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In focus: next-generation iPaaS

> Interview with Malte Klassen, CEO of Galileo Group AG

Munich, November 2020 – The Galileo Group AG, one of the leading Today's cumbersome and rigid integrations of diverse enterprise solution landscapes have the potential to leave corporations stranded. The simplicity and flexibility of integrations is increasingly becoming the growth engine for the most successful companies in their market. We spoke to Malte Klassen, CEO of Galileo Group AG, about the role of the next generation of integration solutions as crucial enablers for SMEs as well as large corporations.

Question: What are the main characteristics of traditional integration platforms?

Malte Klassen: The integration platform concept has been around in IT for a very long time. This concept involves extensive integration projects with enterprise-grade requirements such as scalability, high availability, security, role-based access control and audit compliance. The goal is to integrate any endpoint in a combination of cloud and on-premise services via out-of-the-box connectors. The concept provides comprehensive support in every phase of the integration from start to finish, i.e. development, deployment, execution and monitoring.

QUESTION: How is next-generation iPaaS different from traditional integration platforms?

Malte Klassen: The difference between next-generation iPaaS solutions and traditional integration platforms is the focus of the solutions.

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While traditional solutions have been trying to put on an iPaaS mantle for a while now, they ultimately rely on manually programmed connectors for each endpoint combination, which are usually developed and deployed by external service providers on the customer infrastructure. Although the manufacturers of the integration platforms try to reduce the setup effort by means of extensive API libraries - in line with the open source idea - this is merely the recycling of individual developments. Even minimally changed requirements for data exchange between two endpoints again lead to custom programming, which in the long term makes companies dependent on the respective external service providers. To make matters worse, many essential traditional manufacturers provide their integrators with so-called low-code design environments. At first glance, these are impressive: There is no longer any need to program by hand; code is predominantly generated. However, this approach often leads to a lack of scalability of the endpoint connectors when large data throughputs and stability are required.

QUESTION: Many manufacturers provide cloud platforms, don't they?

Malte Klassen: Indeed, iPaaS providers typically offer cloud-managed tools for building, testing and managing integrations and APIs. The same applies to monitoring and distribution. However, the basic problems described above remain. Moreover, not only since the current data protection scandals have many customers been asking themselves whether they really want to outsource their mission-critical data flows where factually not necessary. Why should it make sense to route data flows between two on-premise applications via a cloud platform?

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QUESTION: What challenges do you see in developing next-generation iPaaS solutions?

Malte Klassen: Next-generation iPaaS products offer procedures for endpoint integration that are not used by developers and software programmers, but by the specialists who know the business processes best. The keyword here is no-code integration via self-service customizing. In the next iPaaS generation, this is done software-guided via graphical interfaces. The challenges here lie at the most diverse levels: The interfaces are to be used by process specialists and must therefore deliver consumer-like usability so that users without hardcore programming experience can find their way around them. In addition, in the enterprise environment with its well-known high demands on performance and stability, it is important that the data flows can be parallelized. Scalability coupled with sophisticated monitoring is therefore the top priority, along with usability. In addition, unrestricted on-premise usability must not be neglected alongside the cloud offering.

QUESTION: How will next-generation iPaaS impact programming activities and the way developers work?

Malte Klassen: API creation and integration management are manual tasks today, requiring IT professionals to spend a lot of time making everything work. Organizations using traditional integration platforms block too many resources specifically for overseeing one or two application integrations. Strategic use of next-generation iPaaS frees up these highly skilled resources that often know the business inside-out for strategic projects, further increasing business value beyond the iPaaS deployment itself. Resources currently spent on building, monitoring and customizing APIs and endpoint connectors can be invested in the truly pressing business challenges.

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QUESTION: What is the main benefit of next-generation iPaaS?

Malte Klassen: Next-generation iPaaS enables companies to connect an unlimited number of endpoints in the cloud and on-premise without having to consider the availability of connectors. If required, any user-specific connectors can be customized.

Companies using next-generation iPaaS are extremely flexible in designing their business processes. This results in a greatly reduced time to market for new process and application combinations. Response time to changing market conditions is dramatically reduced; companies become more agile. Of course, it's nice to have up to 85% lower costs for implementing and operating an iPaaS compared to traditional integration platforms, but process agility is becoming even more important in today's competitive industries, according to our business partners. A business department has discovered a new product and wants to prototype it? No problem, with a few mouse clicks the integration is ready.

QUESTION: What does next-generation iPaaS mean for different industries?

Malte Klassen: The diverse industries each rely on collections of applications and systems such as CRM, ERP, HCM, ITSM for their effective work. In the finance, insurance or healthcare industry, the use of these systems is as diverse as in the process industry or companies focused on discrete manufacturing. Traditional platforms here promote vertical-specific integrations that are customized by the customer. These pre-packaged solutions for industry-specific business problems often allow only limited differentiation from the competition.

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Next-generation iPaaS no longer relies on API libraries or even pre-built process chains across applications. Users solve their industry-specific challenges completely independent of the competition without neglecting time-to-market and ROI.

QUESTION: What developments do you see in next-generation iPaaS over a few years?

Malte Klassen: First, next-generation iPaaS simplifies application integration, making companies more agile, helping to save costs and freeing up highly skilled employees. In the future, however, the single pane of glass function will come to the fore with a data hub for B2B and B2C integrations not only of cloud services.

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