



A CIO's Guide to Agentic AI without RISE

Discover the faster, lower-risk roadmap SAP isn't talking about

Rimini Street



Executive summary

SAP positions RISE and its Clean Core approach as the foundation for a modern, intelligent enterprise — one where a standardized ERP core is paired with innovation delivered through SAP BTP, Joule and other cloud services. The architectural vision aligns with industry trends toward modular, AI-driven, composable ecosystems. However, the path to get there is anything but simple, and there’s a major flaw in SAP’s strategy. Organizations must remove customizations, rebuild processes, redesign integrations and reimplement the ERP entirely before they can access future capabilities — turning what SAP markets as “agility” into a multiyear, high-risk, high-cost transformation that could delay innovation instead of accelerating it.

This mandate comes at the worst possible time. Organizations urgently need AI, automation and better user experiences to stay competitive. Yet budgets are tight, SAP Cloud ERP skills are scarce and concerns about vendor lock-in and unpredictable subscription costs continue to escalate. A 3-5-year reimplementation isn’t modernization — it’s an innovation bottleneck that occurs just as businesses need speed and flexibility.

The good news is that a more pragmatic path — Agentic AI ERP — is emerging. Instead of tearing out stable ECC or S/4HANA systems that already work, organizations are extending their lifespan, eliminating migration pressure and layering intelligent, composable capabilities around them. This Agentic AI ERP model aligns with how enterprise architecture is actually evolving — ERP as a durable system of record, with AI-driven automation, orchestration and user experiences built externally for rapid delivery and measurable value.

Backed by analyst insights, real-world outcomes and new survey data, this guide shows how organizations can:

- **Stabilize and extend ECC or S/4HANA** through independent support, reducing operational risk and ensuring system viability well beyond 2040
- **Optimize operations** by leveraging integrations, improving processes and freeing significant budget from maintenance overhead
- **Modernize with composable capabilities** that enhance — not disrupt — the existing, reliable ERP
- **Adopt Agentic AI ERP** to automate cross-system workflows and decision-making — without reimplementation

This guide outlines a practical, lower-risk roadmap for organizations to innovate now, on their terms — not SAP’s.

Understanding SAP's migration mandate

SAP's architectural vision standardizes the ERP core (SAP Cloud ERP) by keeping it free of custom code and redeveloping all customizations, moving intelligence and innovation to adjacent platforms such as SAP BTP and Joule.

To adopt SAP Cloud ERP through RISE and realize the vendor's vision, customers must redevelop custom logic to run on BTP, adapt to a new data model and UI (Fiori), reconfigure integrations and conform to SAP's development standards. It's a massive effort that requires significant time and budget to complete — and for many organizations, the disruption outweighs the promised benefits.

Industry data reinforces the concern, as research shows that SAP Cloud ERP migrations can cost large enterprises hundreds of millions of dollars

for both licensing and implementation.¹ Mid-sized organizations face the same cost pressures and tight timelines, with limited access to the specialized talent required.

SAP's policies compound the pressure. Mainstream maintenance for ECC and S/4HANA will end in 2027 and 2040, respectively, with extended support available only at an additional premium and with less support coverage. Moreover, SAP is gatekeeping its AI capabilities for cloud users only. This creates a forced-migration environment, even when systems remain stable and reliable. It's no surprise that many customers have grown distrustful, viewing SAP's preferred path as a move toward vendor lock-in and a burden of escalating costs rather than a practical route to innovation.

¹ "SAP S/4HANA Pricing & Costs," ERP Research, retrieved 3 February 2026 from <https://www.erpresearch.com/en-us/sap-s4w-hana-costs>

What's driving business transformation?

A [2025 global survey of 450+ senior IT and business leaders](#) conducted with Freeform Dynamics highlights the gap between SAP's intended outcomes and customers' realities:

95% find it challenging to make a compelling ROI case for SAP Cloud ERP reimplementation

92% are concerned about unpredictable subscription costs

83% don't fully understand SAP's latest migration policies and deadlines

SAP's migration mandate doesn't reflect how enterprises actually modernize today. It forces organizations to choose reimplementation over incremental improvement and vendor control over independence. For most CIOs, this isn't a trade-off that supports short-term value or long-term strategic flexibility.

