boomi

How to Make the Most of Your SuccessFactors Integration With Boomi

Drawing on eight years of experience with Boomi and SuccessFactors integrations, Boomi's developer evangelist offers key tips and guidance.

By Dave Hock

SAP SuccessFactors customers can choose from a range of integration platform as a service (iPaaS) and middleware to connect SuccessFactors with best-of-breed applications. But none is better suited for building integrations with SuccessFactors than the Boomi Platform.

I say that based on my eight years of experience at SuccessFactors, where I led multiple integration and API initiatives at the company.

Now as Boomi's developer evangelist and principal technologist, my role is to help customers get the most from Boomi and its SuccessFactors integrations.

Five characteristics make Boomi the best integration platform for SuccessFactors integration:

- Ease of use
- Pure cloud-native, multi-tenancy architecture
- The SuccessFactors API connector for Boomi
- Rich third-party connectivity
- Low total cost of ownership

The end result is the fastest time to delivery, easiest maintenance, and lowest cost of ownership of any integration platform for SuccessFactors. That's critically important as streamlined HR processes empower an enterprise workforce with the SuccessFactors human capital management (HCM) platform.

In addition, Boomi offers the most comprehensive, powerful, and open integration platform for any

business looking to make major improvements in how it support the entire employee career cycle.

SuccessFactors includes modules for HR, payroll, recruiting, onboarding, performance management, learning and development, and related activities.

A robust, decade-old partnership between Boomi and SuccessFactors brings distinct advantages to SuccessFactors customers. More than 1,500 organizations rely on Boomi to integrate SuccessFactors with cloud and on-premises systems.

Boomi can easily support SuccessFactors integration with virtually any new cloud, legacy on-premises, or partner-run applications, including enterprise resource planning (ERP), identity management, benefits administration, time and attendance, and other systems.

In this executive brief, I offer key considerations for planning your SuccessFactors integration and making the most of your investment in this leading HCM platform. Let's get started!

1. EASE OF USE

One of the best tests for a development environment is how quickly you can develop a "Hello World" application. With Boomi, it takes minutes to configure an account, develop a simple integration, and deploy it to a cloud runtime. In contrast, new users can spend hours or even days setting up an environment with other integration tools.

No other integration development environment combines ease of use with the power to tackle complex integration problems like Boomi.

I'm an expert in HTML, but if I have to produce a document, I'll use a modern document editor. Likewise, I'm an expert in Java, but if I need to build an integration, I'm going to use Boomi — not a complex Java-based tool.

Many integration development environments are built on Eclipse, a 20-year-old, open-source development environment. Over the years, Eclipse has evolved into "bloatware" that requires users to slog through dozens of plug-ins and features that don't apply to their use cases. It's a good environment for Java development, and I still use it for that. But Eclipse is much harder to use than Boomi.

One challenge I call "plug-in hell." If you recall the experiences of "DLL hell," it was difficult to run software on Microsoft Windows because of conflicting versions of dependent components (dynamic link libraries, or DLLs). I've had the same experience installing and manually updating vendor plug-ins for integration.

In contrast, since Boomi's development environment is pure cloud, you're always working with the latest tooling from rolling updates.

This eliminates the potential for a developer to corrupt a project by using an old version of the development environment. Boomi's cloud-native architecture also makes possible valuable features such as Boomi Suggest, Assure, and Resolve, which tap into the collective intelligence of our user base.

With 30 terabytes of anonymous metadata, we can discern the best practices for almost any integration. Our users benefit from that with speedier

development and smarter integrations.

Boomi also has easy-to-use, built-in version control. Other environments require complex, third-party version control tools such as GitHub.

Yes, these environments can be more powerful than Boomi's built-in solution, but they're very difficult to use and often poorly integrated with the development environment. I find Boomi's built-in version capabilities extremely easy to use, perfectly integrated, and suited to the job.

