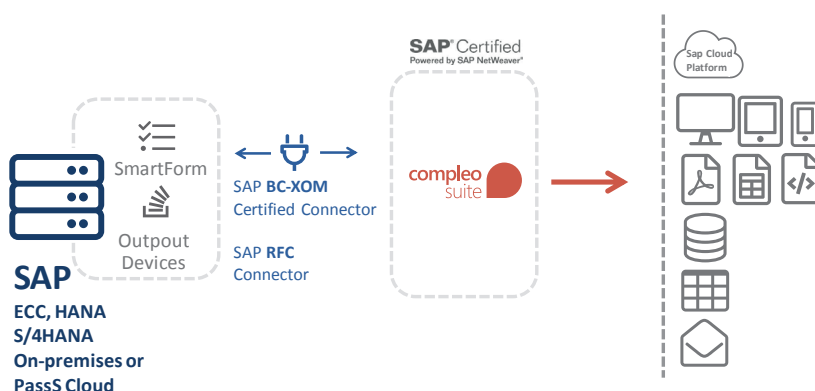
When reports are to be sent to multiple locations, implementing a distributed architecture handling documents and reports locally will ease and enhance the formatting and delivery processes. The ideal workflow management system must incorporate automatic backup and recovery for each report being processed to ensure reliability and performance.

The Benefits of an SAP-recommended Architecture
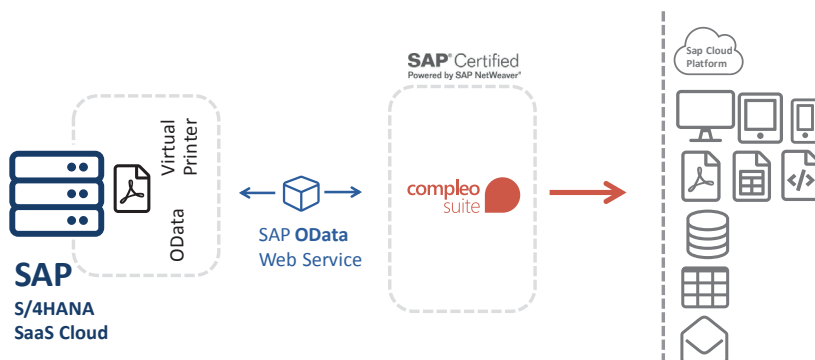
SAP ECC, SAP HANA or S/4HANA

The strategy of delegating and controlling an external document output management system has been defined by SAP some time. The SAP BC-XOM and RFC protocols offer many capabilities to add value to SAP Applications.

Utilizing an SAP-certified solution for managing and distributing reports and documents ensures security and reliability.

S/4HANA Cloud

SAP offers a web service, OData, which improves document output management solutions for controlling and handling external communication.

o ⸱ ⸱ strategy-related   your company can consider include:

- How many statements or instruction documents are passed onto your supply chain or logistics?
- How frequently are situation reports are being analyzed by controllers?
- How many commercial and trade documents are exchanged or delivered along with goods and services to business partners?

Because corporations face constant change, and because of improvements in communications technologies, these processes demand flexibility. However, they are worth making if the documents are well-formatted, protected, certified, approved, acknowledged, and delivered on time.

Whether reports and documents are generated by SAP S/4HANA Cloud or on-premise, they must be secure to be shared, either by email or encrypted URL. Other necessities can include digital signature approval, XML formatting and embedding within the same PDF, being posted on an electronic data interchange platform, notification with status or read/receipts, the ability to save in a cloud storage platform, and more.

An SAP document output management solution, easily tailored to corporate needs, must handle all of these functions, and withstand upgrades and configuration changes for longterm use. The external approach we have chosen at Symtrax addresses this through an SAP-certified solution.