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R E S E A R C H

OFFERING OVERVIEW

Unit4 Changes the ERP Market with Its EAP Platform

A Message-centric Platform, Composable Apps, and Public Cloud Are the Underpinnings of the Unit4 EAP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of how Unit4's platform powers the Unit4 enterprise resource planning (ERP) offerings. Unit4 has gone through a substantial platform investment that was started a few years ago and recently concluded under new CEO Mike Ettling.

With an in-depth understanding of its service industry target markets, Unit4 has built an enterprise application platform (EAP) that operates in the cloud (Microsoft Azure); is based on a microservices architecture; enables modern UX practices with capabilities such as its digital assistant, Wanda; and enables users to build mini-apps with low-code tools for the last mile of automation.

In April 2021, Unit4 launched its new ERP offering, ERPx, which leverages that platform extensively. The combination makes Unit4's platform and business applications offerings some of the most modern in the market.

The other vendor offerings covered in the Constellation Market Overview[1] are (in alphabetical order), Infor OS, Microsoft Dynamics Platform, Oracle NetSuite SuiteCloud Platform, Oracle Visual Builder, Salesforce Platform, SAP Business Technology Platform (BTP), Workday Cloud Extend, and Zoho Creator Platform.[2]

| Business Themes			
New C-Suite	Future of Work	Data to Decisions	Technology Optimization

ABOUT THE UNIT4 PEOPLE PLATFORM

Overview

The Unit4 People Platform Is One of the Most Modern and Complete EAPs

Unit4 rethought the ERP platform in the 2013–2014 time frame, and the result is the Unit4 People Platform, one of the most—if the not *the* most—modern and complete EAP platforms covered in this Market Overview. A key design premise and principle has been that ERP needs to be built for people, from the platform up. The Unit4 People Platform serves not only as the platform for Unit4 products such as the Unit4 People Experience Suite but also as the platform with which enterprises can enable all three key EAP usage scenarios: Extend, Integrate, and Build. Unit4 built the platform by following modern platform principles such as loosely coupled integration via REST APIs, support for dynamic data interoperability, an ontology business object taxonomy, and a message hub for communication and collaboration (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Screenshot of Unit4 Build Use Case
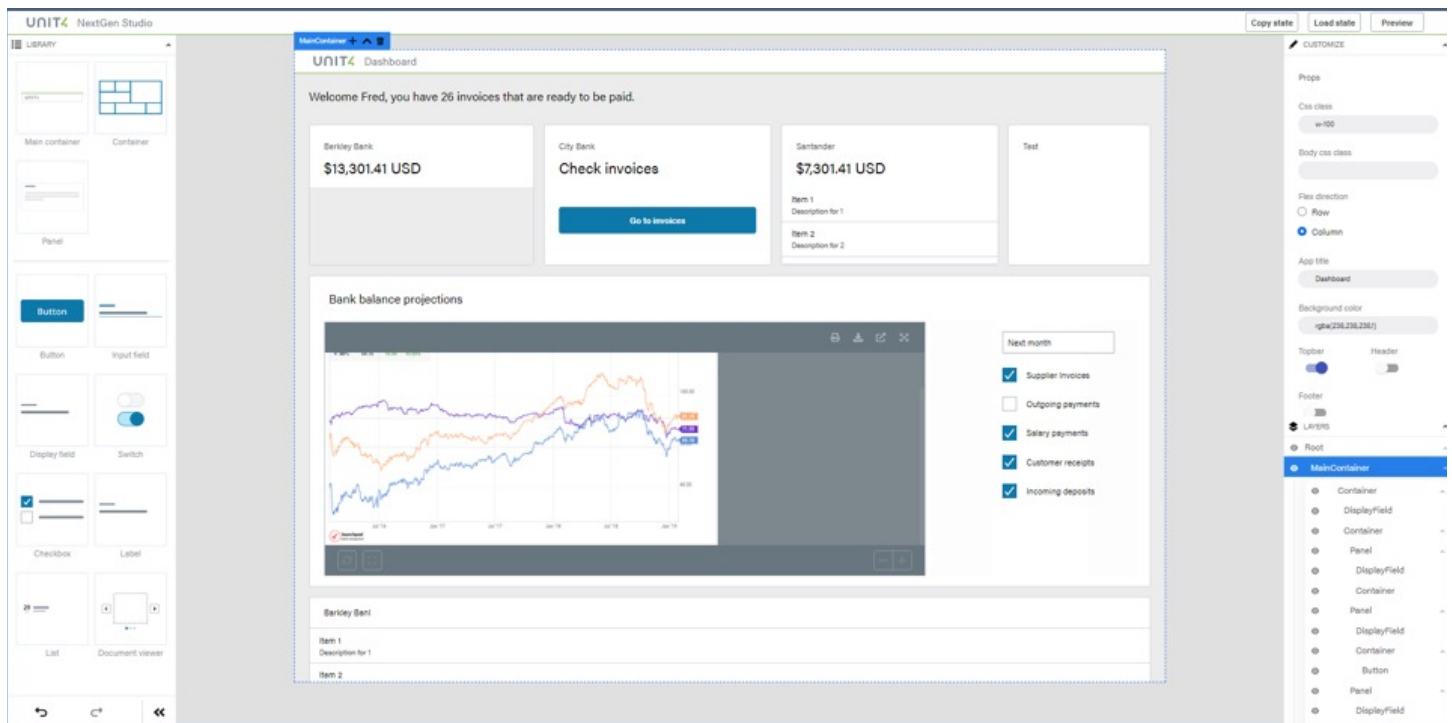
Source: Unit4

The Unit4 People Platform comprises the following offerings:

1. **Extension Kit.** This offering enables enterprises to extend the Unit4 offering as they see fit. Extension Kit makes it easy and fast, without requiring technical skill to extend the Unit4 products. On the integration side, Unit4 offers a XML-based integration platform that allows the management of both Unit4-shipped and customer-created integrations in an easy, user-friendly way.

