

4 Steps to Accelerate Enterprise Value with Low Code

*Your readiness guide for doing more
with less at scale*

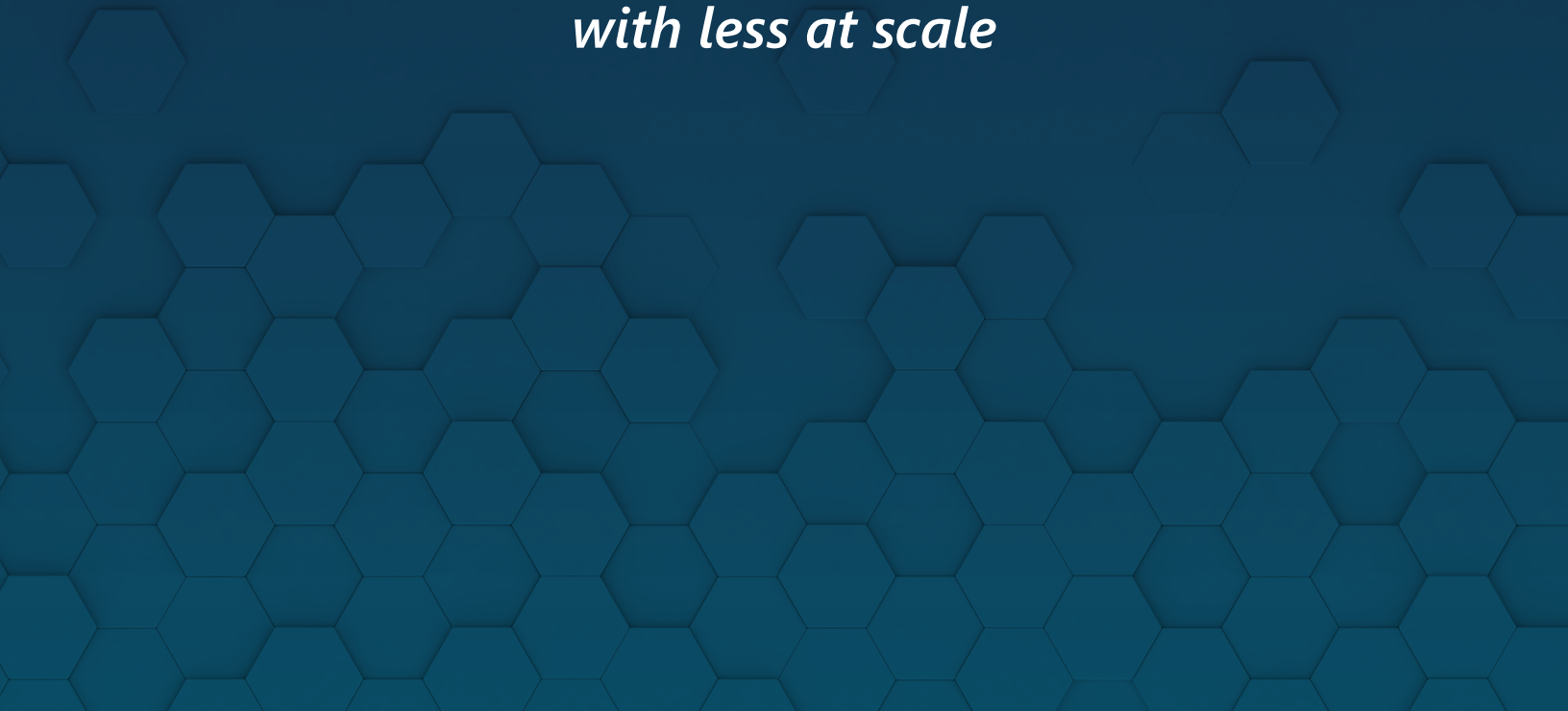


Table of Contents

03

Introduction

16

Next Steps

05

The Low-code Advantage

17

Why Hitachi Solutions

08

4 Models of Low-code Maturity



A year ago, Hitachi Solutions introduced the *Power Platform INSIGHTS* monthly newsletter. It's the ideal vehicle for our Rapid Solution Development (RSD) team to regularly communicate updates and all things Power Platform to our customers. To celebrate the first anniversary of *INSIGHTS*, we're taking a moment to reflect and review some of the guiding principles for building a solid foundation and accelerating low-code innovation.

