

# SUGEN

SAP User-Group Executive Network

# DIGEST



## Foreword

by Gianmaria Perancin, Chairman SUGEN CLT, Chairman *Utilisateurs SAP Francophones, USF*

2023 marked a significant milestone for SUGEN, as we were able to host two Face to Face events for the first time since 2019. It has been truly remarkable to witness the connections within our network come “back to life”. In particular, this F2F was a real moment of strong human warmth among people who were finally in capacity to meet again. We can be really proud of how SUGEN has evolved and grown.

One of the highlights of this year was the “Guide to Growth” initiative, in which several SUGEN members participated. Led by the SAP GUGO (Global User Groups Organization), this comprehensive document will serve as a valuable resource for the User Groups that compose our network, to further their growth.

Additionally, the Core Leadership Team has welcomed a new member, Kari Halmela from FINUG. We can all thank him for his engagement, as we know that we will have a lot of work to do, to satisfy the expectations of all SUGEN members. At the same time, we extend a heartfelt thank you to Frank Haes (SAPience.be) for his years of truly dedicated service on the CLT and the vision and inspiration that he has given to all SUGEN.

From a technological perspective, we have witnessed significant advancements this year. The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence has already made its impact felt in various aspects of our daily lives. Looking at SAP’s plans to incorporate AI into business processes, we can expect even more transformative changes in the future. Furthermore, the migration to the cloud has been a dominant topic, but at the same time we still know that there are a lot of ECC on-premise customers that are still expressing reserves in

adopting the new solutions. When we appreciate SAP's efforts to support all customers in this transition, we should also work closely with the User Groups members of SUGEN, to understand what are the hindrances that customers are coping, and mainly how we can work on the added value that SAP wants to deliver to customers and users, through cloud adoption. Thomas Saueressig's session in November was particularly enlightening, showcasing how even regulated industries could embrace the cloud, if all the conditions are met. As a global network, we stand ready to support SAP in this endeavor, through our open dialog and especially our honest feedbacks to SAP, so to help them in better understanding what customers really expect.

In parallel, 2023 also presented its fair share of challenges. We witnessed international turmoil and multiple crises erupting, while inflation had a noticeable impact on our businesses. Even as we returned to a semblance of normalcy after the COVID-19 pandemic, it became evident that the definition of "normal" is no more the one we were used to.

In times of rapid change, the importance of a strong network such as ours cannot be overstated. As we look ahead, there is work to be done in strengthening SUGEN's communication about our successes as well as SUGEN's positioning by enhancing its brand presence in the outside world. These are two tasks we will tackle together. Our collaboration with SAP will continue to provide us with unique insights into current and future developments. At the same time, we will keep our commitment committed to amplifying the voices of our user group members, providing our unique constructive feedback about how customers and users really perceive SAP's strategy, roadmap definition and finally the implementation of all this in everyday operations, so to influence SAP's direction. At work, all together!

**Gianmaria Perancin**



**SUGEN Group Picture November 2023**

## Executive Exchange on SAP's Product Strategy - November 08

An executive exchange with Thomas Saueressig, member of the SAP SE Executive Board for SAP Product Engineering, is always an incredible moment for SUGEN members. It's a chance to dive directly into SAP's enterprise software strategy. SUGEN members and Thomas have the opportunity for an open and honest dialogue about product development and innovation, as well as cloud operations and support.

This was also the case at the last face-to-face meeting, in November 2023, where Thomas gave his insights into the future direction of SAP and underlined the importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI), in addition to cloud technologies, for the future of SAP.

While recalling that SAP is particularly known for the strength of its business process transformation expertise, Thomas Saueressig emphasized that AI will play a crucial role in enhancing these same business processes. Thomas Saueressig also clearly stated the SAP commitment to making SAP Business AI reliable, responsible, and relevant.

Thomas reaffirmed SAP's commitment to the future, which he believes will be based on a combination of cloud and AI technologies. While on-premise solutions will continue to receive innovations, such as the [SAP S/4HANA 2023 Release](#), SAP intends to deliver strategic innovations only for the cloud. This is clearly a point where existing customers and SAP must open a dialogue, through SAP User Groups and SUGEN, to discuss how this roadmap to cloud adoption can be paved, its pace, and the concrete support SAP can provide.