What leaders really think of SAP's roadmap

SAP promotes its strategy as modular and future ready. In practice, that modularity is gated behind mandatory reimplementations. Organizations are forced to undergo a full redeployment to SAP Cloud ERP before they can access the innovation that SAP highlights — a paradox not lost on CIOs evaluating their options. Critics openly question why costly migrations are needed to innovate on core systems when value will be delivered through external layers. The result is growing skepticism across the SAP community about whether the prescribed journey truly delivers the agility SAP promises.

Kingfisher, a leading European retailer, exemplifies the contradiction. Faced with SAP's push to migrate, Kingfisher rigorously evaluated the business case and ultimately rejected an SAP Cloud ERP reimplementations. Instead, the company kept its reliable SAP ECC system, moved it to Google Cloud and partnered with Rimini Street for third-party support. Kingfisher then built innovations powered by critical data from its core SAP ECC — proving that intelligent ERP outcomes can be achieved without SAP Cloud ERP, Clean Core restrictions or a costly reimplementations.

The decision also challenges SAP's narrative that SAP Cloud ERP is the only route to modernization. As described in The Register, Kingfisher's move casts "doubt over SAP's attempt at creating a motivational carrot of 'innovation' to accompany the stick of support ending."²

Analysts and other industry experts are echoing these observations, noting that many organizations are "innovating around the edge" instead of prioritizing a core replatforming. Though a business case may be made for an upgrade in the future, it will likely be a minimal lift — addressing only what remains in the system of record once most workflows have been lifted out into more flexible, intelligent layers. ERP as we know it is evolving and will ultimately become obsolete, and there's really no need for replatforming.

For CIOs facing urgent demands for automation, AI and workflow improvements, recognizing this shift is critical, as advanced capabilities can be achieved today without waiting for ERP's eventual transformation into a mere supporting component of enterprise architecture.

² Lindsay Clark, "SAP's migration narrative suddenly looks messy as Kingfisher goes off-script," The Register, retrieved 3 February 2026 from https://www.theregister.com/2025/11/19/kingfisher_sap/

Across dozens of conversations and theories, several themes emerge about SAP roadmaps:



Cost and ROI concerns

Most IT leaders struggle to justify the cost of SAP Cloud ERP migrations due to unclear or negative ROI. Many prefer to invest in targeted, quick-win innovations rather than a single major project with uncertain returns.



Vendor lock-in worries

CIOs express concern that RISE and an all-SAP cloud stack could increase dependency and reduce negotiating power — a strategic disadvantage in a fast-moving technology landscape. They value the freedom to choose solutions from multiple vendors rather than being “tied down” to one supplier’s agenda.



Skills and resources gaps

Nearly half of organizations lack the necessary SAP Cloud ERP skills,³ making migration both expensive and risky. With IT talent in high demand, CIOs are cautious about projects that require extensive retraining or new hires.



Timeline and operational disruption

Executives question how they can maintain operational momentum when a reimplementation can take 2-4 years and require major organizational change.

The overarching sentiment is consistent and clear: “We need to innovate now — not after a multiyear project.”

These candid perspectives underscore why many SAP customers are charting alternative paths as end-of-support deadlines loom.

The following chapters outline one such path — an Agentic AI ERP strategy that addresses these concerns head-on.

³ “5 critical questions to ask before embarking on your S/4HANA migration,” Expleo, retrieved 3 February 2026 from <https://expleo.com/global/en/insights/blog/5-questions-before-s4hana-migration/>

The myths vs. reality of ERP transformation

MYTH

“We must be on SAP Cloud ERP to use new technologies like Agentic AI and modern UX.”

“If we don’t migrate by 2027, we’ll lose support and be out of compliance.”

“Staying on SAP ECC or S/4HANA means falling behind; we’ll be stuck on ‘old’ tech.”

REALITY

Innovation doesn’t require SAP Cloud ERP. Organizations are already modernizing around their existing ECC and S/4HANA systems by layering intelligence, automation and modern UX on top of a stable core.

