# Buy or Build:
## Integration Acquisition 101

## In this paper

# Introduction

As businesses adopt more and more software for their processes and operations, it's only natural for integrations to have become an essential requirement. Without integrations, teams with large tool stacks end up working in disconnected data silos with apps that simply aren't compatible.

This then leads to all sorts of inefficiencies:

- Staff are forced to spend time manually sharing information that could be otherwise be automatically transferred.
- Data points become obsolete without constant maintenance.
- Information is easily lost as organizations re-structure, employees depart, or teams adopt new tools without migrating the old ones.

And yet the business landscape today is more competitive than ever and the need to optimize efficiency is among the highest priorities.

This is when savvy business leaders turn to integrations for support. The *right* integrations can turn a disjointed tool stack into a single, unified ecosystem. That means teams working in different tools while collaborating and sharing the same information, all their data synced in real-time to create a distributed source of truth.

There are 2 ways to integrate tools: buying intregrations out of the box, or building your own custom integration solution. Next we'll delve into the benefits, challenges, and considerations associated with each approach to help you make an informed decision.

## This guide is for:

- Senior marketing executives who recognizes the need for an integration platform;
- Anyone responsible for procuring secure platforms;
- Buyers looking to make informed recommendations to a manager or stakeholder regarding an integration.
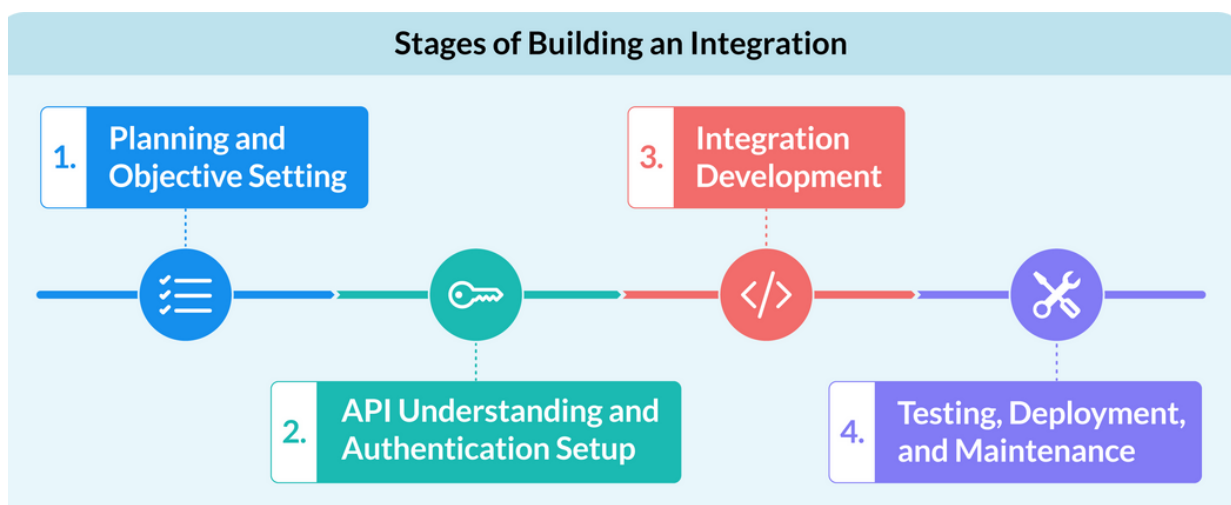
# Building integrations

Building your own integration requires thorough planning and substantial resources. These platforms are built over *months*, and deployment can take considerable additional time.

Here are just a few examples of costs you'll have to consider when building an integration:

- **Staffing expenses**: Building an internal team is not just about salary and recruitment expenses, it also includes administrative overheads, HR-related expenditures and more.
- **Development time:** Projects of this magnitude require months of development, testing, and deployment.
- **Opportunity cost:** Every hour spent on this project is time not spent on other business-critical objectives or initiatives.
- **System adjustments**: Adapting systems and infrastructure for compatibility can disrupt daily operations and demand extra resources to manage effectively.
- **Maintenance and updates:** Once deployed, the integration has to be maintained and improved to stay relevant.

> **Custom integrations, whether built internally or outsourced to a third party, carry similar advantages and drawbacks relative to purchasing pre-made solutions.**

Unito's internal data reveals that a business with two senior developers working full-time can expect to wait, on average, over **six months** for an integration to be built that can match features from a pre-built platform.