2. **Wanda.** Wanda, Unit4's digital assistant, is pervasive across the company's products. Customers can extend Wanda and create their own natural-language integration via an easy-to-use creation and operation capability for use with digital assistants.

Overall, Unit4 has one of the most modern platforms analyzed in this Market Overview. Enterprises can deploy Unit4 solutions in Microsoft Azure as well as on-premises (for ERP7). The people-centric design, which has influenced the platform architecture from its very inception, makes the Unit4 People Platform a unique EAP that supports all EAP core usage scenarios.

MARKET SEGMENT: ENTERPRISE APPLICATION PLATFORMS

Market Definition

The Unit4 People Platform competes in the enterprise application platforms (EAPs) market. These platforms are defined as systems that manage, build, operate, integrate, and extend enterprise applications.

Traditionally, enterprise platforms came along with the enterprise applications of their respective vendors: The platform and applications were inextricably linked. In the past decade, however, platform innovation on the one hand and business process uncertainty on the other have forced enterprise application vendors to open up their platforms to their customers.

Scenarios for EAPs include the following three archetypal use cases:

- **Extend:** The requirement for enterprises to extend and/or customize their applications is the oldest usage scenario for enterprise application platforms. Changing the user experience (UX), adding more fields, changing menus, and so on are staples of the Extend scenario.

- **Integrate:** Because enterprise applications do not stand by themselves, organizations seek better ways to integrate them with the rest of their enterprise automation technologies; EAPs need to facilitate this integration effort.

- **Build:** The most recent usage scenario for EAPs is the Build scenario, in which enterprises build their own stand-alone applications on the EAP vendor's platform. This scenario has been triggered largely by business best-practice uncertainty that rules the current phase of enterprise applications (more on that later).

Another defining market characteristic is the availability of EAPs in the public cloud. The public cloud has changed enterprise IT as no previous technology trend has done, enabling the pay-as-you-go consumption-based licensing business model as well as exceptional resource elasticity.

All vendors in this Constellation Market Overview support the public cloud. However, data residency and performance demands as well as traditional IT operating models often require organizations to run their enterprise applications on-premises. Most of the vendors in this Market Overview also support on-premises deployment of their applications, adding increased capabilities to the enterprise platform (the lone exceptions being the "born in the cloud" vendors NetSuite, Salesforce, and Workday).

Last, some of the vendors in this Constellation Market Overview—such as Microsoft, Oracle, and Salesforce—provide offerings in both the software-as-a-service (SaaS) and platform-as-a-service (PaaS) areas, but we consider only the capabilities of their EAPs in this report, not their separately offered PaaS offerings. In the overall market, however, these vendors' PaaS offerings are the key competitor of EAPs, competing especially with those vendors that do not offer support for the archetypal Build use case.
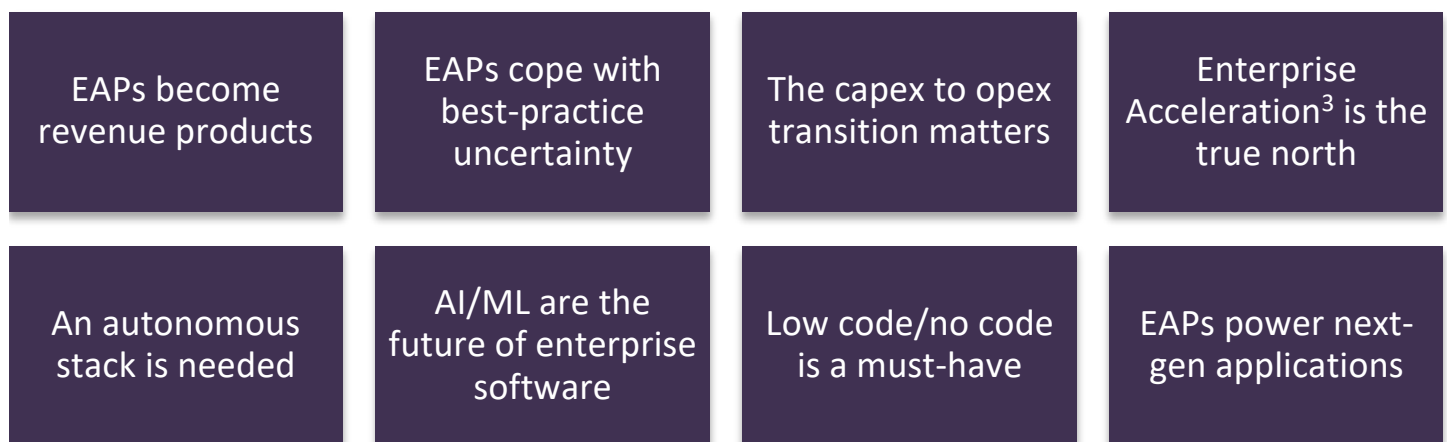
Market Trends

Eight prominent market trends are driving enterprise software/software-as-a-service (SaaS) vendors to offer an EAP (see Figure 2).

EAPs Become Revenue Products

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) vendors, like all other software and SaaS vendors, are under pressure to increase the returns on their research and development (R&D) efforts. Individual developer productivity already has been maximized, as have nearshore and offshore options for the most part, so efforts are focused on increasing productivity both in-house and for customers.

Using EAP platforms is the right strategy for boosting overall developer productivity in the push to create next-generation applications. Because SaaS vendors are able to create EAP solutions that fit their domain space, they can increase productivity and velocity for their developer users. When offered as products, EAP-built solutions can help customers and partners complete and complement existing SaaS offerings of the ERP vendor. This proves very valuable when SaaS vendors are not able to offer complete wall-to-wall solutions but need partners and customers to fill in some functional gaps. Historically, EAP offerings have been a giveaway and not on the price list of ERP vendors; that is changing now, as EAPs become a revenue opportunity.