You can extend the life of your SAP ECC or SAP S/4HANA system well beyond SAP’s deadlines. Third-party support providers like Rimini Street will fully support these systems — including regulatory updates — through 2040 and beyond. This removes the 2027/2030 deadline pressure.

Modernizing doesn’t require core reimplementation. With an Agentic AI ERP approach, you can achieve a next-generation architecture today by automating workflows, orchestrating processes and deploying AI capabilities around your existing ERP.

Many assumptions that favor an immediate SAP Cloud ERP move don’t hold up to scrutiny. You can modernize quickly, reduce risk and deliver real innovation — all while keeping your current SAP system stable. A migration doesn’t have to be a prerequisite for progress, nor should it be.

How Agentic AI ERP delivers innovation without migration

Agentic AI ERP provides a practical alternative to costly cloud reimplementations, as it's built on a straightforward principle: Keep the ERP stable and layer intelligence over the top of it. An external intelligent layer serves as the "brain," interacting with the ERP system and orchestrating processes across applications via APIs and events. This model unlocks rapid innovation without redeployment, delivering the architectural benefits SAP promotes by maintaining your existing, reliable systems.

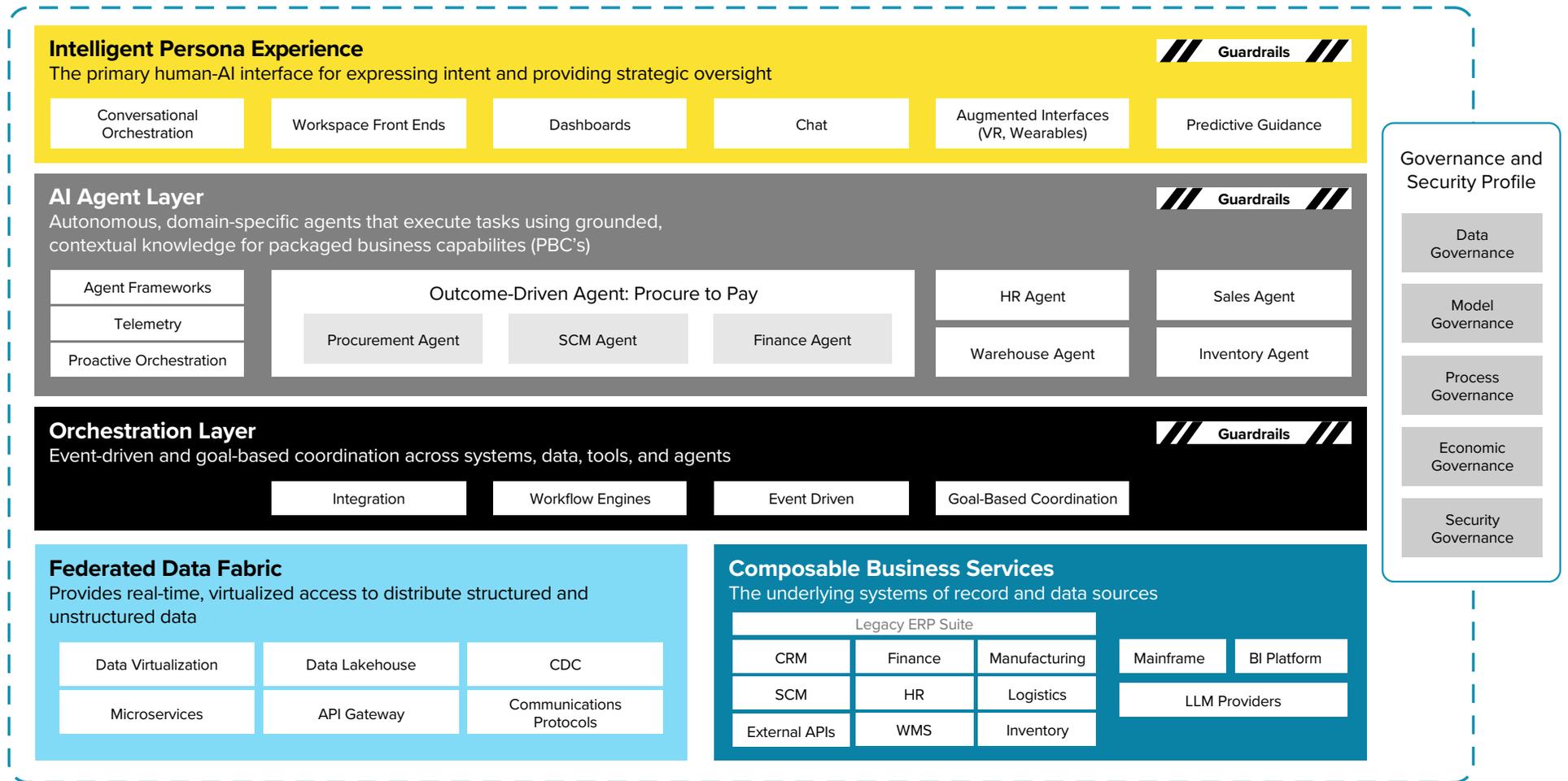
Autonomous agents coordinate cross-system processes — from procure-to-pay to supply chain coordination — while keeping their current ERP systems as they are. Intelligence, orchestration and decision-making operate outside the ERP system, enabling greater agility and dramatically faster time-to-value.

