SIMPLEFI

Seamless Planning with SAP Business Data Cloud

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INTRODUCTION

It's been about a year since SAP announced and started positioning Seamless Planning as a strategic planning initiative. Fundamentally it centers around the integration of SAP Analytics Cloud and Datasphere, with a roadmap that represents how other SAP solutions will include more datasphere integration. Over the past 9 months the seamless planning positioning has been strengthened with how it is part of a larger product and cloud licensing strategy based on Business Data Cloud (BDC). BDC represents a transformative technology and usage strategy designed to unify enterprise planning, analytics, and data management into a single, cohesive ecosystem.

At its core is still the integration of SAP Analytics Cloud (SAC) and SAP Datasphere. However, BDC has taken shape to show how organizations can use and navigate through an existing landscape that includes Business Warehouse (BW), Business Planning and Consolidations, Databricks, Artificial Intelligence, Insight Applications and newly announced Data Products.

As an SAP Planning and Analytics Partner SimpleFi has been part of the design and strategic roadmap of BDC. This white paper explores the core components of SAP's Business Data Cloud, including its integration with SAC and Datasphere, the role of artificial intelligence (AI), the introduction of Capacity Units, and the positioning of Insight Applications and Data Products within this ecosystem.

THE SEAMLESS PLANNING FOUNDATION

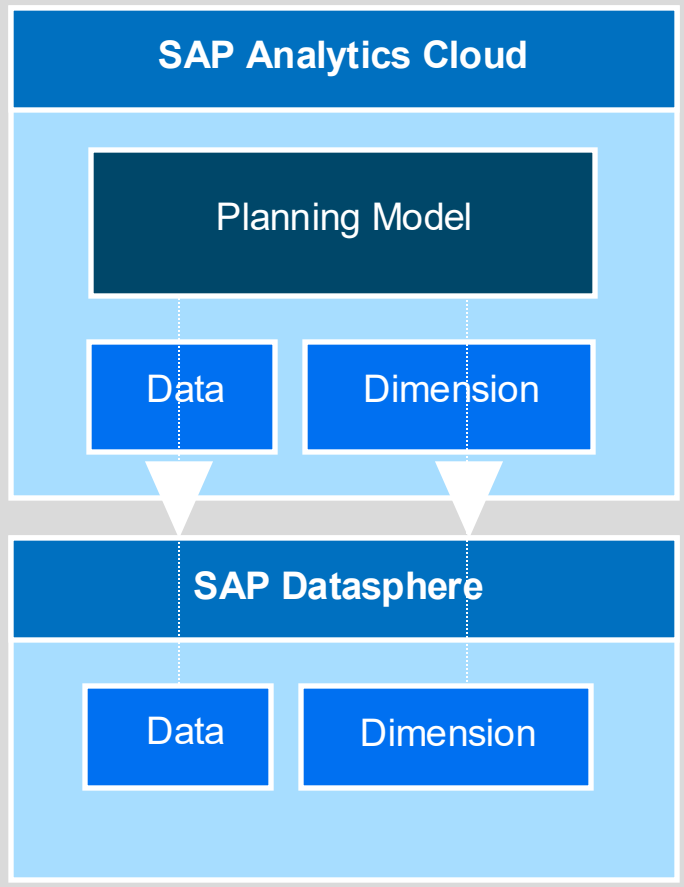
UNIFIED DATA AND ANALYTICS WITH SAP DATASPHERE AND SAC

At the core of Seamless Planning is the integration of SAP Datasphere with SAP Analytics Cloud. This integration sees its strategy based on several customer challenges. These include the continued struggle with siloed data combined with poor real time insights and reporting. In short organizations, even those with heavier technology investments have data trapped in separate systems or departments preventing organizations from gaining a holistic financial and operational view and hindering decision-making.

The integration between datasphere and SAC ensures seamless access to trusted business data, enabling organizations to make faster, more accurate decisions. Key benefits include:

- End-to-End Data Visibility: Unified access to structured and unstructured data across enterprise applications.
- Real-Time Insights: SAC's advanced analytics provide predictive capabilities and simulation-driven forecasting.
- Enterprise-Wide Connectivity: Connects to SAP and non-SAP sources, breaking down silos and enhancing collaboration.