Figure 2. Eight Market Trends Define the EAP Market

EAPs become revenue products	EAPs cope with best-practice uncertainty	The capex to opex transition matters	Enterprise Acceleration[3] is the true north
An autonomous stack is needed	AI/ML are the future of enterprise software	Low code/no code is a must-have	EAPs power next-gen applications

Source: Constellation Research

CxOs know that the enterprise software vendor with the better return on R&D will be the winner in their market and therefore the right partner for their enterprise. The availability and maturity of an EAP offering are leading indicators of how well a vendor is positioned for the return on its R&D.

EAPs Cope with Best-Practice Uncertainty

For the first time in the history of enterprise software, technology exceeds the software's computational requirements and enables new processes and best practices. This creates a best-practice void, which means enterprises do not know what the real best practices are and need to experiment and try new best practices. Effectively, this is a repeat of the mainframe era of the 1950s: The hardware was there, but the software had to be written. Enterprises that want to be disruptors and winners in digital transformation must be able to build software for experimental and disruptive purposes.

Naturally, an enterprise does not want to share with its suppliers any best-practice innovations that have market disruption potential—particularly not with its enterprise software supplier, whose business model would compel it to package and sell that innovation to as many other enterprises as possible. On the other hand, enterprise software vendors cannot build for every experiment their customers want to conduct.

But the need for EAPs goes further than developing software as a strategic tool. It is clear that software vendors cannot build all the automation that enterprises need—even if that automation is standardized. Deep localizations and verticalizations, for example, are areas in which EAPs enable enterprises to pursue their own automation destiny.

As a result, enterprises use EAPs to build additional capabilities they deem important to their success (and that they cannot get or do not want to get from their enterprise software supplier); this enables software vendors to provide a platform for experimentation and creation of custom business processes.

The Capex and Opex Transition Matters

Software development is capital-intensive and requires vendors to make capital expenditure (capex) investments. The same is true for buying hardware and operating data centers. Because reliable public cloud computing infrastructure has been available for the last few years, enterprise software vendors do not get a good return on their capital by running their own data centers. As Infor CEO Charles Phillips put it in 2014, "Friends don't let friends build data centers."[4]

In addition to the pure capex, running and operating data centers also presents a talent and personnel cost for enterprise software vendors, with talent and budget that could be allocated to software and product development instead being spent monitoring and upgrading servers. Much as how enterprises ran their own power plants about 100 years ago and then gradually moved to using public utilities, they will move to public cloud vendors for their computing needs. And enterprise software vendors will anticipate that trend by closing their data centers and moving to public cloud infrastructures.

Constellation estimates that an enterprise software vendor that moves to a public cloud-based operational expenditure (opex) model can invest between 15% and 20% more in its product. Compounded over a few years, this can result in functional leadership by a public-cloud-based vendor of 50% to 60% over a vendor that still operates its own data center(s).

This trend makes public cloud support a key factor for CxOs selecting the right enterprise software products. Enterprise application vendors that come from an on-premises history have to make sure their products, including EAPs, run in the public cloud. The requisite innovation starts with the platform, and this makes public cloud platforms a requirement for EAPs.

Enterprise Acceleration via Solution Completeness

For far too long, enterprises have operated with incomplete and fragmented enterprise software. Workarounds, often manually operated, are still common. In an era when labor costs are quickly rising and talent is getting scarcer and scarcer, a solution's automation completeness, ideally spanning the entire enterprise, is crucial for success.

Experienced CxOs know they cannot expect solution completeness from their enterprise software vendor(s). There is no guarantee that this will change even in the near future; although some vendors offer roadmaps, these roadmaps may not align with the automation needs and current state of business best-practice innovation and competition each enterprise experiences.

The solution to this challenge is an EAP platform provided by the enterprise software vendor that gives enterprises the strategic option to strive for solution completeness, even if their enterprise software vendor does not provide it.

The Need for an Autonomous Stack

Traditional enterprise software functions with an operator mindset: The user has to show up for business to happen. If the user does not show up, nothing or very little happens. With economies running out of capacity and talent, it is more and more important for enterprise vendors' software to become self-driving and autonomous.

EAPs play a key role in enabling enterprises to operate in a more autonomous way, because they form the basis for the creation, validation, and automation of the rules and algorithms that power the best practices enabled by Infinite Computing.[5]

AI, ML, and Deep Learning Networks Are Key to the Future of Enterprise Software

The future of enterprise automation is in ... automation. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) give enterprises a new option for automating tasks via software.

The first area of innovation involves humanizing the interaction with enterprise software: Instead of typing on a QWERTY keyboard and using a mouse, users can employ natural speech and touch to interact with software. This is a much more human-suited way to interact with software than using the relatively primitive input tools of the past. With humans effectively acting as autonomous 3D processors, the next revolution will involve understanding data in a 3D way, using augmented, mixed, and digital reality.

An even larger impact is occurring on the automation side. For the first time, the digital trail (and digital exhaust) of an enterprise can be used to automate processes—even without human involvement. And these processes can continuously adapt, morph, and reinvent themselves. The capability comes from deep-learning networks (DLNs) that continuously look at the digital trail and automate processes autonomously.

Both major trends—the humanization of software interaction and the rise of DLNs—are powered by the public cloud. Vendors adapting to public cloud infrastructure and opting to automate these processes in an enterprise-friendly way in an EAP platform will be the winners as enterprises and vendors transition to the public cloud.

Low Code/No Code Is a Must-Have

Invariably, enterprise use of an EAP requires code automation. Traditional avenues for creating the code—i.e., via developers—have been more or less depleted: The world does not have enough developers to build all the code it needs to survive in the era of digital transformation.

Additionally, vendors do not want their enterprise customers to embark on overly large, traditional software projects, because they compete with the vendor for wallet share. In addition, the overall risk of going live can be affected by the ups and downs of the software development lifecycle of these projects. Therefore, it is crucial for enterprise software vendors to enable their customers to build their next-generation applications via low-code/no-code options.

The result is that enterprises in general, and more specifically reasonably technology-savvy enterprise end users, can be put in charge of their own automation destiny. Practically, this means that the EAPs are being employed by business users for their specific automation needs across an entire enterprise.

