SAP & hybris Q&A: The Insider’s Take
Supplemental Questions: Technical Aspects of hybris & SAP
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The following questions were submitted directly from attendees at a SAPinsider webinar we co-presented with SAP Global Partner itelligence: Shedding Light on SAP’s New Ecommerce Offering. As a hybris Gold Partner, our hybris Practice Director John Brumbaugh, Gorilla’s Director of Strategy and Operations Victoria Markley, as well as Andy Powers, Director of Innovation Programs at itelligence have shared their insights, along with supplemental information from hybris.

1: What are some key points to consider when evaluating a B2B commerce experience so that it is more B2C-like?

Of course, B2B users have become accustomed to the features and functionality they encounter on consumer ecommerce sites. So, things like streamlined purchase funnels, robust search, and simplified checkout are necessities. However, B2B buyers have fundamentally different needs and goals than consumers. For this reason, we advocate “business-like” commerce experiences that incorporate numerous B2C elements. For more detail on what this means, I would invite you to read our recent article for the SAP Business Innovation blog, which dives deeper into this topic.

2: Does hybris offer a responsive design solution out of the box?

Native hybris includes “Responsive design-ready” capabilities. At Gorilla, we encourage our clients to build upon and customize templates to create their own unique user experiences and to include responsive design in those solutions. Gorilla Group’s hybris Catalyst includes responsive design as a starting point.

3: Given I already have SAP for distribution, which additional master data fields do I need to add and maintain within my existing SAP software for it to work with the hybris solution?

Hybris as a platform requires minimal data, really just a product-id and product name. Although that is all the platform needs to survive, it would not be realistic for that to be all the data you would need to support online ecommerce functionality. We would need further information regarding your products, customers, business rules, pricing, shipping calculations, etc. to help determine what other fields may be required. Additional examples include (some which may be managed directly in SAP by merchandisers instead of within the hybris platform): Description, Product Features, Product Materials, etc.

4: How integrated is hybris with SAP at this stage? Master data, sales orders, product configuration, invoicing, etc.?

There are many features in the 5.3 release that optimize the connection between hybris and SAP:

**SAP Asynchronous Order Management:** In SAP asynchronous order management, the order capture process runs completely in hybris Commerce Suite, including price calculations and order storage. When an order is
generated, it is replicated asynchronously through the Data Hub to the SAP ERP backend. Subsequently, order fulfillment occurs in SAP ERP. Asynchronous data replication ensures the best possible response times for customers. At the same time, asynchronous order management works such that the availability of the online store is independent of the availability of the SAP ERP backend. This makes it a good choice for many B2C scenarios and “lightweight” B2B scenarios. All information is exchanged with SAP ERP via IDoc XML and orders are replicated upon generation to SAP ERP. Information about order confirmation, delivery, and goods issue is sent back from SAP ERP to hybris Commerce Suite so that the order status matches in hybris Commerce Suite and SAP ERP. Orders can be canceled either from hybris Service Cockpit or from SAP ERP, and the cancellations are replicated to the other system.

**SAP Synchronous Order Management:** With SAP synchronous order management, the order processes and data reside in the SAP ERP backend. This option is designed for use in B2B scenarios, safeguarding heavy investments made for an SAP ERP backend such as implementation of complex pricing rules, inventory information, and credit limit checks that are not meant to be replicated to the hybris Commerce Suite.

