

A Citizen Integrator's Staple: Excel's Role in the Next Evolution of Data Integration

Turning Spreadsheets into Enterprise Applications through New System Integration Tools and End-User Empowerment

Summary

Businesses need to generate insights from data and, to stay competitive, those insights are needed faster than ever before. Thanks to changes in the enterprise, including the emergence of cloud technology, end-users are empowered to modify existing systems in order to extract those insights without the need for IT intervention. However, for thousands of organizations worldwide, Microsoft Excel is still the program of choice for data management, but its desktop-based nature creates version control and integration issues.

This white paper introduces the advanced capabilities of HULFT Integrate to align with Excel. HULFT Integrate provides a drag-and-drop user interface to create cooperation flows, data conversion, and processing so that complex data connections are easier than ever to execute. With improved operability and usability, HULFT Integrate enables end-users to quickly and seamlessly integrate Excel workflow into existing enterprise systems and processes.

Business Needs are Changing, and so is the Enterprise

The way companies do business is changing faster than ever before and, as a result, the development of enterprise systems that support these organizations are being pushed to new levels. To meet these ever-changing needs, enterprise systems must seamlessly handle multiple processes, sales management, customer management, and more. However, the end result is often a patchwork of solutions designed for specific tasks, meaning business processes are cumbersome and disconnected. For many companies, current processes fail to operate at a speed that will meet the needs of the business.

Traditionally, when a business division needs a new way to view, consume, or utilize data, that execution of that need begins with IT. Requests are sent to IT to make any system modifications but, between the always-increasing backlog, the constant pressure to deliver projects for the business, and the need to find the balance between ever-changing demands and budgets, IT requests can be seen as a barrier to progress. Between costs associated with outsourced system integrators and constantly changing requirements, many projects are often delayed or simply never completed.

Meanwhile, end-users are waiting for insights that can significantly impact the business and, in a market that is constantly changing, companies risk losing a competitive edge.

Citizen Integration: End-User Empowerment

As a result, the concept of Citizen Integration has begun to take hold in a new generation of end-users who are eager to learn how new technologies can address day-to-day business issues.

Citizen Integrators often choose to modify information systems in order to quickly access necessary data, business intelligence, and analytics when the existing system isn't providing the insights they require. Not only does this alleviate IT burden, it reduces wait times so businesses can get the right insights to meet the dynamic needs of the market and maintain competitive edge.

Allowing end-users to modify information systems may sound risky but, with the help of emerging IT solutions and savvy generation of users, organizations no longer need to compromise security and control for flexibility and access.

The Evolution of Excel and its role Within Citizen Integration

The concept of Citizen Integration is built on End-User Computing (EUC) which means how it sounds: software development and operational management by end-users.

While Citizen Integration and EUC are similar concepts, EUC has one distinct disadvantage: it leads to the dispersion of information, primarily due to version control. Without one single repository, data management and version control becomes cumbersome when multiple users are involved. A typical example of this is Excel.

Excel is one of the most widely-used tools for pulling data together. It's a powerful business tool with advanced charting, graphing, and algorithmic and statistical capabilities. However, it does require extensive processing, which can cost organizations valuable bandwidth, time, and resources, and accuracy and version control can be a nightmare when multiple users are editing the same file, all from individual computers. In addition, security is problematic because, once data is in a spreadsheet, it can be easily moved or transported with no trace.

Businesses are increasingly taking action to tackle these version control and data integration issues by implementing cloud-based applications. However, companies must overcome a major obstacle: familiarity. End-users occupied with daily operations may not always have the time to become proficient with a completely new system, particularly if it means abandoning a familiar application, such as Excel.

The Importance of Data Integration Tools

This is where user-friendly data integration tools are critical to coordinating and combining data and IT processes. Given the wide variety of tasks that each enterprise system performs, connecting a number of systems is a complicated process that uses multiple interfaces, all of which make the enterprise even more complex, time consuming, and expensive. Even adding one new system may require implementing a dozen or more interfaces, exponentially increasing costs.

To solve these issues, data integration tools, such as Enterprise Application Integration (EAI), have been invented. The data integration tool is placed in a hub, and an interface is provided to connect a new system to that hub which allows the new system to connect to all other systems. As more applications are added, the hub-and-spoke structure formed by the data integration tool can continue to connect individual applications to the enterprise in a cost-effective, scalable way.

Data Integration Meets Citizen Integration

For true Citizen Integration capabilities, it's important to have the right data integration tools. A data integration tool located in a system's hub is similar to an intersection. Large amounts of data are crossing paths, and if the data integration tool does not perform well, traffic jams occur. Now, given the explosive increase in data usage, it's even more important for integration tools to maintain optimal performance and speed.

To truly support Citizen Integration, data integration tools must support Excel and allow end-users to use Excel to manipulate various systems. While other front-end tools can, and should, also be connected, many employees already know how to use Excel, which lowers any associated training costs.

