

# The Need for Speed

Automating Manual Processes



In the past, conducting and coordinating work via manual tools, like paper, spreadsheets, and email, worked just fine for most organizations. Their speed of business and their customers didn't demand otherwise, so companies maintained the status quo.

Today, the world of business has become increasingly global, sophisticated, and complex, and the need to accelerate the pace of operations and to respond to market changes agilely is becoming critical to overall corporate success. This reality becomes even more apparent when you consider that “in 1965, the average tenure of companies on the S&P 500 was 33 years. By 1990, it was 20 years. It's forecast to shrink to 14 years by 2026.<sup>1</sup>” As a result, enterprise companies are increasingly looking to innovate beyond the status quo and work towards the goal of automating their operations in order to survive.



## WHAT'S DRIVING THE NEED TO DIGITIZE

When thinking about the shift towards the automation of enterprise operations, it's worth considering the three following significant drivers.

### The Competitive Landscape

The barrier to entry across industries is shrinking due to the exponential advances in technology and the rapid globalization of the business world. With new competitors primed to disrupt established industries, inefficiencies and delays caused by manual work or tools like spreadsheets or paper will hinder an organization's ability to sustainably compete in their respective markets. Companies do not want to fall victim to a situation like that of Toys-R-Us, which failed to adapt quickly enough to market changes and thus saw their market share diminish by the rise of online vendors. As such, many companies are looking to leverage modern, flexible technology in order to gain more operational agility and ultimately to help them maintain their competitive advantage.

### The “Now Economy”

Change occurs rapidly across industries due to evolving market conditions, government regulations, and a customer-base that is driven to find solutions that solve their evolving needs immediately. The time that a company has to compensate for or to respond internally to external changes is shrinking. As a result, companies are turning to flexible technological solutions that are rapid-to-implement and quick-to-change. They know this will be paramount to their efforts to keep up with constantly changing market conditions and consumer demands.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.inc.com/ilan-mochari/innosight-sp-500-new-companies.html>

## The Millennial Effect

With Millennials as the largest generation within the workforce, access to technology that supports work and enables productivity is expected—not tomorrow, but now. Power-users of technology, this generation is not conditioned to wait on IT to develop solutions in-house, to be satisfied with just-good-enough technology, or to use off-the-shelf solutions that only meet their partial needs. This Millennial attitude is also emulated by other generations in the workforce, which have now experienced the powerful impact that technology can add when it comes to enabling better work. The vast majority of the workforce has now adopted what one might call, “a Millennial mindset,” when it comes to their expectations for tools that support their work.



## EXPONENTIAL DEMAND FOR BUSINESS APPS

These drivers, among others, have caused the demand for new or improved enterprise applications that support operations to increase exponentially, especially apps that also can be used on a mobile device. In fact, “Gartner predicts that market demand for app development will grow at least five times faster than IT’s capacity to deliver it through 2021.”<sup>2</sup> As this statistic demonstrates, the drive towards automating manual processes is tangibly present and here to stay. That said, it also illustrates that the growth of requests for applications that support automating processes presents challenges for today’s organizations.

Consider the current realities of today’s organizations, and you can begin to understand why they are often struggling to keep up with the growing demand for modern applications aimed at fueling their process automation efforts.

## Under-resourced IT Teams with Mounting Workloads

It’s clear that the increased demand for new, modern business applications is creating a daunting backlog for enterprise IT departments. These requests represent additional work that sit on top of IT’s current workload. This issue is only compounded by a high turnover in IT talent. According to InformationWeek, a “survey by LinkedIn of their member data found that among ten sectors, technology (software) topped the list with the highest employee turnover rate at 13.2%<sup>3</sup>”. The bottom line is there is more work for IT to accomplish and a less consistent workforce to perform it than ever before.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.information-age.com/state-application-development-growing-says-gartner-123464619/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.informationweek.com/strategic-cio/team-building-and-staffing/technology-tops-list-of-industry-talent-turnover-rates-/d/d-id/1331668>

## Shadow IT is on the Rise

TrackVia research found that 42% of employees say organizational tools don't meet their needs, and 52% of them want new applications that enable more productive work. When presented with software that does not meet their needs, or when forced to resort to manual tools such as spreadsheets, paper, and email, employees often turn to unsanctioned apps. In fact, TrackVia research indicates that over half of employees admit that they use outside apps to support their work. This phenomenon, often referred to as, "Shadow IT," creates additional headaches for both business users and IT. Often, outside apps can only solve a portion of one's work needs and don't connect easily to other internal IT systems. This disconnected assortment of applications creates reporting and process management difficulties within the business. Additionally for IT, the security and data management issues caused by this issue only further compound their challenges.

With an increasingly competitive business landscape, a customer base that expects speed and transparency, and a workforce that is the most technology-centric to date, the need for business applications continues to rise. Despite being faced with mounting obstacles, organizations continue to strain to meet this growing demand. They know that any barrier to their ability to keep up with rapid pace of business will have significant repercussions on their competitive advantage. As such, companies are looking for new ways to bridge the gap and are turning to a new breed of rapid and flexible solutions to help them do so.

## ENTER THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF ENTERPRISE APPS

When it comes to overcoming the challenges posed by the current corporate realities and addressing the unique needs of today's businesses, simplifying and speeding up solution development and deployment is a top priority for today's leading organizations.

In order to accelerate their ability to support their process automation efforts with technology, many organizations are turning to what's called 'low-code platforms' that allow them to easily build custom applications according to their unique needs.