Modern, modular architecture under the business's control

The Agentic AI ERP architecture consists of connected layers that enable secure, adaptive and intelligent operations. Unlike traditional single-vendor stacks, it forms a modular, scalable mesh owned and controlled by the enterprise — not the vendor. Each layer integrates seamlessly to deliver automated workflows and business outcomes, governed by embedded compliance and security.



The architecture of tomorrow's Agentic AI ERP technology



Real-world results from Agentic AI ERP adoption

This model has demonstrated success in practice. According to the [Freeform Dynamics analyst research study](#), organizations using open, multi-vendor architectures supported by third-party maintenance report above-average performance 83% of the time, compared to just 27% for those relying on traditional single-vendor ERP strategies. The conclusion: An Agentic AI ERP strategy can accelerate results, preserve flexibility and reduce transformation risk.

[Apsen Farmacêutica](#), a Brazilian pharmaceutical manufacturer, provides further proof of the effectiveness of an Agentic AI ERP approach. By layering the ServiceNow platform over the top of its existing SAP ECC 6 release, the company automated 70% of previously manual processes. With Rimini Street's guidance, Apsen redesigned a critical materials-transfer workflow in weeks using AI and low-code tools — all without altering the SAP core. The company's CIO called it “a model for the entire company,” demonstrating that next-generation automation doesn't require next-generation ERP.

Strategic benefits of this emerging model



Accelerate innovation: Deploy AI-driven workflows and automation immediately, adding new capabilities without waiting for a complete ERP overhaul. Achieve measurable results within weeks and deliver value early.



Extend the stable core: Keep ECC or S/4HANA as your stable system of record, extend its life for 15+ years and modernize around it without disruption.



Utilize a composable architecture: Adopt a modular, composable architecture powered by an intelligent orchestration layer that integrates best-fit tools via APIs.



Avoid vendor lock-in: Retain control of your budget, technology choices and pace of modernization. Avoid restrictive subscription models and Clean Core mandates, choosing the platforms and AI engines you prefer.



Maximize SAP investments: Move on your roadmap and your terms with strategic flexibility and support through 2040 and beyond. Gain the optionality to modernize only when it delivers actual business value.

Comparison between RISE and Agentic AI ERP

Organizations planning their ERP roadmap face two contrasting approaches. The table below shows the differences between a traditional SAP Cloud ERP migration and composable modernization using Agentic AI ERP across key dimensions.

	SAP Cloud ERP with RISE	Composable modernization (Agentic AI ERP)
Modern architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full replatforming • Requires “Clean Core” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incremental and modular • Uses existing core ERP + intelligent layer
AI and automation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available post-implementation via SAP BTP and Joule • Often gated by roadmap and licensing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available immediately • AI agents and orchestration deployed on top of ECC or S/4HANA
Time-to-value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiyear timeline • Innovation delayed until go-live 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered in weeks/months • Quick wins through targeted automation
Business agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited agility during migration • Rigid upgrade cycles post-migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High agility • Composable architecture allows continuous adaptation
Cost efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High upfront cost • Ongoing subscription fees: ROI often unclear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cost • Third-party support and saved migration costs fund innovation: ROI tied to each project
Control and independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendor-controlled roadmap • Locked into SAP Cloud and licensing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business-led roadmap • Freedom to choose platforms and pace

The RISE route, along with introducing risk for disruption across day-to-day business operations, has a possibility of failure or abandonment. With replatforming projects, the result is often the same, similar or even less functionality than the previous on-premises system, despite the significant investment of time, capital and organizational effort.