EAPs Power Next-Gen Applications[6]

New technology capabilities create new automation needs and opportunities, and enterprises must leverage those opportunities to win markets or at least remain relevant. They cannot wait

for enterprise software vendors to build solutions for them in this era of digital disruption and transformation, due to the uncertainty about business best practices.

At the same time, it is clear that these next-generation applications (see Figure 3) have to be operated in connection and cooperation with traditional enterprise software applications—the systems of record. Therefore, it is crucial that enterprise software vendors give their customers the opportunity to build these next-generation applications in parallel with software that supports their existing needs, further reinforcing the need for an EAP.

KEY CAPABILITIES

This section describes the most important capabilities of Unit4's EAP, offered via the Unit4 People Platform.

Figure 3. The Seven Universal Next-Gen Apps Use Cases
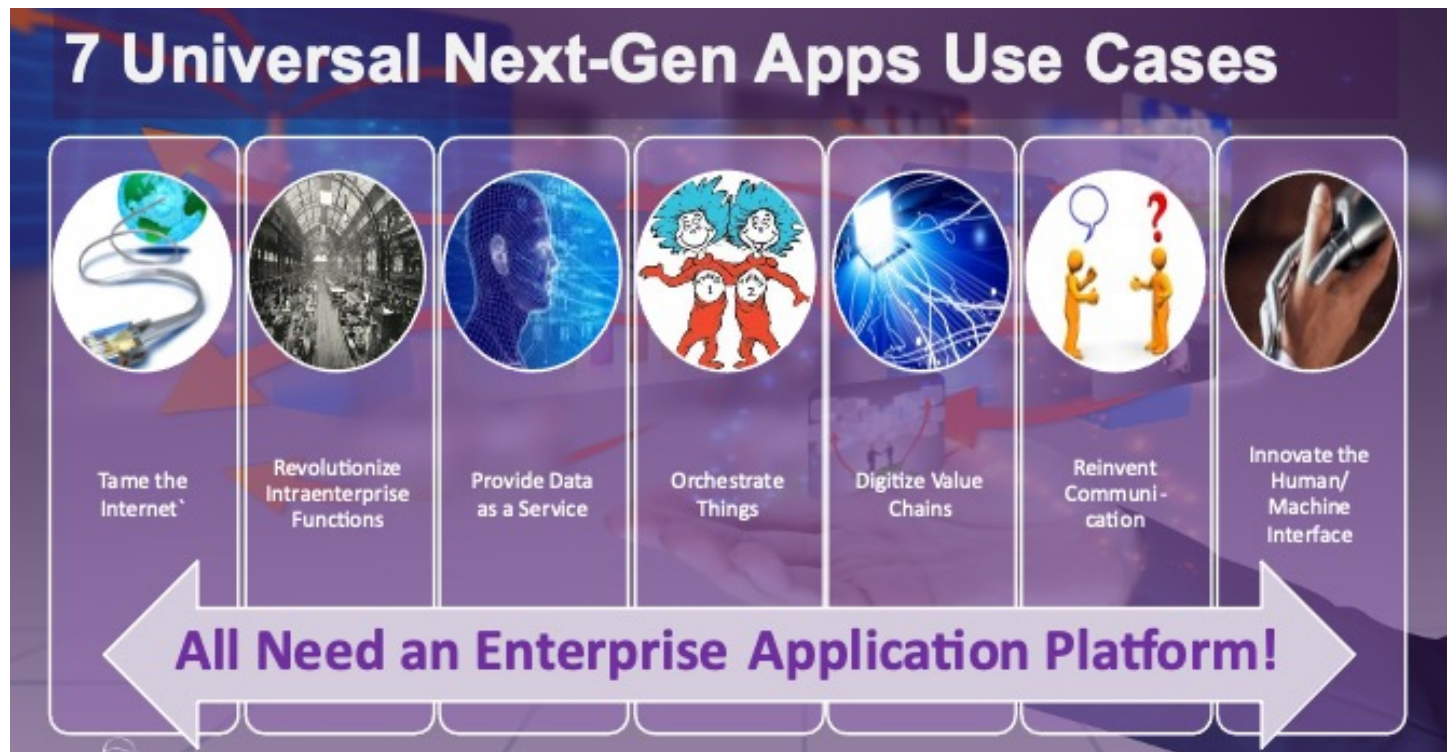
Source: Oracle

An Innovative and Unique Message-centric EAP for Next-Gen Applications

Enterprise application architectures, if successful, span decades. Usually a new architecture is triggered via fundamental platform changes. It is rarer to see a vendor having the chance to rethink its architecture without the pressures of platform changes, instead really taking the opportunity to rethink what an enterprise application architecture should be about.

This is what Unit4 has done over the last few years, taking a step back and looking at what is really needed to make customers successful with enterprise applications. The result was a dramatic shift from online transaction processing (OLTP) being the core of the architecture (as it is for all the other vendors featured in the underlying Constellation Market Overview) to making messages the core architecture principle. There is a lot of merit in focusing on messages, starting with the idea that the real world, when it comes to the enterprise, runs on messages as well. Unit4 envisioned the teardown of traditional architectural boundaries via the move: Instead of moving a purchase order message into a relational database and selling finished goods and services via messages (e.g., email), for example, why not keep the whole architecture and platform message-oriented? There is a lot of charm and beauty in a message-based architecture. Not to mention that message-based architectures scale much better, because they can be built in a more elastic fashion than traditional transactional architectures, which stand and fall with a single point of control—the primary ID generation of the underlying transactional database.

Unit4 decided to pursue a message-based architecture for its People Platform, putting messaging at the very center (see Figure 4).

Here are the five key components of the Unit4 People Platform, which operates ERPx:

1. **Web applications are the user interface.** Users interact with applications built on the Unit4 People Platform via web applications.

2. **Web APIs, documents, and events form the enterprise interface.** For electronic processes, enterprises interact with the Unit4 People Platform via web APIs, enterprise documents, or events.