Stages of Building an Integration

1. Planning and Objective Setting

2. API Understanding and Authentication Setup

3. Integration Development

4. Testing, Deployment, and Maintenance

# Total cost of ownership

The Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of an integration includes all expenses linked to its development, maintenance, hosting, and scalability. It's crucial to account for every cost when planning an integration. Beyond the initial development phase, on-going expenses include adapting to frequent API changes from connectors, creating new features, and addressing bugs.

Your permanent development team may grow as your organization scales and introduces new use cases for integrations and the development cycle can quickly become unmanageable. If you've outsourced the development of your integration, the outsourcing of every update or maintenance session is sure to be a nagging cost.

**Tip:** According to Unito's internal estimates, the TCO over 5 years for a built integration reaches an average 124% of the initial development cost.

As mentioned in the previous section, it's always wise to weigh the opportunity cost: what *other* projects or initiatives could your team pursue *instead* of an integration, and what impact would that have on your business?

## Use cases that align with building custom integrations

**Unique requirements:** If your company possesses niche or industry-specific needs, off-the-shelf solutions may not suffice for every use case.

**Strategic alignment:** When the integration need aligns with specific use cases critical to your company's core offerings, ensuring sustained relevance over time.

**Competitive advantage:** Developing integrations can confer a competitive advantage when competitors rely on ill-fitting off-the-shelf solutions or lack integration entirely.

**Resource availability:** If your team possesses the required development resources to build, test, and maintain an integration solution without compromising other vital projects.

**Enhanced data security:** For businesses in highly-regulated industries or those handling sensitive data, custom-built integrations can offer greater control and compliance.

Not sure if building an integration is right for you? Let's look at the alternative.

# Buying a ready-made integration

By purchasing integrations, you leverage years of prior development work that's been thoroughly validated. This approach enables buyers to circumvent unforeseen delays and unexpected expenses, creating a more predictable experience.

Buying an out-of-the-box integration allows you to deploy your solution more quickly, reducing the time it takes for you to reap the benefits of integrations. Plus, while you may still need to iterate on configurations to get them working exactly right, it's less tedious compared to the continuous maintenance required for custom-built solutions

An iPaaS (Integration Platform as a Service) is the best one-size-fits-all integration solution for most organizations. They handle countless use cases and are easy to deploy — even for less technical users. Let's compare two common types of integration providers: legacy, trigger-based iPaaS and modern iPaaS that support two-way sync.

Two-way sync means that data automatically flows back and forth between tools based on manual input. So a change in one place updates data somewhere else.

This allows teams in different apps or tools to share a distributed source of truth at all times, while extending visibility to stakeholders.

## Legacy trigger-based iPaaS

Trigger-based iPaaS can be a solution for businesses with basic automation needs. Users of these platforms benefit from hundreds, even thousands, of unique connectors.

Legacy iPaaS systems feature one-way automations, and may attempt to replicate two-way (bi-directional) synchronization capabilities by combining several one-way automations. However, this layering of many one-way automations introduces complexity for users, which can delay implementation and make troubleshooting more difficult.

Legacy iPaaS solutions such as Workato necessitate operators with a technical background to ensure effective execution. Onboarding and maintaining workflows within these platforms typically demand skilled developers and experts, particularly for handling complex use cases.

Internal experts at Unito estimate that companies spend between three and six months fully implementing a legacy iPaaS tool, depending on the complexity and numbers of integrations.

## Use cases for partnering with a legacy trigger-based iPaaS

**Routine workflows:** Trigger-based iPaaS are suitable for scenarios with basic workflows, such as automating routine data transfers between established systems.

**Scalability of connectors:** Legacy iPaaS solutions offer a large number of connectors, enabling quick and efficient scaling of your integrations.

**Existing expertise:** If your organization already has expertise in using legacy iPaaS, there can be a preference from stakeholders to continue with the familiar system.

## iPaaS that support 2-way sync

An iPaaS solution featuring integrated 2-way synchronization offers distinct advantages over legacy iPaaS systems, delivering simplicity, heightened user-friendliness, and increased adaptability.

That's because a single two-way sync can manage the workload equivalent to 16 automations thanks to its ability to address a wide array of unique fields that would typically require separate triggers and actions to be mapped individually.

*"Before discovering Unito I'd tried Zapier and Power Automate, but they're only good for one way integrations."*

**Ryan Duguid , Product Leader & Regional Director @ Microsoft**

This consolidation can streamline setup, management, and maintenance, potentially providing a significant advantage to organizations seeking rapid, comprehensive, and scalable integration solutions.

