iPaaS Buyer's Guide:

6 Tips for Finding the Right Enterprise Integration and Automation Platform

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The rapid growth of enterprise point systems is driving demand for iPaaS solutions to improve organizational alignment and data management.

In the last decade, organizations have found themselves needing to evolve to meet the needs of a growing, fast-paced technology driven customer and employee base. As these needs have been addressed, a new challenge has emerged. As a result, lines of business are purchasing and managing their own technology stacks independently from central IT.

On average, any organization now has 300-500 point solutions while still managing older legacy platforms.

All this complexity has resulted in a situation where:

- Redundant data is housed in multiple systems and therefore, it's out of sync.
- Only certain users can get to the data or work within each system.
- Manual processing is increasing because we now need to go from system to system.

Enterprise Integration, Data Management and System Connectivity are Emerging as *Top Priority*
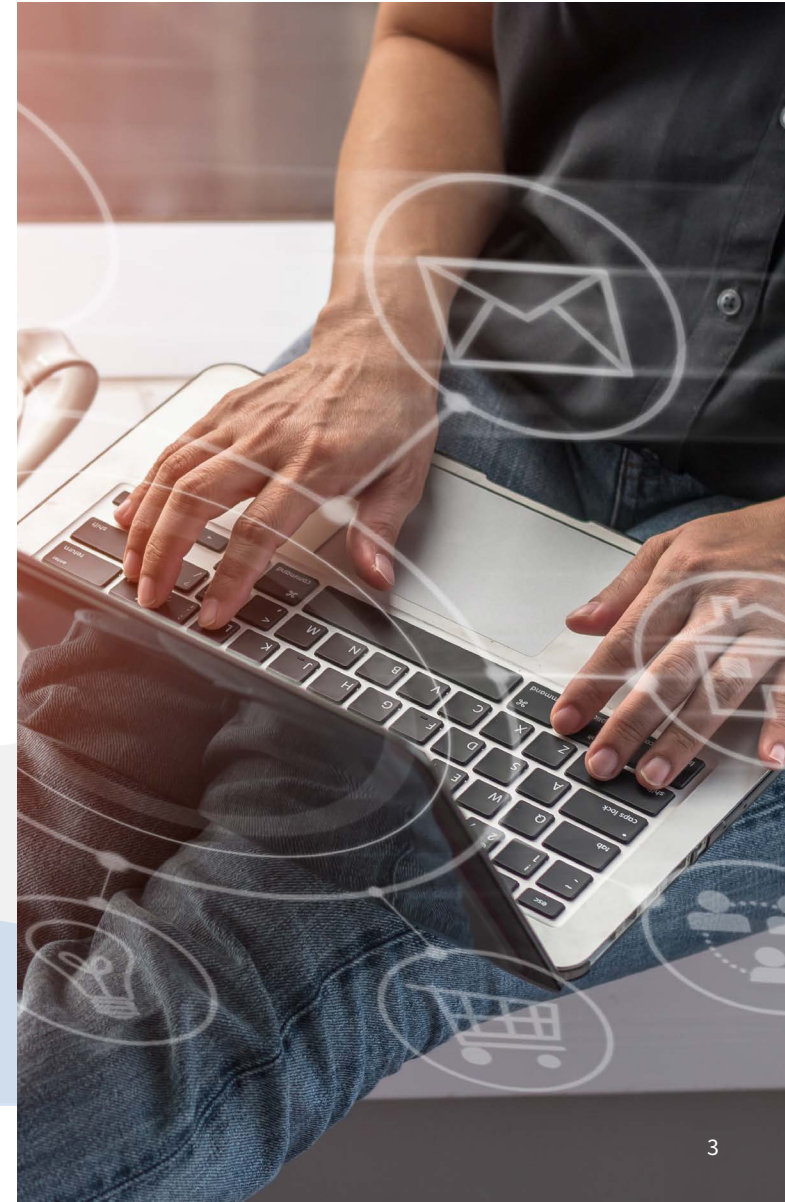
Proliferation of Point Solutions and the Demand for Enterprise Integration (iPaaS)

As more and more departments work outside of central IT to reach out to their customers in innovative ways; support their employees in performing their best work; and address new markets with creative business models, work is getting increasingly fragmented across the organization. That's because these disparate systems that do a great job in their core focus areas are not designed to seamlessly talk to each other. For these reasons, organizations are seeking improved integration and automation found in iPaaS solutions (Integration Platform as a Service).

The Problem with Fragmented Work and Data

This growing fragmentation of work is a strategic challenge for senior business leaders. Because leaders don't have a holistic view of the work happening across an organization, the resources dedicated to each project, it can hinder them in making the kind of speedy and well-informed decisions that are possible when you have an integrated view of your business. In addition, the disparate systems mean there are likely employees across the organization spending a significant portion of their day reconciling data across applications.