The comparison at left illustrates why, for many, the composable modernization path is more aligned with business value — delivering faster value, keeping options open and avoiding the known pitfalls of large-scale replatforming projects.

Decision framework for SAP roadmap

Before committing to an SAP Cloud ERP migration with RISE, CIOs should take a step back and ensure the move is a business-driven decision — not a technical reflex. The following recommendations can help leaders stay grounded in business priorities while avoiding unnecessary risk and disruption.

1. Assess business value

Identify the concrete benefits of the SAP mandate for your company. Will SAP Cloud ERP provide capabilities your organization truly needs today, or can enhancements to your current SAP system deliver similar — or even better — results? Avoid “latest version” thinking, as modernization should be tied directly to measurable business outcomes.

2. Evaluate ROI

The ROI of SAP RISE migration remains unclear for many organizations. If the projected returns are small or intangible, be cautious. Transformation shouldn't begin without a clear financial case, especially when alternative investments may yield faster, more reliable returns.

3. Review current system limitations

If your ECC or S/4HANA is stable and meeting business needs, consider whether targeted add-ons or a modern UX layer could address pain points instead of a complete replatforming. Many organizations discover that constraints lie outside the ERP core and are solvable without replatforming.

4. Understand risks and resource requirements

An SAP Cloud ERP migration requires hard-to-find skills, extensive retraining and multi-year resource commitments. Determine whether your teams have the capacity to execute — and whether the business can handle the operational disruption — before following SAP's prescribed path.