SAP will provide more tools and guidance to support its customers to make the move to the cloud. SAP is actively facilitating the transition for customers, still using the ECC system, by leveraging AI technology and simplifying brownfield implementations to SAP S/4HANA. These will likely increase closer to 2027: the end date for ECC maintenance.

At the same time, Thomas Saueressig has clearly stated that private cloud is an important cornerstone for the next 20 years. Obviously, Net New Names are mainly interested in public cloud, as they start a brand-new journey with SAP.

In parallel, it is also important to recall that SAP has two primary areas of focus: innovation adoption and product experience. SAP is pursuing a [clean core strategy](#) to facilitate the adoption of innovations by its customers. Additionally, the company is placing greater emphasis on adopting the latest innovations, as they consider that older versions tend to have a less user-friendly experience: as an example, it is possible to cite RISE with SAP which provides more automation and features.

Addressing the needs of companies undergoing specific legislations in data protection, it was also discussed that SAP supports cloud solutions in public sector already in some countries and is open for further locations.

In conclusion, Thomas Saueressig's address at the SUGEN face-to-face meeting clearly outlined SAP's future direction: a customer-centric approach leveraging the power of AI and cloud technologies, with a strong commitment to innovation, enablement, and user experience. SUGEN understood a total openness in discussing requirements and constraints for those SAP customers in search of more clarity and more capacity in

providing secure cloud solutions, even if “sovereign cloud” is still not completely defined by public authorities.

**Gianmaria Perancin**



## Executive Exchange on SAP Corporate Strategy, November 09

by Alejandro Bonsignore, President, *ASUG Argentina*

SAP’s Chief Strategy Officer Sebastian Steinhaeuser, who will also soon take over the responsibility as SAP’s COO, committed to a consistent and integrated strategy, responding to past concerns over fluctuating strategies following SAPPHERE events.

He emphasized the importance of an integrated portfolio with a harmonized data model and user experience. Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a central role in this strategy, with SAP intending to embed it across its entire portfolio in a reliable, resilient, and relevant way. The [AI Foundation](#) on the Business Technology Platform (BTP) will allow customers and partners to develop their own applications.

The combination of [Signavio and LeanIX](#) was outlined as a significant opportunity to support customers’ transformation journeys, with the system landscape aspect covered by LeanIX. He also noted significant progress in Sustainability, with many customers adopting these solutions. With regards to the Green Ledger, it will be cloud-based. It was described that customers should look to expect a better experience when SAP manages the Hyperscalers, as SAP is working to offer stronger SLAs and to create a more mutually beneficial partnership. He underlined the importance of partner education on SAP’s strategy, such as the clean core concept, asserting that partner business is becoming more attractive and that there is no doubt about the mutual benefits of the partnership.

Localization was discussed as a differentiating factor for SAP, as it is one of the most significant investment areas. SAP plans to offer more guidance for customers and the ecosystem on their clean core strategy. Finally, learning and enablement were pointed out among key priorities for 2024, both internally and externally. He encouraged feedback and amplification of these messages within member bases.

**Alejandro Bonsignore**



## Executive Exchange on SAP S/4HANA, November 09

by Reg Barry, Vice Chairman, *African SAP User Group, AFSUG*

In the recent SUGEN face-to-face meeting in November 2023, SAP's President and Chief Product Officer Cloud ERP, Jan Gilg, shared critical insights about the future trajectory of SAP's RISE program. This comprehensive suite is not only about private cloud but also focuses on digital transformation through adoption and standardization.

He highlighted that [SAP's Private Cloud](#) is the largest in the world. SAP's vast resources, knowledge, and experience allow it to run the most extensive Private Cloud, providing customers with unparalleled benefits like high scalability, flexibility, and security. Despite its position as a leader in the industry, SAP is still learning and evolving. The company is keen on receiving feedback from customers and using it to improve RISE. This agility and responsiveness to customer needs have played a significant part in SAP's success. RISE is already evolving into a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) like product, offering a more streamlined, efficient way of running ERP systems instead of the traditional project-based approach. This shift is a clear indication of SAP's commitment to simplifying and modernizing business processes for its clients.

