'LEAN SECURE SAP' AS A PARADIGM FOR BUSINESS

FUNDAMENTALS OF RUNNING A LEAN SECURE SAP LANDSCAPE

'Lean Secure SAP' is a paradigm that I have added to my lexicon in recent years and helped to bring into usage at EPI-USE Labs. In my mind, it is a valuable ethos for how to approach SAP landscape design to ensure your SAP environment is able to support modern principles of a digital core for your business. In this handout, I have tried to explain what it means to use this paradigm as a guiding principle when designing your processes for administrating your SAP estate more efficiently.

This is some quite nerdy stuff, and my friends think it makes me sound like Chandler from 'Friends' if I try and explain what I do to them, but to me, it's a fascinating idea that can have a positive impact on every industry that uses Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) technology, such as SAP. From Oil and Utilities businesses, to Governments, Retail, Sports teams and Financial institutions; all these industries require this kind of information technology to run better businesses.

The parallel and increasingly complex need to comply with governmental and globally auditable standards, for proper handling of the data that their businesses run on, makes controlling TCO problematic. Data is a core asset and has become as much of a potent fuel for business as the oil and renewable sources of energy we spend some much time capturing to drive our world. Data is now one of the roads our businesses must manage efficiently to keep running.

Data and its associated costs have skyrocketed; Data Privacy and its associated risks & costs have skyrocketed. So, 'Lean Secure SAP'– it's a paradigm for how you manage the data that powers your business in a way that retains a focus on these concerns.

HOW DID THIS PARADIGM COME INTO BEING?

When I started my career in the IT industry, it was the year 2000, and SAP was a rapidly growing business. Companies knew they had to invest in having data and processes in place to have the competitive advantage to support the business. SAP and ERP systems were growing more important for this reason. SAP R/3 was the 'new technology' conversion of this point in time, and the three-tier client/server architecture was a key development, as HANA is today driving the next stage of revolution of the digital core of business.

Fast forward a couple of years, through many projects with business applications & SAP... I never realised once that I had a problem with data and I certainly wasn't thinking about data security – mobile phones were only just becoming prevalent and Facebook and smartphones weren't a thing. Data wasn't that easy for hackers to access or for companies to mishandle. But in retrospect, we spent a really large amount of time handling data and systems and, in many ways, were not handling data security very well at all. In comparison to today, the risks were quite limited.

But that is history – our industry has changed irreversibly. Data and Data Privacy are core to every individual and every business – whether profit- making, NGO or Government. From primary school, our children learn about handling data, and our news feed is full of stories about data being mishandled.

The idea of 'Lean Secure SAP' is that clients can establish transformation in their processes and standards to focus far more strongly on reducing data volumes, increasing data agility, data scrambling and the proactive management of private data. Running any transformative project with these principles enshrined from day one. These principles require an underpinning with software; however the paradigm must be applied at board and business level to fully take form.

The five principles of 'Lean Secure SAP':

DATA MINIMISATION:
Only hold and replicate the data you need to run your business profitably, i.e. Keep it Lean

DATA AGILITY:
Ensure that you facilitate agile data in your data-minimised environment so that projects and systems support can work efficiently to support business transformation

DATA PRIVACY:
Scramble all test data as standard; this is easiest on data-minimised systems

DATA ACCESS:
Ensure that data access is something you proactively manage – this can impact licensing costs and also significantly increase audit issues and risk of fraud if not well handled

DATA & SYSTEMS VISIBILITY:
Make sure your systems, data volume and security end-to-end are proactively managed and visible. Use the latest in APM and SIEM technology to light up ERP data within your holistic IT estate; data objects such as a 'legal person' will have a broad footprint in your ecosystem.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR FUTURE SAP?
While your current SAP landscape might not have these elements already embedded, moving to S/4HANA brings a new opportunity to embrace this paradigm.

If an investment in platforms like S/4HANA are going to help drive positive business innovation and support sustainable growth, then the cost of data, platforms and privacy concerns must be controlled to enable investment in business innovation. Businesses who don't take this approach could well see runaway TCO, due to the cost of platforms, data and regulatory breaches. To ensure a healthy synergy between business and IT, data and security paradigms akin to 'Lean Secure SAP' must be a core focus for IT in business.

Key influencers driving the move to the new paradigm

Platform costs per Gigabyte increased. With the advent of data platforms such as HANA, data itself became a tangible high-value asset of the business.

Data privacy became a far more pressing issue as data privacy regulations evolved across all governments globally, and the $ risk to businesses of mishandling data security rose significantly in line with this.

DevOps transformed as a specialist area and the importance of swifter developments became a huge business focus, where the speed required must be supported by data and offset with risk mitigation to prevent services outages and their huge associated costs for many businesses.

IN SUMMARY:

Software and data are now fundamental to how business and vital governmental and non-profit organisations run. Without our global systems that exist today, we have no social media, can't control our transportation or financial systems and certainly could not respond globally to challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. SAP systems are at the heart of a large percentage of business transactions. SAP alone often contains Terabytes if not Petabytes of data, which, inefficiently managed, can cost millions unnecessarily in uncontrolled data growth and the resulting difficulties faced with compute costs and increased data privacy risk. Consider what paradigms guide your Enterprise & SAP Architecture; if your friends say you're a 'Chandler' and ERP systems are your area, reach out for a conversation with EPI-USE Labs.

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Jamie is the Professional Services Director for EPI-USE Labs in Europe, with 20 years of experience in the IT services Industry, primarily with businesses using SAP. Jamie's career started as a SAP Technical Consultant; he then went on to specialise in SAP data projects, BASIS, RunSAP, and Pre-Sales/Solution Architecture.

He has a variety of SAP certifications,and his background includes programming, DBA work, web design and SAP technical work. Jamie has broad experience on various platforms, and is passionate about leveraging SAP technology to bring value to our clients.