One might say a solution to this is to build in-house integrations for these applications. However, that can be slow and costly for organizations, leading to missed business opportunities and inefficient operations. Point-to-Point integrations also present challenges around error and security risk. That's why companies are turning to integration platform as a service (iPaaS). iPaaS is an easy-to-use integration and automation product that can be deployed by employees across the organization.

"In iPaaS we find the groundwork being laid for a digital future, as the products in this segment generally are lighter, more agile IT infrastructure suited for the rapidly evolving use cases around digital business."
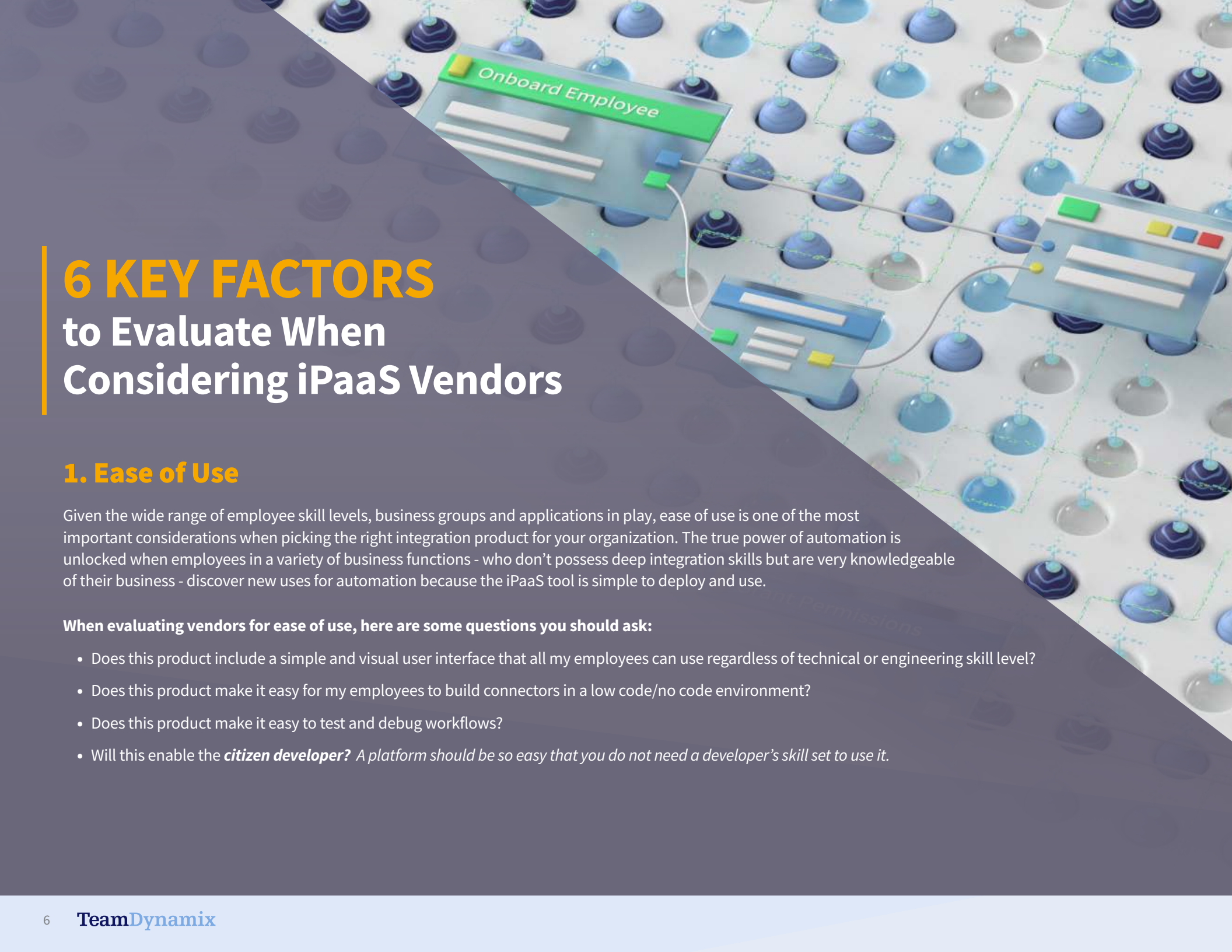
BINDI BHULLAR
Research Director at Gartner

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What is iPaaS and How Does it Drive Enterprise Connectivity?