By harmonizing data and analytics the core focus of Business Data Cloud empowers organizations to optimize planning with confidence.

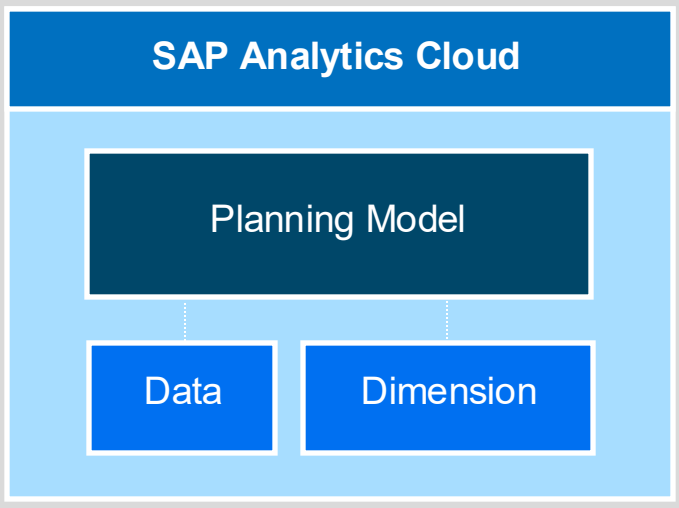


OPTION 1

Data Within Datasphere (new)

OPTION 2

Data Within SAP Analytics Cloud (traditional)



SAP has been clear that SAC will not force the use of Datasphere. As a standalone planning solution SAC will store all master and transactional data directly within SAC. In this context SAC serves as the planning and analytics tool within BDC, enabling organizations to perform real-time simulations and visualizations.

SAC is embedded with AI and predictive analytics. It leverages AI and machine learning (ML) for predictive forecasting, anomaly detection, and automated insights. With Natural Language Query (NLQ) users can also query data using conversational language, making insights accessible to non-technical users.

With the integration of Datasphere SAC users can begin to take advantage of features such as data lineage tracking, metadata management, and access control policies, organizations can maintain data integrity while complying with regulatory requirements.

The integration of SAP Analytics Cloud and SAP Datasphere provides organizations with a modern, scalable, and intelligent analytics platform. This architecture not only enhances real-time decision-making but also ensures data governance, security, and collaboration. By leveraging AI, live connectivity, and flexible modeling, businesses can unlock new levels of agility and innovation in their data strategy.

THE SEAMLESS PLANNING FOUNDATION

WHAT ABOUT BW AND BPC?

SAP has a rich set of on-premises business transformation tools that over the years has been the backbone of SAP's planning strategy. From BW to BPC, customers have used and built out their planning landscapes. SAP has included their customers investment in these solutions to be part of the future of Seamless Planning.

BDC is designed to seamlessly integrate with both existing and longer serving SAP planning and analytics solutions and new solutions ensuring a unified approach to data-driven decision making.

SAP BW and BPC will continue to be supported, but with the introduction of new BDC licensing arrangements, SAP has significantly simplified the process of transferring all or portions of BPC and BW licensing to BDC. This opens up various new use cases, allowing organizations to adopt more flexible, cost-effective, and cloud-oriented planning solutions."

BW AND BPC USE CASES UNDER BDC

1

Gradual Migration to BDC While Maintaining Existing Workflows

For companies heavily invested in SAP BPC and BW, the ability to transfer licenses to BDC provides a phased migration path. Instead of an abrupt transition, organizations can gradually shift selected planning and consolidation processes to BDC while continuing to use BPC for critical operations. This ensures business continuity and minimizes disruption while leveraging BDC's advanced cloud-based functionalities.

2

Hybrid Planning and Reporting Approach

Some organizations may find value in maintaining a hybrid environment, where SAP BPC continues to be used for on-premises financial planning and consolidation, while BDC is adopted for cloud-based analytics and extended planning. This approach allows companies to take advantage of BDC's enhanced scalability, AI-driven insights, and real-time connectivity with SAP Datasphere and SAC, all while keeping core BPC functionalities in place.