Compared to legacy iPaaS, 2-way sync is a simpler approach which can often be implemented more quickly. For example, Unito is typically configured in just 12 minutes on average.

Platforms such as Unito prioritize no-code configurations, emphasizing adaptability and empowering teams lacking technical expertise. Notably, over 80% of Unito's users operate without a technical background, enabling business users across various roles to effectively deploy and manage high-quality integrations.

## Use cases for partnering with an iPaaS that supports 2-way sync

**No technical expertise:** No-code solutions are ideal for teams lacking technical expertise or resources, as they're user-friendly and and able to be managed by non-technical staff.

**Faster rollout:** Thanks to 2-way sync, modern iPaaS platforms require less individual automations to achieve the same ends, thereby expediting deployment. This makes them a great choice for rapid prototyping and early project stages without extensive coding.

**Deep Syncing:** Most options support a wide range of native and custom fields across tools, and have a wider breadth of choice when it comes to rules and filtering to fit your workflow perfectly.

## Why not buy <u>and</u> build?

Several companies have multiple use cases that make it beneficial to both construct and purchase integration solutions.

Imagine a scenario where a specialized healthcare technology company is developing a proprietary diagnostic tool for disease detection.

This business might opt to build a custom integration solution for their core diagnostic tool, as the complexities of handling specialized data outputs and ensuring real-time synchronization with hospital management systems and electronic health records necessitate a tailored approach.

Meanwhile, this same company will likely buy into a third-party's network of supported integrations for areas like HR management, accounting software, or marketing automation tools.

There are endless ways that integration users can benefit from connecting across tools and departments, so when considering the benefits and drawbacks of building and buying, remember that a combination of the two may be the best fit for your team's needs.

# Which path will you take?

When you continually have to do more with less, integrations aren't a luxury; they're essential.

The choice between crafting custom integrations or procuring ready-made solutions is multifaceted, necessitating a thorough assessment of organizational needs, resources, and future scalability.

The intricacies of creating custom integrations, from comprehensive planning to unanticipated challenges, require a strategic approach and sustained commitment typically suited for niche use cases. On the other hand, the benefits of purchasing pre-built solutions are found in their speed, efficiency, and reliance on established expertise incorporated into an existing product.

Keep in mind that the integration journey isn't solely about connecting systems; it's also about fostering collaboration, streamlining workflows, and ultimately, propelling your organization's growth. Your competitors are likely already utilizing integration to support internal teams and enhance efficiency. Can you afford to lag behind?
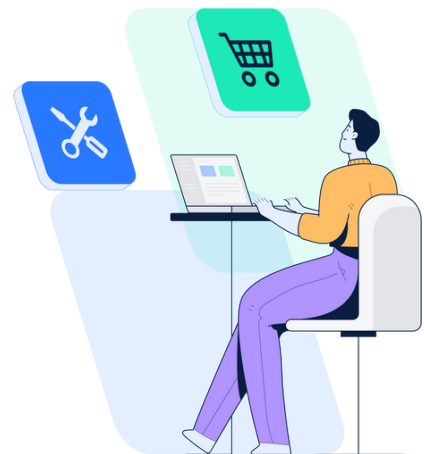
# Work at the speed of sync with Unito

The **deepest syncing capabilities** on the market

**Business and user-friendly** experience

Trusted by **Fortune 500 companies and global brands**

## A new, simpler approach to integration, powered by live, two-way sync

### Simple to setup and use
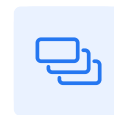80% of users are non-technical

### Two-way Flows
Data flows both ways, like a conversation

### Live Sync
Information is always up-to-date

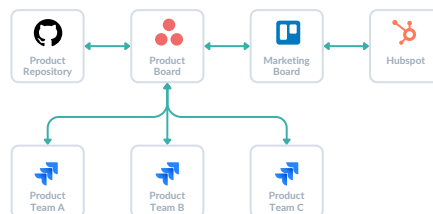### Deep field configuration
All the data you need, where you need it most

## Sync remains simple at scale

A 5-tool workflow in Unito

**1 sync = 16 triggers & actions**
in Zapier or Workato

Product Board → Product Team A

**= 96 triggers & actions**
in Zapier or Workato

Product Repository → Product Board → Marketing Board → Hubspot

Product Team A — Product Team B — Product Team C

## Curious to find out more?

Fortune 500 and global organizations are syncing with Unito:

**Go to Unito.io**

The Washington Post   SAMSUNG   iHeart MEDIA

DOWJONES   ▲ DELTA