iPaaS is a powerful solution for organizations. It enables employees across functions and business units to quickly build and deploy integration workflows, and to integrate data across multiple platforms. In view of the large number of apps and systems that need to be integrated in most enterprise businesses, as well as the breadth and diversity of employee profiles that need access to automation solutions and the importance of security and governance, it is critical for organizations to pick the right iPaaS vendor. Key areas of focus should be ease of use and completeness of vision.
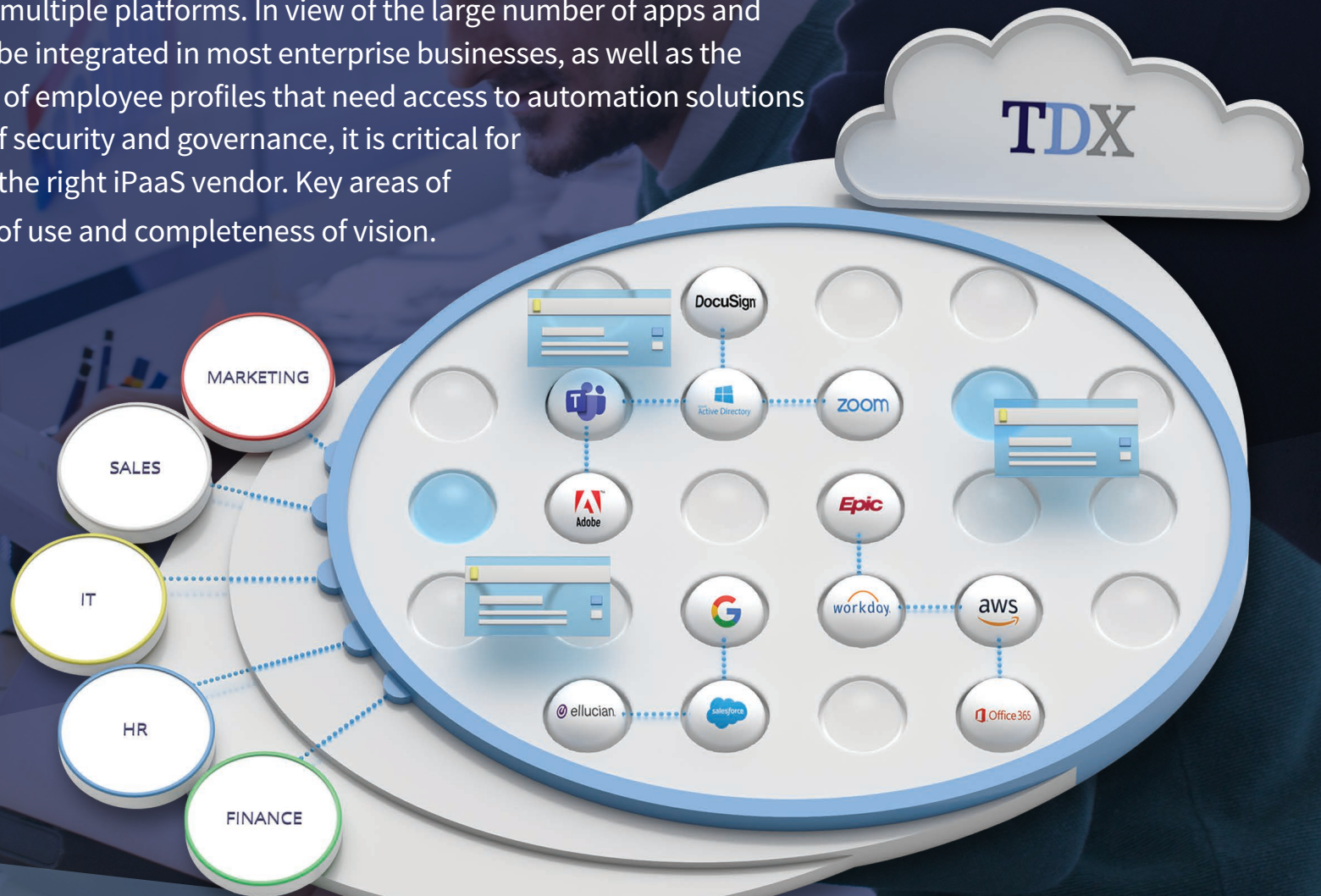
6 KEY FACTORS
to Evaluate When Considering iPaaS Vendors

1. Ease of Use

Given the wide range of employee skill levels, business groups and applications in play, ease of use is one of the most important considerations when picking the right integration product for your organization. The true power of automation is unlocked when employees in a variety of business functions - who don't possess deep integration skills but are very knowledgeable of their business - discover new uses for automation because the iPaaS tool is simple to deploy and use.