Moving forward, SAP plans to introduce new additions to make upgrades easier for customers. The importance of maintaining a clean core was emphasized to ensure that innovations can be swiftly and efficiently adopted and the SAP Business Technology Platform (BTP) as the innovation and integration platform. Investments are being made not just into features and functions, but also into migration tools. This strategy is aimed at ensuring a smooth transition for businesses migrating to SAP S/4HANA Cloud. For example, RISE also comes with a usage measuring feature to check for unused components, thereby enabling businesses to optimize their resources and processes better. This should also help customers to maintain a clean core.

In terms of product development for SAP S/4HANA On-Premise and Private Cloud, SAP will be releasing a feature pack every six months, with a new major release every two years. This strategy ensures that customers always have access to the latest innovations and improvements.

Jan Gilg sent a strong message to customers still using ECC: It's time to move. The mainstream maintenance for Enhancement Package (EHP) 0 - 5 will continue till 2025, EHP 6 - 8 till 2027, followed by the option to extend by 3 years of Extended Maintenance at additional costs. When moving, Jan Gilg stressed that a technical move to S/4HANA

gives less business value. Companies should not only look for technical conversions but seize the opportunity to redesign and optimize business processes from scratch.

In conclusion, the Executive Exchange with Jan Gilg at SUGEN revealed significant insights into the future of SAP's RISE offering. The company is committed to continual learning, improvement, and most importantly, ensuring that their customers can leverage the full potential of digital transformation.

**Reg Barry**



## Executive Exchange on Artificial Intelligence, November 09

by Philip Adams, Board Member & Ireland SIG Chair, *UK & Ireland SAP User Group (UKISUG)*

Jana Richter, Vice President Artificial Intelligence Product Success at SAP, shared her insights and expertise during an Executive Exchange at the SUGEN F2F meeting. The focal point of her discussion was the evolving landscape of [Artificial Intelligence](#) (AI), its integration into SAP systems, and the future of AI in decision-making processes.

She further explained the different forms of AI, ranging from rule-based capabilities and neural networks to simulation, and the current shift towards [Generative AI](#) (GEN AI). Even though AI is no new venture for SAP, but rather an integral part of its operations for over seven years (e.g. Concur document extraction), this year, she noted, has marked a significant surge in AI's growth and application due to the rise of GEN AI.

Before the GEN AI revolution, models were typically trained for specific use cases. However, with the advent of GEN AI, models can now be applied to a wide variety of tasks without the need for additional training. The ability to prompt (a mode of interaction between a human and a large language model) correctly is becoming increasingly vital and the scope of AI's tasks expands from standardized tasks (like entity recognition, classification, outlier detection, forecasting) to more creative ones, such as crafting product descriptions.

Jana emphasized that SAP's AI Foundation lies in the Business Technology Platform (BTP), leveraging data available in SAP systems. The ability to detect patterns that link analytics and AI is crucial to making informed, human-like decisions. It was also highlighted that AI is being used across all SAP products, and extensions will be available to partners and customers alike.

During the meeting, Jana demonstrated '[Just Ask](#)', a solution embedded in SAP Analytics Cloud solution that responds to queries in natural language, with suggestions being generated directly. Another exciting development she discussed was '[Joule](#)', SAP's

generative AI Co-Pilot that understands the business. Already generally available with SAP SuccessFactors, the generative AI assistant revolutionizes how users interact with SAP business systems, making every touchpoint count and every task simpler. The plan includes a broad embedding of Joule across SAP's cloud portfolio, significantly enhancing solutions such as SAP S/4HANA Cloud.

This will not only allow for the answering of questions related to SAP's extensive knowledge base and for seamless connection to customer's own knowledge repository, but also enable advanced functionalities such as summarizing complex content, providing navigational guidance, responding to analytical inquiries, and facilitating transnational interactions. This means users can quickly access vital information, like travel rules for specific countries without the need to review lengthy documents. In essence, this remarkably enhances the overall value and efficiency of the end users' interactions with our systems.