Finally, Boomi's product suite includes API Management, Master Data Hub for data quality governance, and Flow for low-code development of desktop and mobile user interfaces.

The Boomi Platform provides economies of skill by providing the same development environment, across its portfolio of integration, data management and workflow automation services. You can even easily refactor an existing schedule-based integration into a fast, scalable API.

2. 100 PERCENT CLOUD-NATIVE MULTI-TENANCY

Boomi is the pioneer of cloud-native, low-code integration. Our platform is 100 percent cloud-native with true multi-tenancy. This provides many advantages, including:

- Zero-cost monthly software upgrades. These upgrades eliminate almost all maintenance overhead. Fully regression-tested, releases are dependably error-free. You can also test integrations in a sandbox environment for two weeks before deploying to production.

- Boomi Suggest is a "crowd-sourced" machine learning capability that exploits the intelligence

Boomi offers the most comprehensive, powerful, and open integration platform **for any business looking to make major improvements in how it supports the entire employee career cycle.**

of all the integrations in the Boomi Cloud. This makes it much faster and easier to build and map transformations by using highly accurate source and destination field mapping.

- Boomi Assure allows you to submit your process and test data to Boomi's suite of automated tests. This provides confidence that your processes will run with every release, as we monitor for regression prior to release.

3. THE SUCCESSFACTORS API CONNECTOR FOR BOOMI

One of the biggest advantages of the Boomi Platform is the SuccessFactors API connector for Boomi. This connector encapsulates eight years of experience following the evolution of the SuccessFactors APIs. It includes many features to help ensure processes that use the APIs are as reliable and easy to build as possible.

- **Retry capabilities.** Retry capabilities were added in 2015. The connector invokes a retry algorithm that holds back an increasing amount of time to retry transactions. In many cases, it can even re-establish a new session when a server goes down and continue from there.

  Yes, you can refactor processes to use Boomi's retry capabilities with the "try/catch" component, but retry was introduced in the connector to avoid that requirement. After introduction of retry, process errors decreased dramatically.

- **Optimized for SuccessFactors APIs.** The connector eases the complexity of using all API flavors: OData, Compound Employee, and the now deprecated SOAP and Ad hoc reports APIs. Ad hoc is complex because it's actually an asynchronous process that requires waiting for a report execution to complete. The connector makes that completely transparent.

OData has a powerful ability to join related data. The connector eases this with an intuitive graphical interface for constructing API transactions. The connector also has a checkbox to enable the recent OData "server pagination" feature that improves the performance and data integrity of long-running OData queries.

Since the SuccessFactors API connector for Boomi supports all API types with a single connector, it eases the task of migrating from deprecated APIs to OData and Compound Employee.

- **Updates delivered automatically.** Since Boomi is a 100 percent cloud-native product with true multi-tenancy, connector updates can be pushed out automatically. A SuccessFactors administrator can use Boomi's graphical console to deploy an update to thousands of Boomi Atoms and multiple clouds worldwide with only a few clicks.

  This means customers get the benefits of changes without manually upgrading, compiling, deploying, and retesting integrations. Also, the connector framework allows fast rollback for the remote possibility that a release causes problems. In just a few clicks, the previous version can be pushed out worldwide with no need for customer intervention.

4. RICH THIRD-PARTY CONNECTIVITY

As with all HCM systems, SuccessFactors must connect to other enterprise software, including ERP, customer relationship management (CRM), payroll, benefits, and so forth.

Boomi offers a huge selection of product-specific connectors. This is partially due to the ease of use and the power of Boomi's connector software development kit (SDK). I once created a connector for an email marketing product in just three days.

Even more important, Boomi doesn't produce CRM, ERP or other business applications, so we're not competing with enterprise application vendors.

Instead, Boomi works with software vendors to produce a rich set of integration offerings. I compare this to the neutrality of Switzerland: All vendors are happy to work with us as we expand our connector offerings.