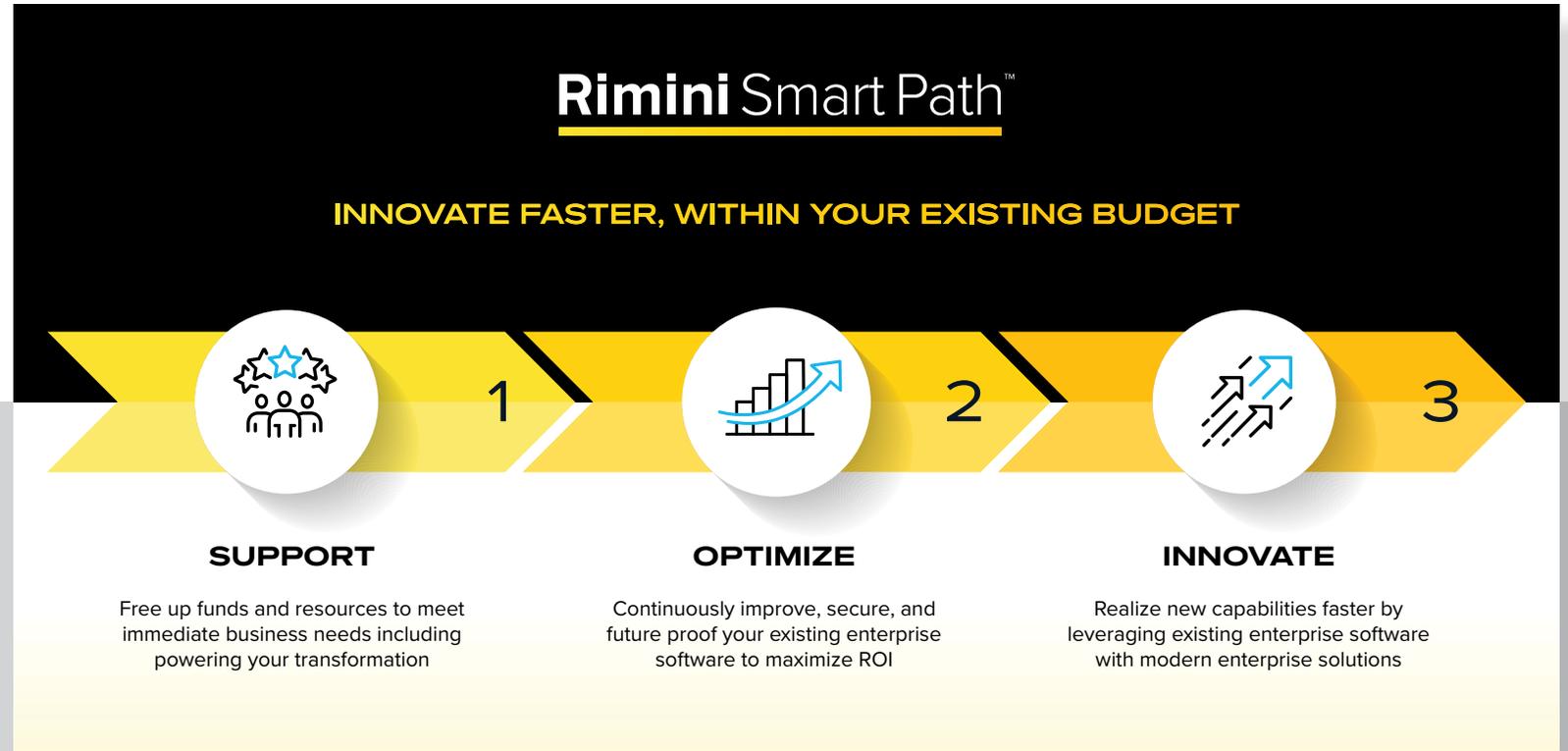
5. Challenge deadline-driven decisions

SAP's 2027/2030 support deadlines are pushing many organizations into reactive decision-making. Explore third-party support as a way to extend the life of your existing system through 2040 and beyond — preserving customizations and preventing forced migrations while reducing costs. This can help eliminate artificial urgency and provide more time to modernize based on a solid business strategy, not pressure.

6. Retain your independence

Recognize that moving to SAP Cloud ERP could increase your reliance on SAP for infrastructure, support and innovation pacing. Evaluate whether that level of vendor control aligns with your long-term strategy. If not, you may prefer a multi-vendor approach that preserves flexibility, offers competitive pricing and enables best-fit choices.

How Rimini Street gets you there



Adopting an Agentic AI ERP strategy as an alternative to RISE is powerful, but executing it requires stability, budget and a partner who can help you along your transformation journey. That's where Rimini Street comes in.

Through our proven, guided methodology — the Rimini Smart Path™ — organizations can modernize on their own terms, without having to reimplement their ERP, succumb to vendor lock-in or experience operational disruption.

It's as easy as 1-2-3.



1. SUPPORT

Rimini Support™ replaces SAP's expensive annual maintenance model with full support for SAP ECC and on-premises and cloud S/4HANA through at least 2040 — with no required upgrades or Clean Core mandates. With it, you receive:

- Coverage for custom code, integrations and modifications (which SAP typically doesn't fully cover)
- Global tax, legal and regulatory updates across 160+ countries, keeping your system compliant
- Named, dedicated Primary Support Engineer from a team averaging 20+ years of experience, backed by a global team of SAP experts, available 24/7/365
- 10-minute response SLA for critical issues (actual average response time is less than 2 minutes) and patented AI technology that ensures tickets are resolved quickly and completely
- Up to 50% immediate savings on annual maintenance fees, along with significant savings from avoided migrations to fuel innovation

This shift alone stops the pressure from SAP's deadlines and vastly reduces operating costs, creating breathing room to plan the future based on business priorities, not vendor ultimatums.



2. OPTIMIZE

With reliable, long-term support assured, Rimini Street helps improve system performance, security and interoperability. Services under this pillar include:

- Advisory services for IT roadmap planning, cloud strategy and integration architecture
- Interoperability solutions to ensure the existing ERP system works with modern browsers, operating systems, Java versions and email applications, without code changes or downtime
- Exclusive, proactive security solutions that protect SAP systems and strengthen overall security posture, without requiring vendor security patches
- Change management solutions that replace SAP Solution Manager (SolMan) and its Change Request Management (ChaRM) tool to help accelerate change delivery and reduce operational risk, without needing to move to SAP Cloud ALM
- Managed services and hosting options to offload infrastructure or maintenance tasks

Through these services and more, clients can modernize their infrastructure, streamline operations and prepare for innovation while keeping their ERP stable and fully supported. You effectively get the best of both worlds: a well-run core system and readiness for new technology.