Figure 4. Architectural Overview
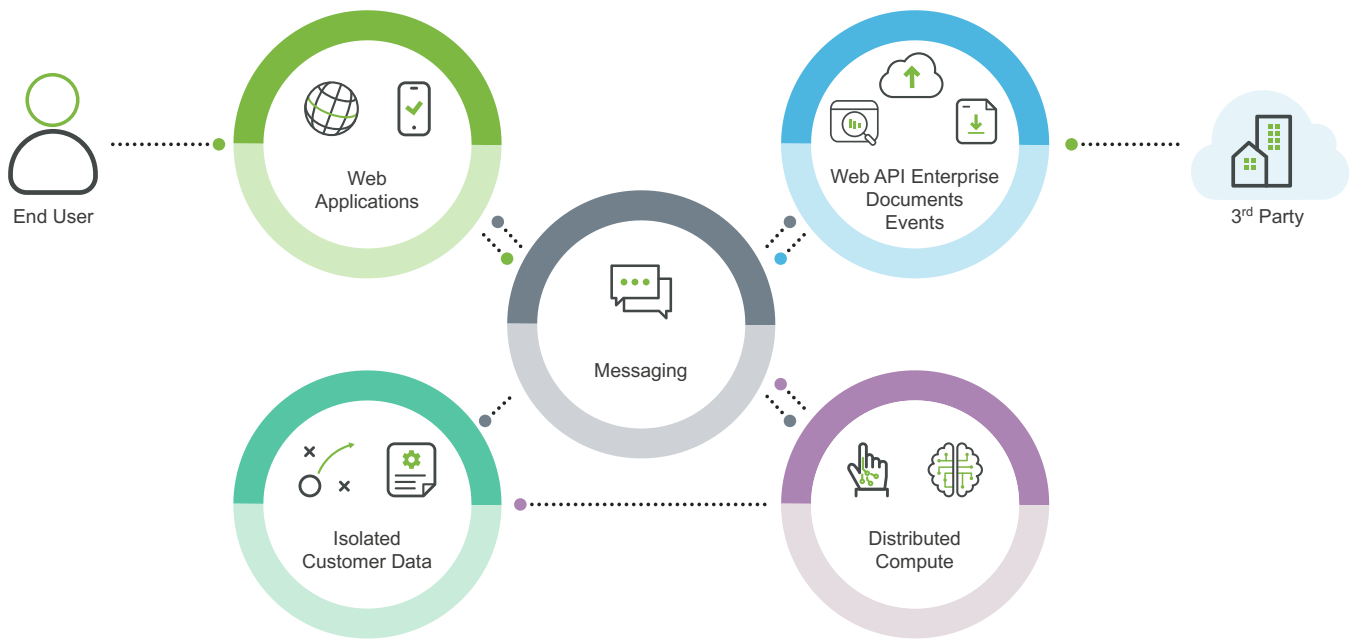
Source: Unit4

3. **Customer data is stored in isolation.** Customer data is stored in isolation, versus in large tables as in OLTP systems. This allows complete privacy and isolation for customer data, which is accessed only through messages.

4. **Distributed compute enables scalability.** Scalability is enabled for using the public cloud; in this case, Unit4 opted for Microsoft Azure, which provides the elasticities to add more capacity to the overall Unit4 People Platform.

5. **Messaging glues it all together.** And finally, messaging is at the core of the Unit4 People Platform and brings these four components together.

In summary, Unit4 has provided a compelling alternative architecture for operating business applications. It scales very well, avoids traditional transactional performance challenges, is a modern public-cloud-based EAP, and is a viable and elegant platform.

The Complete People Platform

The Unit4 People Platform combines all the relevant elements to power a modern set of business applications. The key functional components of the People Platform are the following:

Extension Kit, which enables enterprises to extend and integrate their applications. It is crucial for enterprises to extend their applications as new use cases arise. This is one of the core EAP scenarios that need to be supported by a modern EAP. And enterprise applications do not live alone but need to be integrated with other applications. The Unit4 Extension Kit enables the two core EAP use cases Extend and Integrate.

NextGen studio. For the third generic EAP use case, Build, the Unit4 People Platform supports the creation of standalone applications via its NextGen Studio (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Unit4 People Platform

Source: Unit4

From its key foundational components, the Unit4 People Platform powers the following applications and capabilities:

- **Unit4 and third-party business applications.** Not only does the People Platform support the three Unit4 business applications for human capital management (HCM), ERP, and financial planning but it also enables the consumption of third-party platforms for partners and customers.

- **Fundamental architecture capabilities.** The People Platform powers the creation of intelligent apps, provides skills to chatbots, manages connectors to other systems, administers the localizations needed for the business applications it powers, and enables the creation and management of instant apps.

- **Customer-specific apps.** Via customization, People Platform users can create their own applications, a key capability of the People Platform to support the fundamental EAP Build scenario.

Unit4 People Platform Powers Extension Needs

Unit4 released its Extension Kit in spring 2018,[7] with the integration and extension needs of service-centric enterprises in mind (see Figure 6).

As of spring 2019, several Extension Kit capabilities have been shipped.

Specifically, these are:

- Calendar event posting in Microsoft Outlook when an absence is created in the Unit4 HCM application

- Automated reporting if a customer/donor registered in Unit4 ERPx is on the U.S. government's watch list