Through the newsletter, we have been sharing our knowledge and expertise, something we really enjoy. We've also been engaging with customers, prospects, and colleagues and learning from them as well. **We've found that whether a customer is investing in Power Platform to modernize, save time or money, improve productivity, or increase access to data and insights, the one thing they have in common is they are looking to do more with less.**

It's no secret that economic times are tough, budgets tight, and resources limited. This has led to the rise in popularity of low code. Tools such as Power Platform can address all these areas and help companies cost-effectively innovate faster, ease IT burden, and empower employees to solve their own business problems.

We're seeing that many companies have already dabbled in low code — whether it is to let people create personal productivity apps and automations or if they are looking for digital transformation of mission-critical systems and processes. And the appeal of low code — and Power Platform — is undeniable.



According to Forrester's 2018-2022 The Total Economic Impact of Power Apps report, **"Power Platform solutions are leveraged to develop end-user solutions as much as 74%, faster than traditional application development with more than a 140% return on investment."**

So, yes, companies are definitely getting value from low code. But now what we're hearing loud and clear from our customers is "what's next?" How can they fully realize the benefits of low code, speed app innovation, and scale its value across the enterprise?

In a word, it's about maturity — of makers, environment, and goals. Assessing your readiness, understanding your capabilities, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and building a solid set of guardrails is the best way to take low code to the next level.

This eBook is meant to be a guide to help customers on their low-code journey determine what's next for the organization when it comes to leveraging Power Platform resources and investments. Based on the lessons we've learned from working with customers, it outlines a commonsense framework and helps establish a pattern of value for allowing you to actualize and optimize your outcomes and realize the full benefit of low code for your organization.

Low-code Innovation — Pattern of Value

- Accelerate professional development
- Accelerate application modernization
- Empower people across departments
- Hyperautomate the enterprise
- Maximize the value of existing investments
- Drive agility for core systems

The Low-code Advantage



Let's take a quick minute to review low-code development. In today's agile, fast-paced environment, resource-strapped IT departments can struggle to keep up with demand. This can cause slow delivery and lack of innovation, which can lead to frustration on the part of business leaders.

Citizen development is when companies empower business users to create data-driven and task-specific apps to support their digital transformation. Fueling this effort is the availability and popularity of low-code/no-code tools like Microsoft Power Platform, which make it quick and easy for non-technical employees to develop what they need without having to rely on IT or understand how to code.

These tools include familiar interfaces, visual editors, and reusable actions that users — called makers — can just drag-and-drop for rapid development and deployment. And since makers are most knowledgeable about their job workflows, they are able to build the solutions they need to streamline processes, automate tasks, and access the insights and data they need to work better, smarter, and faster.

Not only does low code give companies the speed they need to innovate, it allows them to squeeze more value and ROI from their technology investments. It also takes the pressure off IT, reducing

Microsoft Power Platform (Power Apps, Power Automate, Power BI, Power Virtual Agent, and Power Pages) is one of the most popular low-code platforms on the market. It is robust and agile, creating rich customer experiences without compromising security or compliance standards.

“
72%

of leaders in the IT world admit that project backlogs constitute a major setback in strategic projects.

”

— [ZDNet](#)

“

45%

of IT pros say they first adopted low-code platforms to make up for staff shortages.

”

— [Forrester Consulting](#)

Benefits include:

- Fast, simplified application development
- Organization-wide direct and indirect cost savings
- Streamlined data insights to actions
- Unified view and greater visibility
- Security, control, and risk mitigation
- Improved performance and time to value

According to this [Forrester Total Economic Impact](#) study on premium Power Platform, real-world results from enabling citizen developers include:

- **140%** return on investment
- **\$14.25M** in benefits from streamlined business and development
- **45%** decrease in application development costs
- **54%** of legacy applications retired



Barrie Police Service

Low-code mobile solution keeps officers in the field and the community safer

Barrie Police Service has been serving Ontario, Canada since 1853. Although the times have changed, its goal has remained the same — to provide accountable, responsive, and cost-efficient policing services to the community.

Barrie Police has always invested in innovative ways to improve their services, recognizing the value of technology. So, when their officer reporting solution became outdated, they wanted to replace it with a modern, mobile solution that would increase officer efficiency as they work on the road.

[Microsoft Power Apps](#) hit the mark. It's a low-code tool for fast and easy in-house application development. However, Barrie Police didn't have in-house expertise with the product and turned to Hitachi Solutions to help them create a scalable solution, train app makers and users, and establish security and governance.

Together, we designed and built MORA (Maria's Officer Reporting App) to automate, streamline, and digitize reporting functionality for Barrie Police officers. It allows them to efficiently log live reports from the field using mobile phones and car computers.

