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Power Platform Insights
November 2022

Microsoft Power Platform

Organizational Maturity

When it Comes to Leveraging Low-Code Solutions, Building Capability is Key

Power Platform Insights is a monthly roundup of information about what is new with the Microsoft Power Platform and what is happening with **Hitachi Solutions' Rapid Solution Development (RSD) Power Platform Tech Hub.**

Have any questions you would like us to answer in future newsletters?

Send them to **lgreszler@hitachisolutions.com**

As the calendar year draws to a close, it's a great time to assess, review, and plan your next steps — especially when it comes to digital transformation. This includes determining what's next for your enterprise and measuring how well you are actualizing and leveraging current investments.

DID YOU KNOW?

Companies investing in **low-code development platforms** have a lot in common. They all want to:

- Save time, money, and innovate faster

- Do more with limited staff and resources

- Empower business groups and departments to solve their own problems

- Reduce or eliminate "ninja" IT by arming employees with the tools they need to to build useful apps and automations

- Want to maintain central control over data and security and keep company assets safe

Low code can address each of these areas. But fully realizing the benefits requires low-code makers and pro-code developers who know what they are doing, clearly defined business processes and priorities, solid application lifecycle management (ALM), and guardrails in place to monitor and secure your applications and enforce compliance.

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These apps aren't going to build themselves. Power Platform isn't "set it and forget it." If your current landscape is a disorganized amalgamation of spreadsheets, databases, and paper documents, just giving your employees a new tool like the Power Platform doesn't guarantee better outcomes.

The first step is to assess your Power Platform maturity in several key areas. This will help baseline your makers, environment, and security readiness for Power Platform; identify strengths and weaknesses; and help you define a roadmap to achieve the desired outcomes.

Note that you don't need to be perfect in all areas, depending on what your goals are for the Power Platform. For example, the level of user experience (UX) is more important for business-critical apps that are used by many people compared to an app that is only used by one or two people. When assessing your maturity in each area, you should determine the target based on your company's goals and development policies.

That said, it is common for lower priority applications and automations to gain in urgency as more users adopt them, so your apps should be reassessed periodically to stay in sync with current usage patterns.

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SECTION 1: MAKER MATURITY

Evaluating your maker maturity

To create apps and automations, you need business people to build them. Called makers, they need to have availability in their schedules to develop. They also need to know how to develop and how to decide what tools, techniques, and patterns to follow when designing an app or automation.

To be most successful, makers should know how to write PowerFX formulas, use components and collections, as well as understand the techniques for making apps responsive online and off when dictated by the business requirement. Also, they should know a variety of data sources and when to use them so the apps they create are performant and scalable.

Are the screens and components in your apps and your flow steps named consistently? Are comments added to your formulas so other makers can support the app or automation when the developer of the application leaves your company?

Apps created should have no delegation issues or accessibility errors. Accessibility standards are very important to provide a usable and inclusive solution that can be used by everyone, including people with disabilities. Also, apps that are not accessible may open your company up to legal risk under laws like the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

Tools to help with assessing maker maturity include:

1. **Power Apps Studio:** Review apps that your makers have created

2. **Power Apps code review tool:** Evaluate the source code of a Power App msapp file and identify issues, including performance and accessibility

3. **Maker assessment tool (COE Starter Kit):** Configure questions that your makers answer to assess their maturity with developing apps

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SECTION 2: UX MATURITY

Do your makers follow standard design patterns so apps provide consistent and optimal usability? Do your application users love to use their Power Apps, or are they "functional but ugly?"

Do you have a style guide and standards for app colors, theming, shading, logo sizing and placement, and primary and secondary buttons? Or are your apps like the "wild west" where each one looks dramatically different?