**Synchronous Ordering process:**

- **Logon to online store:** Before customers can add products to the cart, they need to logon to the online store. The new early logon extension of the B2B accelerator must be activated to do this.
- **Add product to cart:** When a customer adds a product to the cart, a sales order is created synchronously in the SAP ERP backend, where all functionality for creating the sales order is executed. In the online store, the customer gets the price and availability information, along with whether the credit limit is exceeded or the minimum order quantity is not reached, directly from the SAP ERP backend. The pricing condition and pricing procedure used in the SAP ERP backend are set in the hybris Management Console.
- **Complete check-out:** During check-out, customers can select an alternative shipping address. The shipping addresses of the B2B unit are the address of the sold-to party in SAP ERP plus the addresses of all ship-to parties of that sold-to party. Additionally, the customer can select a shipping method from the list provided by the SAP ERP backend. When the customer submits the order in the online store, it is captured in the SAP ERP backend.
- **View order confirmation:** In addition to pricing and shipping information, order confirmation displays the sales order number from the SAP ERP backend.
- **Order history:**
  - **Get order overview:** Customers can search for their company’s orders created for their company and view order details. The result list covers all orders created either by themselves or by other contacts of their company (SAP ERP: sold-to party), independent of the channel through which the orders were created (backend, call center, online store, or other).
  - **View order details:** Besides pricing and shipping information, the order confirmation shows the header status and the shipping status synchronously from the SAP ERP backend. Thus, any order changes via other channels are incorporated.

**SAP Product Configuration:** The first release of SAP Product Configuration provided a comprehensive solution to managing personalized and customizable products in and with hybris Commerce Suite. A pillar of the SAP Configure Price Quote (CPQ) solution is the ability to expose capabilities of the SAP Variant and Product Configuration to your online store customers. At the same time, it allows you to hide any complexity that is not relevant. This means that customers can configure products interactively, while the system ensures that only relevant information is asked of the customer and only valid information is entered by the customer.

**SAP CPQ Runtime Engine:** Product Configuration in hybris Commerce Suite is based on a fully featured runtime engine, which operates locally within hybris, ensuring that customers can configure a product in the online store...
without the need for an active connection to the SAP backend. The configuration runtime engine is fully compatible with the SAP Internet Pricing and Configuration engine (IPC).

**Master Data Replication:** Product Configuration in hybris Commerce Suite adheres to the “model once, configure everywhere” principle. The business user models the product in SAP ERP Variant Configuration, including the definition of relevant options, components, and rules. Existing product models can be used, as long as they are compatible with IPC. The last step in modeling involves the business user generating the knowledge base, which is then replicated to the local database. The configuration runtime engine accesses the local database to validate user inputs against the defined rules and to calculate the new configuration status based on the model definitions.

**SAP Audience Discovery and Targeting:** With the integration of SAP Audience Discovery and Targeting in hybris Commerce Suite, you can offer your customers personalized shopping experiences by integrating the advanced segmentation capabilities of SAP Audience Discovery and Targeting. The integration focuses on:

- **Design time:** Integration for extending existing maintenance of personalization capabilities of hybris WCMS towards the usage of initiatives from SAP Audience Discovery and Targeting
- **Runtime integration:** Usage of initiatives from SAP Audience Discovery and Targeting for execution of the personalization

The data needed in SAP Audience Discovery and Targeting for segmentation comes from hybris Commerce Suite via SAP ERP, for customer-related and order-related information created in hybris (integration already existing between SAP ERP and SAP ADT).

**5: What is SAP’s recommendation for exchanging data between SAP ECC and hybris ecommerce, and do they have pre-built solutions for this?**

There are pre-built solutions for several of the integrations. The recommended method used would be largely dependent of use case(s) and business model.

**SAP Asynchronous Order Management:** Please refer to question 4 for detailed information on Asynchronous Order Management

**SAP Synchronous Order Management:** Please refer to question 4 for detailed information on Synchronous Order Management

**6: Can you outline some of the benefits of the hybris 5.3 release alongside an SAP (ECC) ERP?**

There are many features included in the 5.3 release that optimize the connection between hybris and SAP:

**SAP Asynchronous Order Management:** Please refer to question 4 for detailed information on Asynchronous Order Management
**SAP Synchronous Order Management:** Please refer to question 4 for detailed information on Synchronous Order Management

**7: Where will my data live? Are fields interfaced from hybris to SAP so that the two are kept in sync at all times?**

We do want to keep some data in hybris in order to present product data points to the customer to aid in their purchasing selection. Customer, pricing, and order data may also live in hybris with synchronizations to SAP to keep data accurate or data may all live in SAP with real-time look-ups when the data is requested. Part of the project discovery process is used to determine the correct architecture solution for your specific needs.