With regards to availability, generative AI capabilities are planned to be provided across SAP cloud solutions.

This Executive Exchange proved insightful, shedding light on the current state of AI, its integration with SAP, and its promising future. The rise of GEN AI and its expanding capabilities, together with SAP's commitment to innovation and collaboration, paints an exciting picture for the future of AI in business.

**Philip Adams**



## **SAP Global User Groups Organization Update, November 08**

by Yasmin Awad, SVP, *SAP Global User Groups Organization*, SAP

Growing the user groups is a strategic priority for SAP, particularly in the cloud era. Establishing a constant feedback loop directly from the customer base to SAP is crucial for better adoption of SAP's latest innovations. To support their growth, the Global User Group Organization collaborated with user group representatives from around the world to run a growth initiative.

During the SUGEN face-to-face meeting in November, participants were not only presented with the results of the initiative, but they were also provided with a comprehensive, 60-page guide called the "Guide-to-Growth." This guide is filled with recommendations and thought-provoking insights to assist user groups in their expansion efforts. Additionally, Yasmin Awad, Senior Vice President & Head of the Global User Group

Organization, shared best practices that had been collected over the years with the audience.

The session offered a diverse range of possibilities to support user groups. For example, participants were given insight into AFSUG's collaboration with SAP and UNICEF, which aimed to equip young talents with the necessary skills to enter the workforce and become future technology consultants. The session also explored how awards can be utilized to motivate volunteers, highlighting INDUS' annual Oscar-like ceremony with a red carpet to express gratitude for their customer members' efforts. Furthermore, it emphasized how a diverse board can attract and amplify the growth of a user group.

The importance of diversity for a successful user group was addressed as well. Best practices from around the globe include organizing "bring your kids" days, which allow parents to join user group events and create a new community within the user groups for working parents. Another challenge faced by user groups is achieving a good representation of women. Therefore, special programs to support female speakers, such as those implemented by UKISUG, or Women's Day celebrations, like AFSUG's, can be beneficial.

Another critical factor for the success of a user group is maintaining the right balance of content. Close collaboration with partners can be helpful in this regard, as it often provides financial benefits for the user groups. However, it is important to strike a balance between partner content and other content sources. Creating a partner circle, as done by DSAG, can help establish a separate institution for partners to exchange ideas and collaborate.

Overall, a wide range of best practices were shared during the session, but it would be impractical to mention all 30+ of them in this article. Nevertheless, it is evident that the session was highly engaging, with active participation from numerous attendees. They contributed new best practices and engaged in fruitful discussions about the ones already collected. As a result, the lively conversation generated fresh ideas for participants to take back to their respective user groups.

**Yasmin Awad**



**Guide to Growth Participants**





## Executive Exchange on SAP Industries & CX, November 09

by Per Högberg, Secretary, *Swedish User Group, SAPSA*

Ritu Bhargava, President and Chief Product Officer of SAP Industries & Customer Experience (I&CX), started her session by pointing out that the main focus regarding CX is the integration and user experience of SAP's products. She emphasized that products are required to function together seamlessly, with an efficient and effective provisioning experience.

Furthermore, Intelligent CX, launched this year, bridges the gap between the back and front office, leveraging comprehensive operational and customer data to enable businesses to make more informed decisions and offer deep personalization. Only SAP has the rich breadth and depth of data to make this possible.

To illustrate, she used the example of a streamlined experience when buying a car, where both online research and on-site dealership experiences are interconnected. In this scenario, personal information and requirements the customer shared during their online research are available in-store. With this contextual data, the salesperson can offer tailored products and promotions, increasing the likelihood of a sale without the customer needing to provide the information multiple times.

It was shared that compared to its competitors, SAP has a distinct advantage in terms of industry knowledge, process knowledge, and integration capabilities that leverage information throughout the entire ERP landscape. SAP's 50 years of experience with industry-specific business processes and its ability to provide integrated operational and contextual data uniquely place SAP to offer solutions tailored to industry requirements and trends.