## THE LOW-DOWN ON LOW-CODE TECHNOLOGY

A leading analyst firm, Forrester, defines this new wave of low-code solutions as, "Platforms that enable rapid delivery of business applications with a minimum of hand-coding and minimal upfront investment in setup, training, and deployment."<sup>4</sup> Low-code solutions provide companies with an easy and fast way to meet employees' demand for improved business applications while using less IT resources than ever before. The two main core capabilities found in most low-code platforms are easy customization and integrated mobility.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.forrester.com/report/The+Forrester+Wave+LowCode+Development+Platforms+Q2+2016/-/E-RES117623>



## Easy Customization

A one-size-fits-all approach to business software has proven to be problematic for companies that have unique processes or evolving operations. Low-code platforms solve this issue by providing the ability for technical users to use intuitive tools for rapid app development, such as adding code directly into the system's user interface. Furthermore, these solutions also provide drag-and-drop, visual tools and features that business users can use to easily configure and make iterative changes to applications without the need for advanced coding knowledge. This comes in handy for IT teams, which may only need to step in to assist with advanced requirements. Additionally, low-code platforms empower business users to easily and quickly customize their applications according to their more intimate knowledge of day-to-day operations and any changes occurring in their area of the business.

Business users no longer have to wait for IT teams to code small, frequent updates to their applications. Meanwhile, this type of versatile and easy configuration frees up time that IT once spent on small requests, which can now be used on strategic projects and to carry out other important responsibilities.

## Integrated Mobility

With a global workforce and distributed operations, the growing demand for mobile applications shows no signs of slowing. Many low-code platforms, like TrackVia, provide integrated mobile and web functionality. This provides companies with the ability to develop a single application and instantly deploy it for use across all end-user devices. Some solutions even offer native mobile capabilities. This allows app creators to take advantage of the hardware-based functionality of today's mobile devices and ultimately enables end-users to do things, such as gather and access information, take and annotate photos, capture signatures and geo-location information, record audio notes, and the like. This functionality becomes especially powerful when providers of low-code platforms offer offline mobile capabilities, which allow apps to fully function with or without an Internet connection. This means work can be performed, data can be collected, and processes can remain coordinated anywhere, anytime—even in remote locations.

## **BUSINESS LEADERS AND IT TEAMS, UNITE!**

Although the popularity of low-code technology has begun to accelerate, vendors, like TrackVia, have been providing industry-leading companies with this type of technology for the last 10 years. In fact, Aberdeen research shows that many companies have already adopted this approach to rapid solution development, citing that Best-in-Class organizations are three times more likely to leverage a low-code application platform. Furthermore, Aberdeen research suggests that in doing so these companies have increased their speed to operational improvements by a factor of two.

Increasingly, companies are seeing their business developers, or technically-inclined employees that often live within operational departments, introduce these types of platforms to their organizations. This allows departmental employees, which have a better pulse on operational requirements, to create and change the application without the need for advanced programming or IT involvement. Low-code platforms bring together IT teams, business developers, and management that are all looking to better leverage technology in order to drive better performance and enable innovation across the enterprise.

## **BENEFITS OF BUILDING CUSTOM LOW-CODE APPLICATIONS**

### **Speed**

As discussed throughout this paper, keeping pace with the increasingly rapid speed of business is top of mind at organizations across every industry. Low-code platforms provide a technological springboard for speeding up the pace of application delivery and deployment. Newfound access to enterprise solutions also helps enable employees to be more productive, operations to be streamlined, and clients to be better served. Additionally, low-code applications are easily and rapidly adjusted, which ensures that operational technology can always keep pace with evolving markets, client needs, regulations, and the like. Ultimately, the use of low-code technology allows companies to remain agile and to accelerate their speed to enterprise improvements and performance.

### **Visibility & Control**

When companies have to wait to get access to technology, work often is performed using manual tools, like email, spreadsheets and paper. These tools simply do not provide any means for management, or even the people performing the actual tasks, to understand where work stands at any given point in time. As discussed, low-code platforms allow for the rapid automation of previously manual work and provide real-time reporting. This means management now has complete visibility and control over their operations while employee work is better coordinated and streamlined. Lastly, this type of insight enables data-driven decision-making to occur at every level of the enterprise and allows companies to shift their problem-solving mindset from reactive to proactive.

## Security

IT wants to enable its organization for success, but they are limited in their resources to do so. In their absence, manual tools and outside applications have flourished, leaving large security and data management concerns looming. Yet, with the help of low-code platforms, IT can now retain governance over the custom-built applications deployed across the business while also providing departments with access to tools they need to support their work. Utilizing low-code platforms to build custom apps, employees are able to better perform their jobs without the risk of unintentionally introducing potential security vulnerabilities.

## Efficiency

Automating operations with low-code platforms means that the manual, inefficient tools once used to complete work can be left behind. Replacing outdated tools with low-code, customized applications enables employees to accomplish their work more productively. It also allows previously disjointed or uncoordinated processes to be streamlined—allowing work to seamlessly flow from one step to the next—across various teams and departments. This eliminates delays or inefficiencies that may have previously existed and enhances overall company efficiency.



TrackVia™, the leading low-code workflow platform for operations, helps companies build applications that improve on-time performance and reduce costs. TrackVia offers operations leaders the fastest and easiest way to build powerful applications that are business led and IT-approved. Companies like Honeywell, Stearns Lending, and Brinks rely on TrackVia to digitize their operations. Learn more at: [www.trackvia.com](http://www.trackvia.com).

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