3. INNOVATE

Once systems are stable and additional budget is released, Rimini Street helps clients implement Agentic AI ERP to enable:

- AI-driven automation, workflow intelligence and composable capabilities
- Cross-platform orchestration across ERP, CRM, HR, supply chain and more using best-fit tools such as ServiceNow, Workday and Salesforce
- Fast pilot AI use cases, such as forecasting modules or an NLP-based assistants for SAP queries, that scale quickly across the enterprise

This is true Transformation without Disruption.™

In short, Rimini Street doesn't just support your ERP — it supports your strategy. With the Smart Path™, you can stabilize today, optimize for tomorrow and innovate continuously, all on your own terms. *We'll Get You There.™*

Expected client outcomes for Rimini Agentic UX Solutions include:

50-60%

REDUCTIONS
IN APPROVAL
TURNAROUNDS

100%

INCREASE IN AUDIT
READINESS

70-80%

REDUCTION IN
ORDER CYCLE
TIMES

60-70%

REDUCTION IN
INTERDEPARTMENTAL
COORDINATION
TIMES

>95%

IMPROVEMENT IN
DATA ACCURACY AND
COMPLETENESS

Rimini Agentic UX Solutions are easily deployable across SAP ECC or SAP S/4HANA without disruption, giving SAP customers complete control over their roadmaps and budgets to achieve innovation at a fraction of the cost compared to vendor strategies.

Putting it into practice with Rimini Agentic UX™

In partnership with ServiceNow, Rimini Street Agentic UX™ Solutions are already redefining ERP operations for SAP customers. Built by ERP process experts, each targets a specific business challenge and delivers measurable results in days or weeks — not months or years.

Currently, Rimini Agentic UX spans more than 20 specialized solutions aligned to critical ERP functions:

- Sales and Go-to-Market
- Procurement and Supplier
- Material and Master Data
- Logistics and Fulfillment
- Order and Shipment Exceptions
- Maintenance Operations
- Finance and Expense Management
- Quality and Compliance

Conclusion

SAP's narrative positions SAP Cloud ERP via RISE as the only way forward — urging customers to eliminate customizations, move into a “Clean Core” and migrate to gain access to AI. But the truth is simpler: You can innovate now — without a disruptive, high-cost reimplementation — and achieve results faster, better, cheaper through Agentic AI ERP.

It's simply a matter of stabilizing your existing ECC or S/4HANA with third-party support, optimizing its performance and layering Agentic AI over the top.

With this strategy, you gain:

- **Timing**

You choose whether to replace your core ERP based on business needs and ROI, not vendor deadlines. Rimini Street removes the “ticking clock” of end-of-support dates, so you can schedule significant changes when they truly make sense.

- **Control**

You maintain control of your IT strategy, selecting vendors and solutions that align with your goals. This helps you avoid being forced into an all-SAP (or any single-vendor) stack with potentially unfavorable contracts or unexpected costs. Your roadmap is driven by your competitive strategy, not a vendor's sales cycle.

- **Flexibility**

You select the best tools for each task and easily swap them in and out as needed. It's easier to adopt new technologies because your architecture is more adaptable. If you choose to transition your core, the surrounding components can integrate with the new system, making that migration smoother.

That way, you can not only avoid enterprise software chaos but maximize the full potential of your existing, stable and reliable SAP investments.

It's Transformation without Disruption™.



About Rimini Street

Rimini Street, Inc. (Nasdaq: RMNI) is a global provider of enterprise software products and services, the leading third-party support provider for Oracle and SAP software products and a Salesforce® partner. The company offers premium, ultra-responsive and integrated application management and support services that enable enterprise software licensees to save significant costs, free up resources for innovation and achieve better business outcomes. Global Fortune 500, midmarket, public sector and other organizations from a broad range of industries rely on Rimini Street as their trusted enterprise software products and services provider.

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