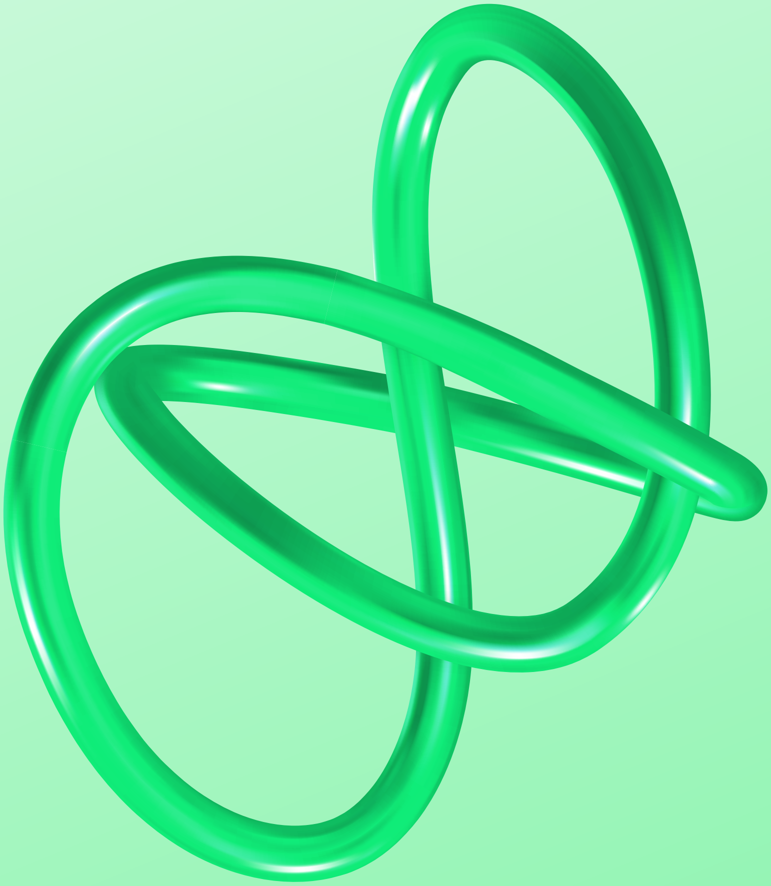
billtrust

WHITE PAPER

Empowering your ecosystem

The importance of AR solution integrations

Solid, reliable integrations are essential to creating a modern digital AR/AP ecosystem.



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Introduction: ecosystems and integration

> Digital ecosystems are the new ideal within the finance function.

Without robust integrations, your AR/AP/finance ecosystem will never reach its full potential.

More organizations are connecting their internal tech stack with ERP providers, AP portals, eCommerce platforms and AR automation solutions. All together, these technologies can unlock the full potential of digital transformation.

But integrating internal architecture with external platforms is mission critical. And those integrations need to be as seamless and reliable as possible.

Integrations are an opportunity to get the most value possible from your solutions: lower DSO, improved CX, faster payments and a better experience for your team.

Billtrust is an expert in integrations. We're committed to extending the benefits of our solutions across our customer's entire ecosystem. And we have dedicated, experienced teams that focus on integrations exclusively.

Billtrust leads the field in integration development. We have built-in integrations with many of the top ERPs in multiple industries. And we have the capacity to build custom integrations quickly and efficiently.

In this paper, we'll lean on our own experience deploying integrations for our customers and recent industry research to weigh the costs and risks of "home-grown" integrations against provider-supplied services.

Defining integrations

Integrations describe a wide variety of pre-built APIs, connections and presets that make implementations faster to achieve, improve the ease of doing business with customers and help you leverage data from your vendor and third-party partners. These include:

- Easy-to-use APIs to support and enhance **eCommerce connections.**
- ERP integrations with options for CSV and XML.
- Connectors for use with your **banks or financial providers.**
- Integrations with **trade information/business intelligence, credit insurance and print partners.**
- **Automatic delivery** of invoices into AP portals.

OTHER INSIGHTS FROM RECENT RESEARCH[2]

39%

lacked confidence in their ability to support a robust business ecosystem

29%

lacked the resources needed for building and managing integrations between systems, applications and partner ecosystems.

The costs of sub-optimal integration

When surveyed on how much annual revenue was lost in 2020 due to poor integrations, 66% of companies said they'd **lost up to $500,000,** compared with just 43% losing that amount in 2019. And an eye-watering 10% said they'd **lost up to $1 million in revenue.**[1]

"Scratchbuilding" a system integration internally can be a long, arduous, and costly process that often results in subpar outcomes. And businesses are rightly hesitant to take on the risk.

The challenges are many

ALIGNING ON BUSINESS GOALS

The external system provider you're trying to integrate may not have a good grasp of your business goals for the integration or may not prioritize them. Even your internal IT and end-user team may not be aligned.

MANAGING THE RESOURCES INVOLVED

Integration projects consume internal resources. But these efforts could be misdirected if they're not attached to clearly defined goals and milestones which can be difficult to determine internally.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

Your in-house development team may decide to build on an existing integration technology. While this makes more sense than building from scratch, picking the wrong technology could create just as many problems. Instead of suffering the headaches of building an integration from zero, you might find you're now attempting to work within a framework that isn't right for the task.

DEPLOYING THE RIGHT TALENT

Building integrations is a complex job that's unlike other types of software development. It takes specialization in APIs, interfaces, and protocols that may not be present within your team.

SLOWER TIME-TO-MARKET

When an integration is developed internally, rather than by using an existing one offered by a provider, it will invariably take far longer to develop, test, and launch. That can be costly when you consider the agility needed to maintain cash flow and competitive advantage.