**8: Can you tell me more about the features hybris can provide versus competing commerce platforms?**

This is a challenging question, as nearly every platform will find a way to meet any requirement, although some may require more drastic changes to the core code to accommodate the feature. Because of this, we cannot provide you specific features that hybris can accommodate which competitors cannot.

However, hybris is architected in such a unique way that I have yet to find a requirement that necessitates a core code change that would disrupt and ultimately ruin your upgrade path and compromise other functionality. Hybris was built so that configurations and extensions are able to be added to the core codebase to support your needs.

For more information on the competitive landscape of commerce platforms, we would suggest to review industry analysts’ reports such as Forrester and Gartner.

**9: Is a customer able to monitor their order throughout its lifecycle? (e.g. Order confirmation, shipping information, invoices, etc.)**

Yes, hybris provides a best-in-class method to keep the customer updated at all times throughout their order. The hybris software allows for proactive pushes using email notifications corresponding to your own intervals and timing, such as when the order is shipped or at defined points during the manufacturing cycle. Additionally, customers have access to order status, as well as line item status, from within their accounts, for complete transparency during the order lifecycle.

**10: Why is data replication asynchronous for B2C companies, but synchronous for B2B in SAP?**

The asynchronous data replication ensures the best possible response times for customers. Additionally, the availability of the online store is independent of the availability of the SAP ERP backend. This makes asynchronous order management a good choice for many B2C scenarios; however, it can also support...
“lightweight” B2B scenarios, as well. In synchronous order management, the order processes and data all reside in the SAP ERP backend. This option is designed for use in B2B scenarios, safeguarding heavy investments, such as implementation of complex pricing, availability information, and credit limit checks, that are not meant to be replicated to hybris Commerce Suite.

11: Can you shed light on how you could handle 3rd party connections (e.g. connecting to Amazon) through hybris?

The hybris platform provides numerous different ways to connect to third party providers either inbound or outbound. After the release of the hybris Data Hub, connections between third party systems and hybris has become smoother, especially if they are file based. Instead of having to come to a similar file structure, hybris can now ingest any file structure through the Data Hub, map it into the format needed by the hybris Commerce Platform, and then import the data.

For service based integrations with third-parties, hybris provides a robust framework of web service APIs to consume services whether they are SOAP or RESTful. For third-party systems that may want to connect to hybris to pull data out, the hybris Web Service API provides a full layer of RESTful services that can be accessed by third parties exposing core hybris data like products, customers, and orders, if necessary.

12: Can you talk about the Configure, Price and Quote (CPQ) solution in hybris?
I’m interested in learning if we can connect VC to ECC with hybris.

The SAP CPQ for Product Configuration Module provides you with the ability to manage and sell personalized and customizable products within hybris. CPQ is the next generation of the product formerly known as Internet Pricing & Configuration (IPC).

CPQ for Product Configuration offers an improved sales configuration solution that enables sales teams, customers, and channel partners to configure, price, and order products accurately and efficiently. Leveraging the hybris platform, sales and marketing teams can manage for the rich and proper display of options and values, with high flexibility, UI customization, and extension.

13: What is the integration layer between SAP and hybris? Is SAP Process Integration (PI) needed to integrate the two?

No, PI is not needed. Standard integration is setup via the hybris DataHub. DataHub is the integration middleware delivered by hybris.

14: Does hybris work with SAP PI connector for integration to ECC?
SAP ECC is connected via SAP standard scenarios (outbound IDOCs and inbound RFC). PI is not needed.

15: Can the user (customer) upload their order using a .csv or excel file?

Yes. Gorilla has implemented a solution to enable end users to import product and quantity that populates the shopping cart and expedites the ordering process (including error messaging when an unknown product id is uploaded). To make this most effective, there does need to be a standard format that all users follow, but the website can guide users towards meeting this requirement.

16: Does hybris capture user search requests/results, navigation, and actions? Can it deliver analytics or reporting?

The hybris platform comes with its own event system allowing developers to create and receive events within the hybris Commerce suite. These events can be published either locally or across nodes in a clustered environment. The hybris event system allows developers to create events for any interaction within the platform whether it is performed by a customer, i.e. a web click, or by a business process, i.e. publishing data from the staging to online catalog.