The MORA app saves Barrie Police officers hours on paperwork, increases their productivity on the road, and reduces report approval time. It also improves the quality of the department's data and reporting and provides valuable insights into incident trends and linkages.

"The Barrie Police Service recognizes the value of investing in technological solutions to create efficiencies. Our community is growing, and we need to balance fiscal responsibility with operational requirements. The Microsoft Power Platform allowed our Services to not only increase officer productivity, but it was also easy-to-use, and allows for more apps to be developed in the future." — Chief Kimberley Greenwood, Barrie Police Service

Read the [full case study](#) to get more details!



4 Models of Low-code Maturity

We know customers have been gravitating to low-code development. **A recent Microsoft study uncovered that 89% of CIOs and IT professionals say low code has been effective in increasing efficiency, 87% say it is effective in helping reduce costs, and 87% say it is helping modernize legacy applications.**

But as mentioned, what we are hearing from customers right now is a desire to extend the benefits of low-code enterprise-wide so they can do more with less. However, many have uncertainty around exactly how to do this while still ensuring quality, security, and connectivity.

Advancing adoption and cultivating a low-code culture is about more than just implementing new technology. Of course, technology can make the greatest impact, but a healthy low-code culture involves many considerations across the spectrum of people, processes, and technology.

Knowing where you are in the process is key to a successful low-code strategy. This is exactly why we always recommend measuring your Power Platform readiness in these key areas:



Governance Maturity



**Technology and
Application Maturity**



Maker Maturity



**Business Process
Maturity**

Through experience working with many customers in many different industries, we've developed maturity models for benchmarking low-code adoption. **Understanding the maturity model will help baseline your makers, environment, and security readiness and identify strengths and weaknesses.** It also helps you define a solid roadmap for building low-code capabilities, improving performance, and speeding time to value.



Governance Maturity

There's a cycle when it comes to low-code adoption. Someone tries it out to solve a business challenge — usually modernizing a manual process. Based on the success of this initial app or flow, more and more people begin to identify opportunities for improvement. It can get out of control pretty fast.

That's why there needs to be governance, early and often, when it comes to your low-code efforts. After all, Power Platform

is powerful, reaching into data wherever it is in the organization. Security and data loss prevention is a big concern. IT needs to establish best practices and rules to mitigate this risk.

Governance also unifies all the disparate groups you have building apps. Ensuring the spokes are connected is important, especially when you are a larger organization. If not, the environment can become chaotic — costing you time and money and putting the company's assets in potential jeopardy.

The governance maturity model looks like this:

Ad Hoc

- Early adopter
- No formal governance
- Independent low-code makers with little guidance
- Maker enablement is inconsistent



Basic

- Policies established with minimal oversight and enforcement
- Environment request and approval process established
- Not yet automated
- Lack of structure

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G2 research says 25% of organizations are scared that low-code applications could be open to threats and other security risks.

”

Standardize

- Dedicated roles and responsibilities for monitoring and enforcement
- Regular review and updates
- Some automated processes for approvals
- Center of Excellence established



Managed

- Mature governance with regular audits and continuous improvement initiatives
- Documented patterns and processes for makers
- Proactive monitoring and enforcement
- Enhanced maker enablement with super users empowered and actively supporting and mentoring other makers



Optimized

- Advance governance and framework with proactive risk management and full integration across the enterprise
- Policies, practices, and processes continuously reviewed and updated
- Fully development enablement community with dedicated support channels
- Super user network driving continuous innovation



Maker Maturity

Adopting modern technology with such broad applicability as the Power Platform can be a bit of a transition for any organization. **You can encourage its growth by providing the tools, training, and standards for business personnel — makers — who want to explore the functionality.** If you communicate your citizen developer/app maker strategy broadly and acknowledge early achievements, you can instill a culture of empowerment and start to realize efficiencies very quickly.