Figure 6. The People Platform Extension Kit Architecture
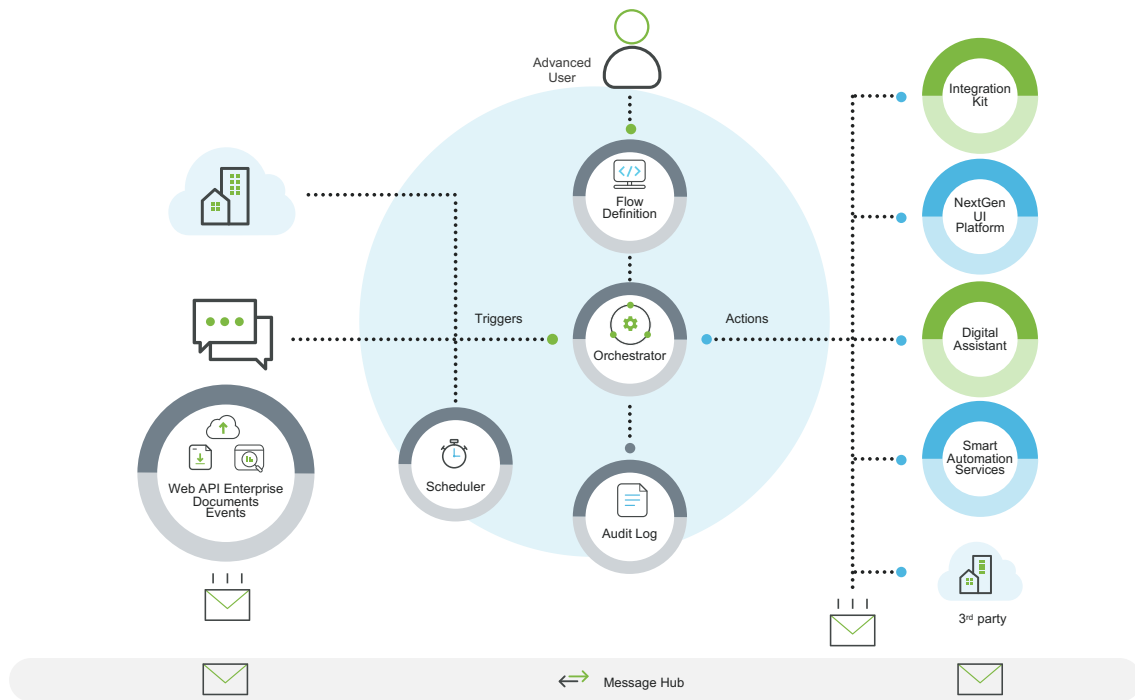
Source: Unit4

- Reporting of customers' credit risk evaluation via Dun & Bradstreet

- Creating a service request in Unit4 Business World via Google Forms

- Welcoming new employees by using Wanda, Unit4's digital assistant

- Populating information on suppliers in Unit4 Business World, using data from the Dutch Chamber of Commerce

With this set of services in the Unit4 Extension Kit, enterprises can integrate Unit4 ERP easily with key information sources (for example, the U.S. government watch list, the Dutch Chamber of Commerce data, or Dun & Bradstreet) but also export information (e.g., posting calendar events to Microsoft Outlook) or import information (e.g., creating a service request from a Google Form inside Unit4 ERP).

Enterprises require more flexible ways of working, and the Unit4 Extension Kit plays a key role in enabling experimentation with, evolution, and execution of new best practices. The low-code nature of the Extension Kit services implementation makes it easier for Unit4 customers to quickly implement them. And the underlying microservices-based architecture of the Unit4 People Platform makes it easy to provide and support these integration services.

Integration Powered by People Platform's Integration Capabilities

The success of EAPs stands and falls with the successful operation of the business applications they power. Once that is a given, the next factor is how well they can integrate with relevant third-party systems, both out of the box and via integration work undertaken by the customer. Next comes the ability to extend the applications, ideally avoiding customization that hinders customers' ability to upgrade. And last but not least comes the building of separate applications as needed by customers. In short, after successfully operating its main load, an EAP needs to support the three generic EAP use cases: Extend, Integrate, and Build.

The Unit4 People Platform addresses the integration use case with the Extension Kit, which, true to the DNA of the platform, is a message-based integration architecture:

1. **Message Hub as the center of everything.** The People Platform Message Hub is the core location for all messages: It brings together, sequences, and stores all messages of the platform.

2. **A Scheduler that choreographs timed messages.** Because integration often needs to run at regular intervals, the Extension Kit has a Scheduler that generates messages for integration purposes.

3. **Enterprise integration powered by webhooks.** Performing all integration via messages may not be viable, because external systems are not message-based, so Unit4's Extension Kit enables users to create messages by invoking webhooks.

4. **The magic that happens with Message Processor.** At the core of the Unit4 Extension Kit is the Orchestrator, which interprets each message and determines what the next actions are. Orchestrator is supported by a Flow Definition module, which determines how the message is

supposed to be processed. Orchestrator also has access to tenant-specific properties that enable tenant-specific context for each message to be processed.

5. **Messages in, messages out.** Extension Kit then sends messages out again—feeding messages to web APIs, enterprise documents, and/or events. Messages can also be sent to external enterprises and, of course, put back into the Message Hub for later processing.

A Modern Platform for EAP Build Use Case Support

Given the pressure to move faster and become more agile—in short, to practice Enterprise Acceleration—enterprises need more automation. Practically, this means that more needs to happen in business software by "itself," without the user's taking action. Unit4 has been headed in the direction of self-driving business applications for a while, which helps the vendor's EAP now to enable these capabilities. The latest culmination of these efforts is what Unit4 calls Smart Automation Services (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. People Platform Smart Automation Services
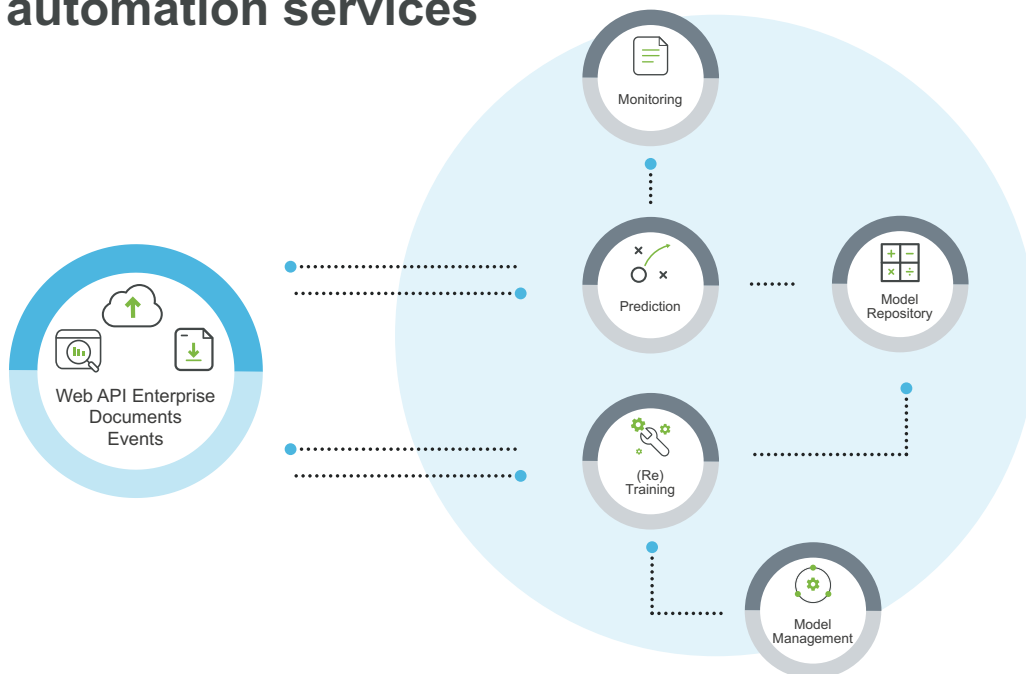
Source: Unit4