Once the events are fired, many actions can be taken from them but one of the most common is to save that event for future usage within a company’s reporting infrastructure. A company’s business intelligence team can then perform the necessary data manipulations to generate reports and analytics used to create new and exciting experiences for customers on the hybris platform.

If a business intelligence system is not within a company’s current architecture, many third-party systems have built integrations into the hybris event system to provide insights into customer browsing and purchasing history, like Jirafe Analytics.

17: Any discussion of hybris taking advantage of HANA?

Hybris on HANA is already supported. As of hybris 5.1, SAP HANA is listed as a supported database.

18: Will hybris remain available as a stand-alone commerce solution?

Yes, hybris will continue to be offered to the market as a standalone product suite. There will be no forced dependencies on SAP’s existing ERP and CRM product lines, which will ensure that hybris continues to be an attractive choice for customers regardless of their current flavor of ERP or CRM back-office.
19: What is SAP’s official stance on the Web Channel Experience Management (WCEM) solution?
After the acquisition of hybris by SAP, WCEM was taken off the price list mid-January 2014 and is no longer available. The hybris Commerce Platform is SAP’s strategic way forward. If you currently have a WCEM license please note that support ends on December 31, 2020.

20: Does Hybris work with SAP Business One econnect API?

Hybris does not currently work with SAP Business One econnect API.

21: Are there other options for a packaged B2B/B2C solution from SAP?

The hybris Commerce Platform is SAP’s strategic way forward, and is the only option for a packaged B2B/B2C commerce solution from SAP.

22: How is Gorilla Catalyst different than the hybris Accelerator?

When creating Catalyst, Gorilla leveraged the work that hybris put into their Accelerator as our starting point. It is expected that each update to the hybris Accelerator will be included in Catalyst’s portfolio to ensure you have the best of all pre-packaged development efforts.

The difference between hybris Accelerator and Gorilla Catalyst is an optimized User Experience and Creative Design, as well as additional key features that Gorilla has seen most frequently in our hybris implementations. These features include all standard pre-built integrations with SAP that are needed for an ecommerce implementation. Gorilla’s IP team continues to develop and modify Catalyst to ensure that it evolves alongside our clients, their needs and their customers. In addition to its code base, Catalyst includes Functional Specifications, Wireframes, Technical Specifications, and Test Cases that can be leveraged as starting points for all projects to lessen the time and budgetary investments needed for standard project artifacts.

23: Why have so many B2B organizations been slow to adopt the online channel for commerce?

This has mainly been due to the complex nature of B2B selling processes and the lack of technology platforms capable of supporting these complexities. However, driven by increasing customer demand for greater convenience and control of the purchasing process and the entrance of more sophisticated B2B commerce platforms, business-to-business organizations are increasingly extending and improving sales processes online.
**24: What is the cost and duration for a ‘typical’ hybris implementation/integration for a small to mid-size company?**

The size of the company doesn’t dictate the implementation time/cost. Instead, the main drivers will be the complexities, including business requirements, system requirements, integration points, number of sites, domestic vs. international, number of stakeholders for inclusion in discovery, how well the business and technical goals are realized, whether the development model will be only the system integrator or a co-development model with your organization, what training needs are, etc.

It’s important to note when analyzing costs that an implementation investment will drive revenue over time. SAP has long been recognized as an enterprise-caliber software provider that relies on the most proficient solution providers to deploy. While other business investments depreciate in value, a well-constructed and planned commerce implementation will deliver a positive ROI.

Using the Gorilla Catalyst with our predefined features, integrations, and wireframes we still recommend you plan on a timeline of at least 4-5 months (which includes discovery, development, creative design, end to end testing, user acceptance testing, and training activities), to account for creative considerations, business process changes, training, user acceptance testing, etc.

*For further clarification or to answer any additional questions you may have, please reach out to a representative at Gorilla Group, hybris, or itelligence.*

**Contact information:**
Gorilla Group: 1.888.601.2091; sales@gorillagroup.com
hybris: 1.888.342.9457; sales@hybris.com