



From system sprawl to streamlined operations: a new path to business efficiency

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Australian organisations build their technology environments incrementally. Systems are introduced to solve specific problems - customer management, finance, HR and operations - but are rarely designed to work as part of a coordinated whole.

Over time, this creates application sprawl and serious challenges. Employees move between systems to complete tasks, data remains siloed and work is handed off manually across teams. Even where automation exists, it is often confined to individual systems rather than spanning the full spectrum of work.

The impact is cumulative, with work slowing down, errors increasing and spotty visibility. Perhaps most importantly, organisations struggle to understand how work is actually performed across the business, making improvement difficult.

This emphasis on systems also carries a high cost. In many enterprises, between 55% and 80% of IT budgets are consumed simply maintaining existing systems, limiting the ability to invest in innovation and improvement.

In this environment, adding more technology rarely solves the problem, but often reinforces it.

Moving towards process thinking

Organisations need to move away from thinking about systems in isolation and toward how work happens.

Process connects systems, people and decisions into a single operating model. When processes are disjointed, inefficiencies persist regardless of how advanced the underlying technology may be.

When processes are unified, organisations gain a different level of control. Work can be coordinated across systems without duplication, handoffs are reduced and performance becomes visible across the full operation. This enables people to identify bottlenecks, improve outcomes and respond more effectively to changing conditions.

Unifying work without rebuilding everything

For organisations in Australia, large-scale system replacement programs are rarely a practical starting point. They are costly, disruptive and often take years to deliver value. A process-first approach offers a more functional alternative.

Instead of replacing core systems, organisations can introduce a layer that coordinates work across them. Data remains where it is, while processes bring together the actions, decisions

and information required to complete work end-to-end. This also allows organisations to separate how work is experienced from where data is stored, reducing the need for complex and high-risk data migration.

This way of working is underpinned by data fabric, which enables processes to securely access and interact with data across multiple systems in real time, without needing to move or duplicate it. This allows organisations to connect processes, automate decisions and coordinate work across systems, teams, and technologies in a unified way.

Rethinking efficiency beyond systems

For many organisations, inefficiency is not just a function of how work is executed but how technology environments have evolved over time.

Large enterprises often manage hundreds of legacy and often redundant applications, many of which support similar processes in different parts of the business. The instinctive response has traditionally been to replace these systems. However, large-scale transformation programs frequently struggle to deliver on their original goals. Gartner predicts that by 2027, 70% of ERP initiatives will fail to meet expectations, largely due to the complexity of “big bang” replacements.

A process-led approach offers a different path. Rather than translating legacy code into modern platforms - which can replicate the same inefficiencies - organisations can rethink the underlying processes that run across their systems.

In doing so, organisations often uncover redundant interfaces and legacy applications that no longer add value over time and can be retired. The result is a more streamlined, cost-effective, and manageable technology landscape.

A solid foundation for AI adoption

Shifting toward process is becoming even more important as organisations look to scale their use of AI. Many businesses have introduced AI tools but are finding it difficult to translate these into meaningful operational outcomes. This is often because AI has been deployed outside the context of structured processes.

Without that structure, AI lacks clear inputs, defined decision points and appropriate oversight. It may deliver isolated improvements but struggles to scale in a controlled and reliable way. In some cases, applying AI directly to legacy systems risks reinforcing the same inefficiencies those systems already contain.

Embedding AI within processes changes this dynamic, allowing it to operate as part of coordinated workflows rather than as a standalone tool. It allows AI to interact with systems, data and people in a controlled and auditable manner, providing the guardrails needed to use it effectively while making its impact easier to assess over time.

From fragmentation to measurable outcomes

The impact of this shift is already experienced by RMBL Investments, one of Australia’s leading first mortgage funds with more than \$2.25 billion in assets under management. RMBL faced growing compliance challenges driven by inefficient document handling and fragmented workflows.

Previously, staff were required to manually review and categorise scanned investment consent agreements, which was a time-intensive process that slowed response times and increased operational risk.

To address this, RMBL implemented an AI-enabled approach using the Appian Platform and Intelligent Document Processing, creating a unified digital workspace that connects process, data and decision-making across its operations.

Document processing accuracy increased to more than 95%, while client inquiries were reduced by over 20%. The business also saved approximately 35 hours per week in manual effort, allowing teams to focus on higher-value activities.

The next phase of efficiency

As economic pressure continues and expectations rise, organisations across ANZ will not achieve efficiency gains by adding more tools or optimising individual systems in isolation. They will come from improving how work flows across the organisation, connecting systems, data and people through well-designed processes.

Process is where this shift happens. It is where complexity is reduced, where performance becomes visible, and where technologies such as automation and AI can deliver meaningful impact.

For organisations looking to improve efficiency in a sustained way, process is no longer just part of the solution, but where performance is determined.