Support Citizen Integration Using HULFT Integrate

HULFT Integrate has long been the data integration tool of choice for many businesses, not only due to data processing speeds, but also because of seamless integration with Excel. HULFT Integrate has consistently allowed businesses to stay abreast of IT trends, while allowing employees to continue using widely used tools such as Excel.

The rich selection of “plug in” style advanced adapters within HULFT Integrate allows companies to easily connect a variety of systems, including Oracle, DB2, and Microsoft SQL Server, and cloud services such as Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure. In addition, HULFT Integrate can easily connect to Excel, HTML, and XML files, business applications such as SAP, groupware such as IBM Domino and Notes, and networks.

The HULFT Advantage

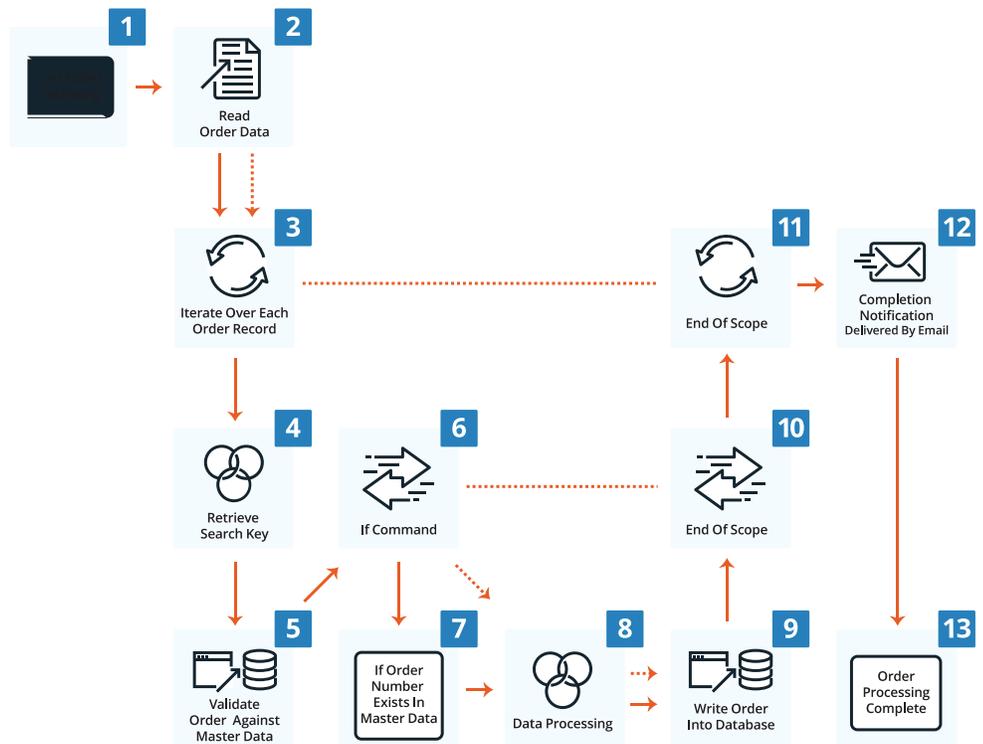
HULFT Integrate* allows you to do more with less. It provides a simple graphical user interface (GUI) to create cooperation flows, data conversion and processing with a simple drag-and-drop so that complex data connections are easier than ever to execute.

Standard Process

- Tedious coding work
- Slow development process
- High probability of human error

An Example of a HULFT Integrate Process

- Eliminate IT grunt work
- Cut development time
- Manage your end-to-end data integration with a simple, drag-and-drop process



This image depicts a flow where order data is being read from a file, and ultimately written to a database. It is extracting, validating, writing, and processing order records into a separate database. With HULFT, your data integration projects can be easily customizable according to your requirements

*HULFT Integrate is sold in the U.S. and is available in other countries under the name DataSpider Servista.

Next Steps to Achieving Citizen Integration

When considering a data integration solution, it's important to view this system as the foundation of the enterprise. For buyers, data integration tools should be easy to use and flexible, alleviating the burden on IT while maintaining the flexibility and scalability for the business to optimize processes. Tools should be implemented without the need for coding and should allow for conversions and cleaning.

Data integration is the thread that knits the enterprise together and enables smooth, effective, and accurate processes across the organization. Achieving Citizen Integration through data integration hinges on the ability to integrate seamlessly with Excel. By allowing employees to use programs that are native to their skills, companies can maintain a competitive edge while empowering employees to gather the insights they need.

About HULFT, Inc.

Today's enterprise works hard for data. IT spends time and money manually connecting far-flung silos of data which are often insecure. A division of Saison Information Systems (TYO: 9640), HULFT has helped more than 10,000 global customers automate, orchestrate, and accelerate the secure flow of information at scale. HULFT provides a single global platform that helps IT quickly find, secure, organize, transform, and move the right information – automating the entire business process of data flow, and unlocking value in a sea of information. With 25 years of customer experience, HULFT is the engine that makes data work.



Visit us at
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