Ritu Bhargava then invited Balaji Balasubramanian, SAP's Global Head of Commerce and Consumer Industries, to talk about the outlook for commerce and retail, such as the economic and consumer trends that are creating demand for composable solutions for fit-to-purpose scalability, as well as data- and AI-powered capabilities that drive personalization, loyalty, and growth.

Dr. Jürgen Eisele, Vice President of Product Management for Energy and Natural Resources Industries, followed up with a demonstration of Intelligent CX for Utilities. Dr. Eisele showed how a utility service agent could view past customer interactions of all types, such as shut-offs, transfers, and service calls. When a customer calls, having this

context at hand prepares the agent for the next steps and upsell opportunities, streamlining the customer experience and paving the way for increased revenue. Finally, Bhargava emphasized the importance of the partner ecosystem. While many partnerships have already been established, she revealed that a significant number of new partnerships are set to be launched in the future to expand and support I&CX's industry-tailored offerings.

Bhargava truly valued this opportunity to update the SUGEN members on I&CX's progress and gain the group's vital feedback.

### Per Högberg



## Executive Exchange on Move to the Cloud, November 09

by Reg Barry, Vice Chairman, *African SAP User Group, AFSUG*

Uwe Grigoleit, Head of the SAP Customer Evolution Program, outlined several key points regarding the move to the Cloud. He emphasized that maintaining a Clean Core is crucial for innovation adoption, optimal data usage, business agility and secure, efficient operations. SAP is aiding this strategy with appropriate tools.

It was pointed out that SAP Signavio can assist in implementing SAP S/4HANA, while Tricentis can automate testing to simplify upgrades, a crucial endeavor to make sure the newest innovations can be adopted. [The SAP Business Transformation Center](#) is available to provide customers with guidance on their journey.

The expansion of the RISE with SAP offering was described, which now provides options tailored to different customer profiles. The Base edition caters to smaller organizations with SAP S/4HANA Private Cloud edition and functionalities in a lean setup. The Premium edition adds capabilities for business process management, process automation, and low-code business application development. The Premium Plus edition expands upon these features with Generative AI, Sustainability, an advanced OCFO suite and extra access to supplier networks.

Uwe also highlighted various benefits for Cloud customers, which include access to new strategic innovations through the 'GROW and RISE with SAP' offerings. The Cloud also provides an opportunity for co-innovation projects with SAP. However, he reassured that new SAP S/4HANA innovations will continue to be available for On-Premise customers, such is also demonstrated by the number of new features delivered with the SAP S/4HANA 2023 release.

Additionally, commercial assistance for transitioning to the cloud such as the Cloud

Extension Program or ECC on premise to Cloud Extension was outlined. Moreover, there are many services available for Cloud customers, such as SAP Enable Now, SAP Preferred Success, and an Enterprise Customer Success Partner from SAP to help customers maximize value from their cloud subscription.

**Reg Barry**



## **Best Practice Session - Next Generation Talent & Leveraging CRM Tools, November 10**

*by Craig Dale, CEO, UK & Ireland SAP User Group, UKISUG*

The SUGEN Best Practice Day on November 10 focused on two main topics: Next Generation Talent/Young Professionals and Leveraging CRM tools to attract and retain members.

The day started with a summary from the “Guide to Growth” project with regards to the findings about Young Talents. The benefits for young talents being part of an SAP user group include, among other aspects, the access to industry as well as learning & networking opportunities. There should be a clear value proposition for young professionals to join and actively participate in a user group. The platform of the community provides them with the chance to exchange ideas with people in their own industry as well as others.

There were discussions on collaborations with universities to solve specific problems in the SAP space, for example in Italy. SAP University Alliance was proposed as a possible collaboration partner, providing an opportunity for young talents to learn professional and social skills. The possibility of collaborating with LinkedIn influencers and creating content that attracts young professionals was explored as well. In addition, an example from South Africa was highlighted, where collaboration with SAP University Alliance is already in place.