Unit4's EAP implements Smart Automation Services as follows:

- **External requests trigger Smart Automation Services.** In the Unit4 People Platform, users can perform a request to Smart Automation Services when creating an automation with Extension Kit. They ask for a prediction based on one of the machine learning/AI models available in the repository.

- **Prediction services are at the core.** From a Smart Automation Services perspective, the prediction model is crucial, because it enables the execution of the smart service by using the underlying machine learning/AI models.

- **Model reuse is available via a model repository.** Unit4 provides a set of machine learning/AI models available in the repository. These models are trained with customer specific data when activated through the Model Management module.

A Next-Gen Platform to Support the EAP Build Use Case

It is clear that enterprise automation vendors cannot provide any and every piece of automation that enterprises need. The enterprise itself needs to provide the last mile of automation, providing the use case for the EAP Build scenario.

The Unit4 People Platform addresses the Build use case with its next-gen platform capabilities (see Figure 8):

Specifically, the next-gen platform capabilities of the Unit4 People Platform work as follows:

- **Application definitions are the core.** As a metadriven EAP system, the Unit4 People Platform starts its application execution with the application definition module. It gets invoked either by users or by enterprise documents via GraphQL, REST APIs, or external interfaces.

Figure 8. The People Platform Next-Gen App Platform
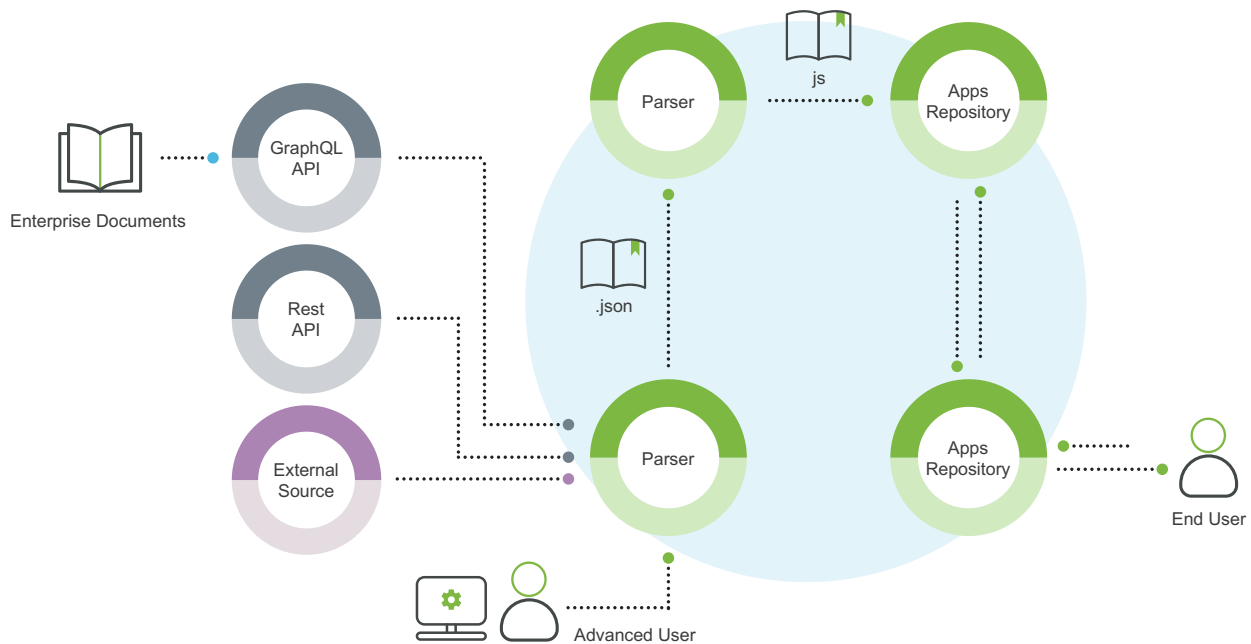
Source: Unit4

- **Code gets processed by a parser.** The code of the new, next-gen application gets parsed in a parser module.

- **The apps repository functions as an apps library.** The parsed code gets moved into the apps repository, which contains all available apps for that customer.

- **Apps are called via an app request module.** Available next-gen applications can be called via the app request module, which users invoke. The app request module handles the important access and security considerations when calling an application.

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS

For CxOs making decisions regarding their enterprise applications, the Unit4 People Platform is a strong differentiator for choosing Unit4 enterprise applications. Not only has Unit4 developed a differentiated and innovative messaging-based EAP but it was also early to commit all customers to the public cloud, specifically to Microsoft Azure.