For tips on UX with Power Apps, see Power Platform Insights: June 2022.
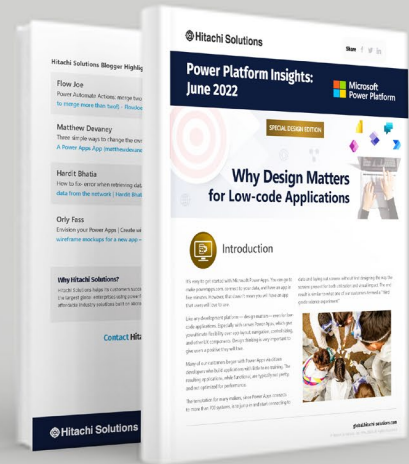
SECTION 3: ALM MATURITY

Power Platform makes it easy to start building applications, but with that convenience too many companies have poor or missing ALM processes. For example:

- An automation developer created a Power Automate flow in the default environment, then accidentally over-wrote the flow.

- Since the default environment does not have automatic backup, the changes were permanent, and the developer had to re-write the flow.

- Other developers have had the unfortunate experience of developing an application in a live production environment where any change disrupted the users, causing downtime to the company, and resulting in data loss.

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Are your makers using solutions for every app they build (or at least the most important apps)? Do your medium to high critical apps and flows have multiple environments so they can be tested and used in different environments without having to make changes directly in production?

Your development environment should not be your source code repository. Makers will be developing enhancements to applications and automations, and if you don't have the source code for these applications and automations you will run into issues. For example, some companies find themselves stuck when they are in a new development phase and need to address a bug in the current build. All business critical applications should leverage a source code repository (such as Azure DevOps or GitHub) to manage the source code and version control of your solution.

Tools to help with your ALM strategy include:

1. **ALM Accelerator:** This is the "easy button" for ALM and makes it simple to set up an Azure DevOps repository and pipelines for Power Platform

2. **Power Platform Build tools for Azure DevOps:** Provides common build and deployment tasks for Azure DevOps and Github for apps and flows built on the Microsoft Power Platform

Check out more about **RSD** here.

SECTION 4: MANAGEMENT MATURITY

As usage and adoption grows throughout your enterprise, it's paramount to develop and communicate an organizational strategy for supporting the platform. This includes general platform management and application-level support.

GENERAL PLATFORM MANAGEMENT

- Who is responsible for managing platform level updates and monitoring platform usage and alerts from Microsoft?
- Who is responsible for creating new environments and enforcing policies?
- Who is responsible for evaluating new connectors and updating data loss prevention (DLP) rules?

APPLICATION-LEVEL SUPPORT

- Who is responsible for fixing applications and automations when there are problems?
- Do you have a different support strategy for personal productivity applications and automations compared to more important applications and automations? Mission critical apps require more support and, if important business processes depend on them, require a short support SLA for when the application or automation goes down.
- Do you have consensus with related service support to remove blockers for low-code makers when there are connectivity issues with those services? Power Platform connects to hundreds of services and sometimes apps and automations need support from the administrators of those platforms to work. For example, Bob writes an app that reads and updates Microsoft Planner. The app starts returning errors because the service account's permission to Planner was removed. Do you have political support from the Teams and Planner administrator to respond to requests related to Power Platform apps and automations?

One Customer's Power Platform Maturity Journey

A manufacturing company with a problem-solving mindset and low-code solution ambitions began building apps and automations but were struggling to meet the cadence required to quickly modernize their legacy applications.

Hitachi Solutions partnered with them and began by evaluating the apps and automations their team built, paying attention to the user experience, data structure, and performance. In the process, we found several areas where the apps and automations could be improved for better business outcomes: for example, automations that were working but were not as efficient as they could be, or apps and automations that duplicated efforts — multiple groups building the same app or flow with the same process and outcome.

We then helped accelerate their team by working with them to make their apps and automations more performant, usable, and scalable.

We also assessed how they were managing the platform and their ALM strategy. We found they were developing apps and automation in the default environment, which was leading to several problems. Changes and updates could not be easily developed without disrupting active users. We helped them move to using solutions and setting up ALM pipelines in Azure DevOps.

The outcome is now their team maturity is much higher and they are able to be more effective, work faster, and develop more useful apps and automation. Hitachi Solutions continues to work with the customer for advisory and development assistance, but their internal resources are now more effective and able to build many apps and automations internally.

Why Hitachi Solutions?

Hitachi Solutions helps its customers successfully compete with the largest global enterprises using powerful, easy-to-use, and affordable industry solutions built on Microsoft cloud services.

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Contact Hitachi Solutions today to get started!

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