COSTS CAN BE TRICKY TO PREDICT

Even with the best of intentions, managers may find the total final costs of a home-built integration project are *severely* at odds with initial projections for any number of reasons.

COMMUNICATION

Integrating two separate systems demands a great deal of knowledge and inter-team communication. Problems can crop up that you'll find yourself repairing later on, delaying implementation.

TESTING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

If you're building an integration yourself, you need to subject it to a rigorous and lengthy testing and QA regimen in order to make sure it doesn't present problems after it's been launched.

THE COST OF RECOVERING LOST DATA

When an integration fails, the failure may go undiscovered for far too long. Often, it's not an integration team that uncovers the loss, but users – or even customers. Then it becomes a long, hard process for your team to recover the missing data.

MONITORING COSTS

Integrations should be monitored regardless, but, after one fails and has supposedly been fixed, our team will find itself devoting more attention to checking that integration to make sure it's been effectively patched.

The average company loses

12%

of its revenue as a result of innacurate data.[3]

The risks involved

Getting beyond the costs involved in an integration project, there are very real risks at stake when an integration doesn't perform as it should. Some of them can be almost catastrophic for an enterprise.

- **Loss of data and vital knowledge:** If integrations fail, or aren't properly configured in the first place, your organization may not be able to obtain key data that it needs. This can have serious consequences for cash flow.
- **Poor customer experiences:** Bad integrations can contribute to bad customer experiences, such as inaccurate invoicing due to bad data or delays in submitting those invoices.
- **Slowed payments:** The point of an AR automation system is to speed up payment, but integration failures can create bottlenecks and delays that slow payment.
- **Delay to achieve ROI:** Prolonged implementations don't quickly deliver the benefits of a solution, while requiring upfront and ongoing costs. This can expand how long it takes for a solution to "pay for itself."
- **Compliance and regulatory risk:** There may be real dangers that poor integration may create regulatory hazards, especially when it comes to matters of data integrity and auditability.

The benefits of top-level integration

A robust ecosystem delivers improvements across the order-to-cash spectrum that can be felt by your AR team and your customers alike.

- **AR process automation is improved** because the software you've adopted is able to quickly do its job. In the case of AP portal integration, that means you can automatically deliver invoices, easily check invoice statuses, and fulfill other functions without tasking your team with the manual keystroking that's necessary in traditional, non-automated AR processes.
- **Cash flow becomes predictable,** since real-time data is always on tap, allowing instant oversight and visualization so managers can make informed and proactive decisions.
- **DSO is reduced,** since your AR process is now faster and more accurate.
- **A single source of information is in place,** so there's no likelihood of making decisions or executing operations on the basis of outdated or replicated data.

> **Time-to-value is accelerated** for both the AR automation solution you've adopted and any external or third-party systems that are part of your ecosystem.

- **Customer and partner experiences are enhanced** since you're now delivering superior, modernized experiences that deepen your connections with them.
- **Finance gains stature within the organization** by demonstrating innovation and the ability to share real-time insights and reporting with upper management.

What should your provider deliver?

If you've implemented an AR automation solution that comes from a leading provider, that provider should be able to help you on the integration front in two ways:

- **By supplying pre-built integrations** with leading ERPs, eCommerce platforms, banks and other components of your AR ecosystem. These can often work right out of the box so you're seeing almost instantaneous value.
- **By offering development and customization support** from their own Professional Services Organization (PSO) who have done a large number of integrations over the years. Rather than having to ramp up your own development team to customize an existing API or connector or build from scratch, the provider team will be able to meet your requirements much more quickly.
- By working with a provider's supplied integrations, it's far more likely you'll be **deploying a robust and reliable answer** to your integration challenges.

What should you expect them to provide?

✔ **Pre-existing ERP integrations**	These should include options for CSV and XML to support you with ERPs (both major and not-so-major) across multiple verticals.
✔ **ERP integration expertise**	This should include expertise for every type/size of customer, whether you're a multinational or an SMB.
✔ **Easy-to-use eCommerce APIs**	These will enhance your digital selling capabilities and storefront efficiency.
✔ **Connectors that work with your banks**	Pre-built connectors with leading banks will let you simplify and streamline cash application.
✔ **Integrations with trade information/ business intelligence, credit insurance and print partners**	To slash risk, workload, and days outstanding.
✔ **Integration with a B2B digital payments network**	Such a network extends and automates order-to-cash functionality if you work with customer AP portals. For instance: Billtrust's Business Payments Network can deliver, track, and manage invoices for over 175 AP portals worldwide.

Conclusions & recommendations

> Without stable and reliable integrations, it's not possible to create a truly digital ecosystem for automating receivables and payables.

Developing APIs and connectors in-house can be an expensive and resource-hungry effort that results in integrations that fall short.

In an area as specialized and fluid as AR automation, it's advisable to utilize pre-built integrations, or work with a provider's Professional Services Organization (PSO) to develop custom-built integrations that are uniquely suited to the product.

Work with a solutions provider who can offer a catalog of pre-built integrations that accommodate a wide range of ERPs, eCommerce providers and more, and also has the PSO competencies to customize these as necessary or help you develop fully customized integrations that will work seamlessly with their AR automation solution.

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Learn more

Visit billtrust.com or contact our sales team.

ABOUT BILLTRUST

Billtrust is a leading provider of cloud-based software and integrated payment processing solutions that simplify and automate B2B commerce. Accounts receivable is broken and relies on conventional processes that are outdated, inefficient, manual and largely paper based. Billtrust is at the forefront of the digital transformation of AR, providing mission-critical solutions that span credit decisioning and monitoring, online ordering, invoice delivery, payments and remittance capture, invoicing, cash application and collections.

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