5. ACHIEVING LOW COST OF OWNERSHIP

As explained so far, Boomi offers many features that help achieve high reliability and low cost of ownership.

But a lack of training can drive up cost of ownership across complex integrations. Even though Boomi is very easy to use, the power and flexibility of the platform can be poorly applied. Good integration fundamentals are always essential.

Above all, make sure all your developers are Certified Boomi Professional Developers. There's no reason not to. Training is free at https://boomi.com/services/training/.

If you're working with a system integrator, ask to see the Boomi certifications for each team member. Boomi training includes an excellent "best practices" module that all developers should master.

TWO TIPS FOR GOING LIVE QUICKLY

Process reviews and refactoring can help ensure that a Boomi implementation goes live quickly, with easy implementation and faster results.

Conduct Process Reviews Before Going Live

Lack of governance is a recipe for failure that can lead to poor reliability of your integrations and drive up total cost of ownership. If you use an internal development team, insist on peer reviews to strengthen governance. If you rely on external consultants, insist on a walk-through of the processes.

Internal analysts who help produce specifications are the ideal audience for these process reviews. Boomi processes are visual, so if you can follow a flow chart, you can follow a Boomi orchestration.

To ensure your processes are easy to maintain, make sure:

- Your integration flows are clean. Beware of creating incomprehensible "spaghetti" processes that are a tangle of connected shapes.
- Your processes and sub-processes are intuitive and well-organized.
- The steps of a process are properly labeled to indicate what function they provide. For example, instead of the default name "data process," describe what the step does such as "decrypt file" or "combine documents."
- Comprehensive descriptions show up on the top of each process. Include "notes" on the canvas to explain more complex steps.

Scripting is another factor that can introduce unnecessary complexity into processes and slow implementation.

Boomi can augment processes with programming scripts, but developers should avoid extensive scripting.

Consultants who are experts in scripting but new to Boomi often resort to writing a lot of code vs. learning the "Boomi way" to develop a graphical, easy-to-maintain process. This always results in disaster.

For example, a representative from a large customer told me how happy they were with their integration partner but complained about problems with Boomi. I did a review of the processes and found that the partner had written scripts as long as 2,000 lines!

Even worse, the scripts were not set up for reuse. Instead, developers had copied and pasted script code all over the processes, yielding a poorly performing and buggy implementation impossible to maintain.

Encourage Refactoring When Requirements Change

Ideally, all business requirements should be known upfront so that a good design can be completed before implementation begins. But it doesn't always happen that way.

If requirements change during development, often developers slap in the modifications without changing the design.

This is not the path to take in almost all instances. You need to adjust your architecture and plans comprehensively. But luckily Boomi makes this quite easy and fast.

A FINAL THOUGHT: BOOMI IS FUN TO USE!

In my eight years of experience with Boomi at SuccessFactors, I found Boomi to be the best tool for making the most of SuccessFactors' vast potential to improve business processes and the employee experience.

Boomi provides a unified platform that makes integration quick and easy, helping combine more systems for full visibility into the employee career cycle.

Many developers are stuck on using more complex tools that lower productivity. It's important to realize that if you deliver functionality faster, you have more time to take on even bigger transformational projects with SuccessFactors.

About the Author

Dave Hock, a veteran of the software industry, is a developer evangelist/principal technologist at Boomi. Before joining Boomi in June 2019, Hock spent more than eight years at SuccessFactors, during which time he was awarded two patents, with two patents pending.

His roles included helping build the Boomi consultancy, developing the SuccessFactors–Boomi connector, leading the API engineering teams, and leading the development of Integration Center and Boomi integration packs.

If you're working with a system integrator, ask to see the Boomi certifications for each team member. Boomi training includes an excellent "best practices" module that all developers should master. **Training is free at boomi.com/services/training/**

Learn more about how Boomi's unified platform can help you connect everything.
boomi.com/platform

Speak with a
Boomi integration expert

View all customer stories at **Boomi.com/Customers**

boomi