When evaluating vendors for ease of use, here are some questions you should ask:

- Does this product include a simple and visual user interface that all my employees can use regardless of technical or engineering skill level?

- Does this product make it easy for my employees to build connectors in a low code/no code environment?

- Does this product make it easy to test and debug workflows?

- Will this enable the *citizen developer?* *A platform should be so easy that you do not need a developer's skill set to use it.*

2. Speed of Deployment

In an increasingly fast-paced and competitive business environment, speed of deployment can often decide the difference between success and failure for any venture. The smartest organizations empower their employees with the kind of products that help them rapidly create new ways to reach their customers and instantly capture value. It's important to have an iPaaS tool that can be deployed quickly by new teams within your organization, as well as first-time users who are starting to use automation in their business lines.

This can help spread the use of integration and automation across your organization which, in turn, can greatly impact your ROI.

When evaluating iPaaS vendors for speed of deployment, here are some questions you should ask:

- Does this vendor provide a library of out-of-the-box connectors to the most common SaaS applications so my team can hit the ground running?

- Does this product make it easy for us to build new connections or to extend existing connectors quickly and without needing any coding effort?

- Can we build, share and reuse connections and workflows as we scale our business with a focus on speed to market?

- Is there a community of connectors and flows that we can readily pick from to deploy pre-built automations?

3. Modern and Scalable Architecture

The best modern integration platforms must be built from the ground up with a fully cloud-native architecture built for speed, simplicity, scalability, high availability and low total cost of ownership. A well-designed product architecture avoids the need for repeated capacity planning, resource provisioning and infrastructure management, allowing your team to focus on what matters in serving your customers in the best possible way. The iPaaS product that you pick must serve your business as it scales and achieves the high growth you aim for.

When evaluating iPaaS vendors for scalability, ask these questions:

- Does this vendor have a track record in building and shipping products that are well-designed for the cloud-native era?

- Does this vendor have a track record of helping companies achieve their biggest strategic goals and a track record of operational success?

- Does this vendor have a client roster of prominent organizations that use their cloud-native products to run mission critical workflows?

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4. Flexibility

Modern organizations can be complex, spanning a range of departments, employee profiles, applications and systems, geographical locations and market segments. To address the needs of such organizations, an iPaaS vendor needs to have flexibility built into its product, enabling users to manage this complexity from a single place. Moreover, as the business needs evolve, it is important to have an integration product that makes it easy to edit, add and remove workflow steps or modify connectors quickly.

When evaluating vendors for flexibility, here are some questions you should ask:

- Does this product make it easy for us to connect to a wide range of business apps and services, including SaaS applications, using out-of-the-box connectors, databases, ERP and legacy systems?

- Will we be able to launch workflows using different types of process triggers including event-driven triggers, webhooks and scheduled triggers?

- Is the product UI simple enough to enable us to easily make modifications, test and launch updates to our workflow logic as our business needs change?

5. Security, Compliance and Governance

Today's organizations operate in an environment where we see an increasing trend in the number and size of security related incidents, with the cost of each security breach often running into millions of dollars and having a significant impact on customer trust.

Additionally, the risk of mistakes related to manual processes of provisioning and deprovisioning of accounts, reconciling data between applications and triggering scripts for various use cases can pose significant liability issues for organizations.

That's why it's important to pick an iPaaS vendor that has a deep understanding of security, compliance and governance, and has a track record of working with reputed and trusted clients in the enterprise space.

When evaluating vendors for security, compliance and governance you should ask these questions:

- Does this product provide the latest state of the art features with respect to platform and product security including access management, audit trails and logging, data visualization and robust flows?

- Has this product been built from the ground up with a culture of security top of mind?

- Do prominent and reputed organizations in the world of business, government, education and nonprofits trust them with their business?

- Will this product make it easy for my central IT teams to have a good view of the end-to-end integration and automation flows that are powering my business?

- Will I be able to comply with regulations including HIPAA, GDPR and security audits using this product?

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6. Pricing

It is important to pick an iPaaS vendor whose pricing philosophy aligns with the value they deliver for your current and future business needs. Specifically, you should pick a vendor whose pricing is simple, transparent and does not result in any surprises when you try to connect new systems and applications to your workflows as your business needs evolve.

When evaluating iPaaS vendors for pricing, here are some questions you should ask:

- Does this vendor provide a simple and understandable price for my workflows regardless of how many connections I am using? Am I able to transparently understand their pricing approach?

- Will this solution offer me a predictable pricing model or site licenses that can help me plan and deliver a stable budget in the face of my changing business needs?

The right iPaaS product can be a game changer, positioning an organization to achieve a high level of success, in a sustainable way, in today's competitive business world. We hope that these tips will help you pick the right partner for your organization.

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