Strengths

The Unit4 People Platform possesses the following strengths compared with other offerings in this market space (see Figure 9, page 23):

- **Innovative messaging platform.** Unit4 has rethought the EAP platform DNA with a move to a completely message-based platform. This poses unique and differentiated advantages for an EAP platform, because it makes integration and extension as well as apps creation much easier than it is with traditional database-centric EAP platforms.

- **Using Azure at its best.** With Microsoft Azure, Unit4 has chosen the right platform. Most of its customers are there, and Unit4 is exploiting Azure in depth—e.g., using the mesh architecture and AI capabilities.

- **Microservices architecture.** The Unit4 People Platform also scores high, because it operates on a microservices architecture, which enables more efficient resource utilization and, even more importantly, a more efficient way to provide critical automation at scale.

- **Innovative approach to the Build use case.** The combination of a messaging-centric architecture and microservices makes the Unit4 People Platform stand out in the market for EAPs. More efficient operations of the three universal EAP scenarios—Extend, Integrate, and Build—give Unit4's customers higher developer velocity and, with that, higher potential to practice critical Enterprise Acceleration.

Weaknesses

The Unit4 People Platform possesses the following weaknesses compared with offerings in this market space (see Figure 9):

- **No multicloud options, only Azure.** All cloud efforts need to start somewhere, and Unit4 started at the right place with Microsoft Azure, given where a large part of its customer base operates. But the reality—and future operating model—for enterprises in the cloud is multicloud, and Unit4 needs to extend its offerings, including the People Platform, to other public clouds sooner rather than later.

- **Azure not being the best choice for AI.** Whereas Microsoft Azure has many strengths, it is relatively weak in the area of AI automation. It's good enough for now, but given the potential of AI automation to create the winners of tomorrow, Unit4 needs to make the People Platform available on more-advanced AI cloud platforms (e.g., Google Cloud).

- **Complex customer upgrades.** Unit4 has been able to create a very compelling platform to operate ERP. But platforms need adoption to justify ongoing investment, and Unit4 needs to find ways to upgrade its customer base to the People Platform and realize the economies of scale from a larger customer base.

- **Battling much larger competitors.** Unit4 is one of the smaller vendors in this Constellation Market Overview, and it's clearly punching above its weight class. It needs growth and economies of scale to thrive in the long term; otherwise, it risks being relegated to being a niche vertical and regional vendor.

Figure 9. Unit4 People Platform Strengths and Weaknesses

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
· Innovative messaging platform · Using Azure at its best · Microservices architecture · Innovative approach to Build use case	· No multicloud options, only Azure · Azure not being the best choice for AI · Complex customer upgrades · Battling much larger competitors

Source: Constellation Research

RECOMMENDATIONS

Constellation recommends the following for CxOs looking at the Unit4 People Platform:

- **Enable enterprise acceleration.** Enterprises need to move faster than ever, and IT/computing infrastructures cannot continue to be the shackles on agility that they have been in the past. Therefore, CxOs should look to EAPs that enable their enterprise to not only integrate and extend their automation portfolio but also to build the relevant applications needed to run their enterprise in the era of digital transformation.

- **Select vendors with an eye on key capabilities, roadmaps, and business-user enablement.** EAP capabilities are becoming a larger part of ERP and business software selection. A lack of EAP capabilities can severely hamper enterprise success, so CxOs need to consider roadmap items and roadmap delivery times as well. Finally, IT cannot build it all, so the enablement of business users via low code is a key capability—one that Constellation regards as a showstopper for an enterprise software platform if it is lacking/nonexistent.

- **Pick your next enterprise software platform carefully, and make sure EAP capabilities are key in the selection, with a focus on the Build use case.** Traditionally, standard software was all about the fit. In the past, that served enterprises well, because best practices were delivered via standard software. In the era of business best-practice uncertainty, however, a vendor cannot ship all the best practices. The only option an enterprise has when it needs automation that its enterprise software vendor cannot provide is to build that automation in house. Therefore, the Build use case matters a great deal as a key EAP capability for Enterprise Acceleration in the era of business best-practice uncertainty.

- **Exploit the Unit4 People Platform at its fullest when a Unit4 customer.** When paying for enterprise software, it makes sense to exploit the software at its fullest, taking advantage of what has been licensed, from both a functionality and a commercial

perspective. Licensing an EAP such as the People Platform and not using it to its fullest is not the best strategy for practicing Enterprise Acceleration.

- **As a prospect, realize the relative competitive strength of the Unit4 People Platform.** When evaluating Unit4, it is important to include EAP capabilities in the selection process. Unit4 will do well for EAP capabilities in terms of functionality, adoption, and robustness. And this is what CxOs need from their EAP: a proven, scalable platform to implement the key three EAP capabilities: Extend, Integrate, and Build.

- **Take a stance on commercial prudence.** Regardless of the vendor, enterprises need to make sure they obtain the value they seek. For the Unit4 People Platform, CxOs must pay attention to ensure that subscription costs provide their enterprise with an attractive TCO. As with all services-related offerings, prices will fluctuate, need to be contractually agreed upon as long as desired, and must be constantly monitored to avoid negative commercial surprises.

RELATED RESEARCH

For the Market Overview, see: Holger Mueller, "Next-Gen Computing: The Enterprise Computing Model for the 2020s," Constellation Research, September 14, 2018. https://www.constellationr.com/research/next-gen-computing-enterprise-computing-model-2020s

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ENDNOTES

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3 Enterprise Acceleration *is the term the author uses to describe the need for enterprise to move faster and become more agile. Read more on Enterprise Acceleration here: Holger Mueller, "Why the C-Suite Must Embrace Enterprise Acceleration," May 2, 2019.* https://www.constellationr.com/research/why-c-suite-must-embrace-enterprise-acceleration

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6 Next-generation applications *is used by the author to describe applications that use a combination of AI, big data, cloud, and build applications across seven distinct use cases. Find more on next-generation applications here: Holger Mueller, "The Era of Infinite Computing Triggers Next-Generation Applications",* June 1, 2018. https://www.constellationr.com/research/era-infinite-computing-triggers-next-generation-applications

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