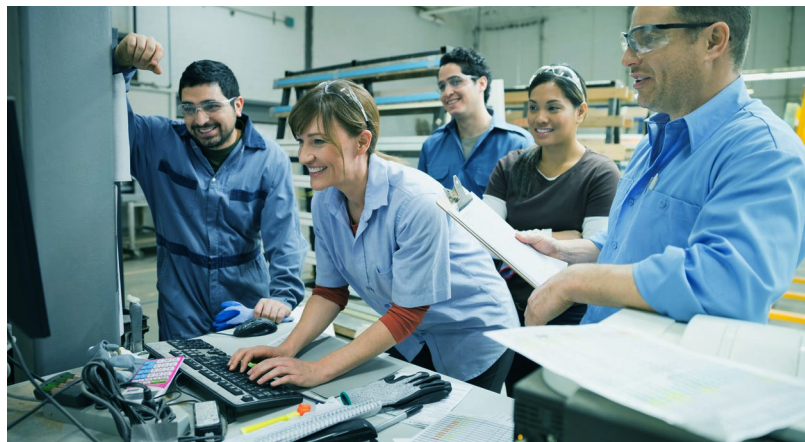
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By 2026, developers outside formal IT departments will account for at least 80% of the user base for low-code development tools.

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— [Gartner](#)

Building your first apps and flows is a huge first step. But it's important to remember it is a journey with many steps, and there is always more to learn. By challenging makers to learn new skills and document processes, they can continue to grow and excel in their maker role. By embracing the challenges and opportunities that come, your employees can become accomplished and highly effective Power Platform developers.



One Customer's Power Platform Maturity Journey

How we helped make their apps more performant, usable, and scalable

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, there were automations that were working but were not as efficient as they could be, there were apps and automations that duplicated efforts, and multiple groups were building the same app or flow with the same process and outcome.

We then supported their team by working with them to improve the user experience and make their apps and automations more performant and scalable.

We also assessed how they were managing the platform and their application lifecycle management (ALM) strategy. We found they were developing apps and automations 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 that now their team maturity is much higher, and they are able to be more effective, work faster, and develop more useful apps and automations. Hitachi Solutions continues to work with the customer for advisory and development assistance, but their internal resources are now more efficient and able to build many apps and automations internally.

The maker maturity model looks like this:





Technology and Application Maturity

Many companies struggle with legacy, monolithic systems that served them well for many years, but are now unstable due to patchwork design. These systems are costly to support; take a lot of precious IT resources to maintain, test, and deploy; and stifle innovation.

To unlock the full performance benefits of Power Platform, you need to modernize your legacy technology assets — cloud-based solutions that deliver quickly and iteratively. By modernizing, you provide a

solid foundation for unifying your data sources, fueling intelligent insights, and unleashing creativity.

“

91% of organizations say they need solutions that automate key processes for developers so they can do more with less.

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— [Computerworld](#)

The technology/application maturity model looks like this:

Initial

- Disparate and outdated technology with low integration
- Manual and paper processes
- Shadow IT, Excel, and Access used
- Outdated processes



Emerging

- Critical systems updated to modern technology, but legacy apps and technical debt exist
- Some integration and collaboration
- Efforts underway for modernization

Defined

- Standardized technology stack
- Focused on automation and process improvement
- Some low-code technology replacing outdated shadow IT with governance
- Replacing legacy technology with more efficient and secure solutions



Advanced

- Fully integrated application and technology ecosystem with seamless delivery and ongoing innovation
- Continuous improvement is key
- Low-code and traditional app development are coupled via APIs and connectors, enabling agility
- Outdated technology and uncontrolled practices are gone



Cutting edge

- Industry-leading application and technology practices in place with a focus on agility, scalability, and continuous improvement
- At the forefront of technology adoption, with successful user adoption and leveraging the latest advancements to drive innovation and maintain a competitive edge



Business Process Maturity

Low-code apps aren't going to build themselves. Power Platform isn't "set it and forget it." If your current business process landscape is an outdated and disorganized amalgamation of spreadsheets, paper documents, manual tasks, and siloed databases, just giving your employees a new tool like the Power Platform doesn't guarantee better outcomes.

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90% of employees feel burdened with repetitive and boring tasks that can be easily automated.

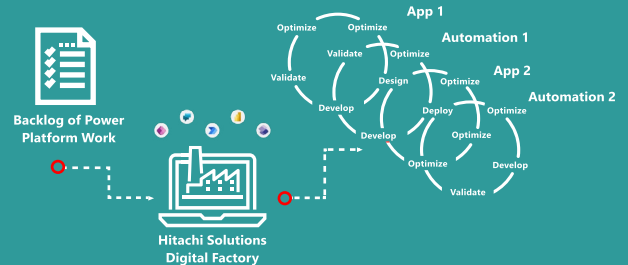
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— [Imaginovation](#)

The technology/application maturity model looks like this:

Ad hoc

- Informal, unstructured, inconsistent processes
- Employees rely on individual knowledge and experience



Digital Factory

Low-code at scale

Building low-code solutions at scale is not just about technology. It's also about repeatability. Establish the guardrails, set the artifacts, determine the processes to follow, then rinse and repeat. That's the winning recipe — design, test, deliver, repeat.