Specific initiatives focusing on Young Talents were presented by different user group representatives. Paz from the Spanish SAP User Group AUSAPE introduced an Employability Portal that connects employers and SAP experts, solving the skill gap that the ecosystem is facing. Amanda from AFSUG described a joint project with UNICEF to upskill underprivileged people, a student day at the bi-annual conference SAPHILA 2023, and a workforce readiness program they have in place.

Kotaro from the Japanese User Group JSUG gave an overview of their User Group and a program called “Next-Gen Boost”, which was introduced in 2022 with the help of SAP Japan

and the aim to overcome challenges such as the aging society and the issues that come with it. “Next-Gen Boost” is a special interest group, which has no functional focus, but is purely dedicated to young talents. The aspiration is to accelerate self-motivation, help to identify areas to focus on for young people as well as fun activities. Education, collaboration and fun are the key pillars of all their events and activities.

Craig from the UK & Ireland User Group UKISUG shared about the “Young Talent Stream” during UKISUG Connect 2023 and introduced a “Futures Membership”. During the annual conference, there will be a dedicated stream for young talents on the first day of the event, including various speakers such as from SAP, UKISUG members, a young professional who attended the event in 2019 and is now part of the SAP Academy as well as a recruitment partner. With “Futures Membership”, UKISUG is targeting universities and aims to engage with their students, who are the next generation of members. The related activities include an invitation to the annual conference for one faculty member and five students as well as a standard membership for university students and access to the university student community of UKISUG.



**Amanda Gibbs from the AFSUG during the Best Practice Day**

The second part of the Best Practice Day, focusing on User Group usage of CRM and a wider Member Management system, started again with the findings from the “Guide to Growth” project. A focus on membership engagement instead of pure administration is recommended as well as enhanced data integration. Prospect engagement should be prioritised in order to be able to attract new members. Among other aspects, the optimisation of the member data collection as well as the investment in team training and skill development are also perceived as important exercises. Future-looking activities could be around increased and enhanced personal messaging to the User Group members.

George from the Australian User Group SAUG highlighted key benefits of their CRM usage such as a great user experience for both customers and admins, a membership manager who takes care of renewals and users, a built-in events and finance module, a document

library as well as the fact that it's a cloud-based SaaS product including market upgrades and maintenance every 1-2 months.

Ronald from the Dutch User Group VNSG shared their vision and objective of a “digital platform” consisting of the building blocks “awareness” to connect with new and renewing member, “commitment” to provide personalised and inspiring content for the members and “participation” to deepen member commitment and spread the message. To realise it, VNSG is planning to use cloud solutions to maximise innovation adoption against predictable expenses. They are striving for integrated solutions instead of stand-alone as it is currently the case.

Amanda from the African SAP User Group AFSUG introduced different CRM tools they are using for marketing automation with regards to email marketing, automation workflows or contact management. Members can sign-up on the website through the CRM system to get access to exclusive content and updates. The website serves as the primary engagement hub for members and prospects by offering a personalised and immersive journey. People that sign-up are automatically integrated into the central database and trigger respective notifications to the managing team.

UKISUG is utilizing SAP Business ByDesign as its financial accounting system, integrated with their website & CMS management system (member portal), which hold information for and allow registrations to meetings and execute mail campaigns. They are reviewing a member management system, which will cover requirements, including being developed with a mobile first strategy. Personalisation is another key factor so that all communications will fit the members' interests. The membership can be managed in the back end and analytical reports can be pulled. Moreover, transactions with payment providers are automated, leading to more efficiency.

Francois from the French-speaking User Group USF shed light on their new partner strategy. A web platform dedicated to partners has been introduced, providing them with the opportunity to share their solutions and best practices with the USF members. Prerequisites for becoming part of the platform are being active in the SAP ecosystem, working in the French market and providing value for the community. There are three membership models for partners associated with different opportunities to position themselves and their services.

Overall, the day was filled with a lot of valuable sharing, learning and engagement about ways to support and attract young talents and optimize the use of CRM in User Groups.

**Craig Dale**