Hitachi Solutions has designed an offering, called [Digital Factory](#), specifically for this purpose. With Digital Factory, we assess your application needs, define a roadmap, and assign a custom team of experts and resources. This "power pod" works with you to rapidly prioritize and build your backlog, as well as help complete it — one app at a time, on your schedule and within your budget. The value of Digital Factory includes:

Innovate faster — Working through your backlog, our team can continually design apps and automations while your company tests our work, expediting the process from design to final delivery.

Greater synergy — Digital Factory provides a consistent team across multiple apps and automations. This leads to increased alignment between Hitachi Solutions and your team. It also eliminates ramp up time between app production, saving on costs as well as time to value.

Increased flexibility — Many Power Platform projects touch other technologies such as Azure, Office, SharePoint, Teams, custom dev, etc. With Digital Factory, you have access to all our expert resources across the entire Microsoft solution ecosystem. And we can supplement as needed without requiring a new contract.

More control — With Digital Factory, you maintain control of future billings. We provide full transparency to the backlog, and a resource manager regularly reviews upcoming work to ensure we maintain alignment and successfully deliver. You can increase or decrease the resource levels as your needs dictate.

Predictable cost — Digital Factory is an affordable and predictable cost option to boost Power Platform success.

Learn more through our complimentary [Power Platform Digital Factory Assessment Offer](#)

Repeatable

- Processes in place but documentation may be outdated
- Legacy technology slows down progress
- Improvements made by individual efforts



Defined

- Standardized processes with clear documentation and regular updates
- Process mining used to analyze and determine priorities for automation
- Established roadmap for future low-code solutions
- Proactive support



Optimized

- Hyper-automation embraced with advanced technology such as AI, ML, and RPA to achieve end-to-end automation and continuous improvement
- Highly efficient, agile, and adaptable processes enabling the enterprise to maintain an edge and drive innovation
- Hyper-automation plays a key role in integrating and orchestrating solutions for seamless integrations



Managed

- Automations active and prioritized
- Processes documented and automated
- Up-to-date and accurate information available
- Processes monitored, measured, and controlled
- Actively seeking ways to optimize through data-driven insights and targeted improvement initiatives

Next Steps



Our low-code maturity models present a series of strategic and tactical considerations and action items that allow you to think through the capabilities that matter most, improve on those capabilities, so you can progress to the next level. You don't have to be perfect in all areas, but understanding where you are helps you get a handle on your readiness — so you can really take the training wheels off and let people innovate faster.

Hitachi Solutions actually has a dedicated [tech hub of Power Platform experts](#). Their primary goal is to help our customers determine when they should and shouldn't use low-code development tools so they can confidently and cost-effectively solve their biggest business challenges.

The team of Power Platform experts and MVPs will collaborate with you to measure your low-code maturity and give you a clear vision of the areas you need to bolster. The goal of the program is to focus priorities, remove obstacles, and determine your best path forward — so you can confidently and successfully achieve all your low-code initiatives.

[Power Platform Discovery Offer](#)



Why Hitachi Solutions.

We know every organization is unique and requires a unique approach to optimize your resources and outcomes. This is why it is best to work with an experienced partner when planning or evolving your data and application platforms — whether you want to accelerate your low-code strategy through fusion development, or you just want to see what all the fuss is about and start experimenting with low code.

The right partner should have expertise in low code and pro code, as well as cloud infrastructure and enterprise information security. That way, they can advise you on your strategy and find the best approach for your needs, skills, and budget. There's no one-size-fits-all for this.

Hitachi Solutions is the partner you need for your low-code journey. As a strategic Microsoft partner for nearly 20 years, we bring deep industry, technology, and advisory expertise to create integrated solutions leveraging Microsoft Dynamics 365, Azure, Power Platform, Teams, and more.

We work closely with our customers to help them achieve Power Platform success. From building complex applications and automations to collaboratively up-skilling of makers to advisory services around platform governance, we meet you where you are and fast-track your success and user adoption of low-code tools.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Joel has been with Hitachi Solutions for 16 years, is a 14-time Microsoft MVP, and has become a sought-after expert on Microsoft Power Platform. When not helping customers solve their business challenges with low-code innovation, you can find him hosting webinars, speaking at industry events, and authoring articles and blogs.



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