3

Cost Optimization and Licensing Efficiency

By reallocating existing BPC licenses to BDC, companies can optimize costs associated with their planning and analytics landscape. Instead of purchasing additional licenses for cloud-based analytics or extended planning solutions, organizations can strategically repurpose their BPC licensing towards BDC, thereby gaining access to SAP's modern data fabric and planning ecosystem without incurring additional expenses.

4

Enhanced Data Connectivity and Integration with SAP Datasphere

BDC's tight integration with SAP Datasphere allows organizations to unify financial and operational planning across multiple data sources. Companies using SAP BW for financial reporting and analytics can leverage BDC to create a more agile and interconnected planning environment. This enables real-time data access, cross-functional scenario modeling, and AI-driven forecasting, which are challenging to achieve in traditional BPC environments.

5

Advanced Financial and Operational Planning

The ability to transfer BPC licenses to BDC allows businesses to expand their planning use cases beyond finance. Organizations can integrate sales, HR, supply chain, and operational data into their planning models using BDC's extended planning and analysis (xP&A) capabilities. This holistic approach improves collaboration between departments and enables more accurate forecasting across the enterprise.

BW AND BPC USE CASES UNDER BDC CONTINUED

Futureproofing Against End-of-Life Concerns

6

Although BPC remains a supported product, organizations may eventually need to transition to modern cloud-based planning solutions. By leveraging BDC's licensing flexibility, companies can proactively prepare for the future by gradually adopting cloud technologies while continuing to operate their legacy BPC systems as needed. This ensures a smooth transition and protects existing investments in SAP planning technologies.

SAP's new BDC licensing arrangements introduce significant flexibility for businesses using SAP BPC and BW. Whether companies choose a full migration, a hybrid approach, or a phased adoption of cloud-based planning capabilities, these licensing options create opportunities for improved scalability, cost efficiency, and strategic alignment with modern analytics and planning trends. Organizations can now tailor their transition based on their specific needs while leveraging the best of both worlds—traditional BPC/BW capabilities and the advanced features of BDC.

DATABRICKS INTEGRATION

Recognizing the growing importance of big data analytics, SAP and Databricks have formed a strategic partnership to integrate SAP Datasphere with the Databricks Data Intelligence Platform. Companies using Datasphere and Databricks can further unify their data landscapes for enhanced analytics, AI, and decision-making. This collaboration bridges SAP's BDC strategy with Databricks.

The integration allows businesses to seamlessly access SAP data within Databricks' Lakehouse architecture without replication, ensuring data integrity and reducing complexity. Through SAP Datasphere's semantic layer, users can maintain business context while leveraging Databricks' powerful AI/ML tools for predictive analytics, real-time insights, and automation.

databricks

The Power of Integrating Databricks' Data Lakehouse Architecture

A key advantage of this partnership is its ability to enhance data governance and security. SAP's built-in compliance frameworks align with Databricks' robust security controls, enabling enterprises to meet regulatory requirements while democratizing data access. Additionally, the collaboration supports open data architectures, allowing interoperability with other cloud environments and third-party tools.

Industries such as finance, manufacturing, and retail benefit significantly from this integration, using AI-driven insights for supply chain optimization, customer personalization, and operational efficiency. The partnership also accelerates digital transformation by simplifying data engineering, reducing IT overhead, and fostering innovation with generative AI applications.

Overall, the SAP-Databricks relationship provides a scalable and intelligent data foundation that empowers organizations to become truly data-driven, unlocking new opportunities for growth, automation, and competitive advantage.

Key Features

- ❑ AI and Machine Learning Integration: Enables advanced data science applications within the SAP ecosystem.
- ❑ Lakehouse Architecture Support: Facilitates structured and unstructured data processing.
- ❑ Scalability and Performance: Handles vast amounts of data for deeper insights and analytics.

By bringing together these technologies, SAP Business Data Cloud ensures that organizations can maximize the value of their data, drive more intelligent planning processes, and support enterprise-wide collaboration.

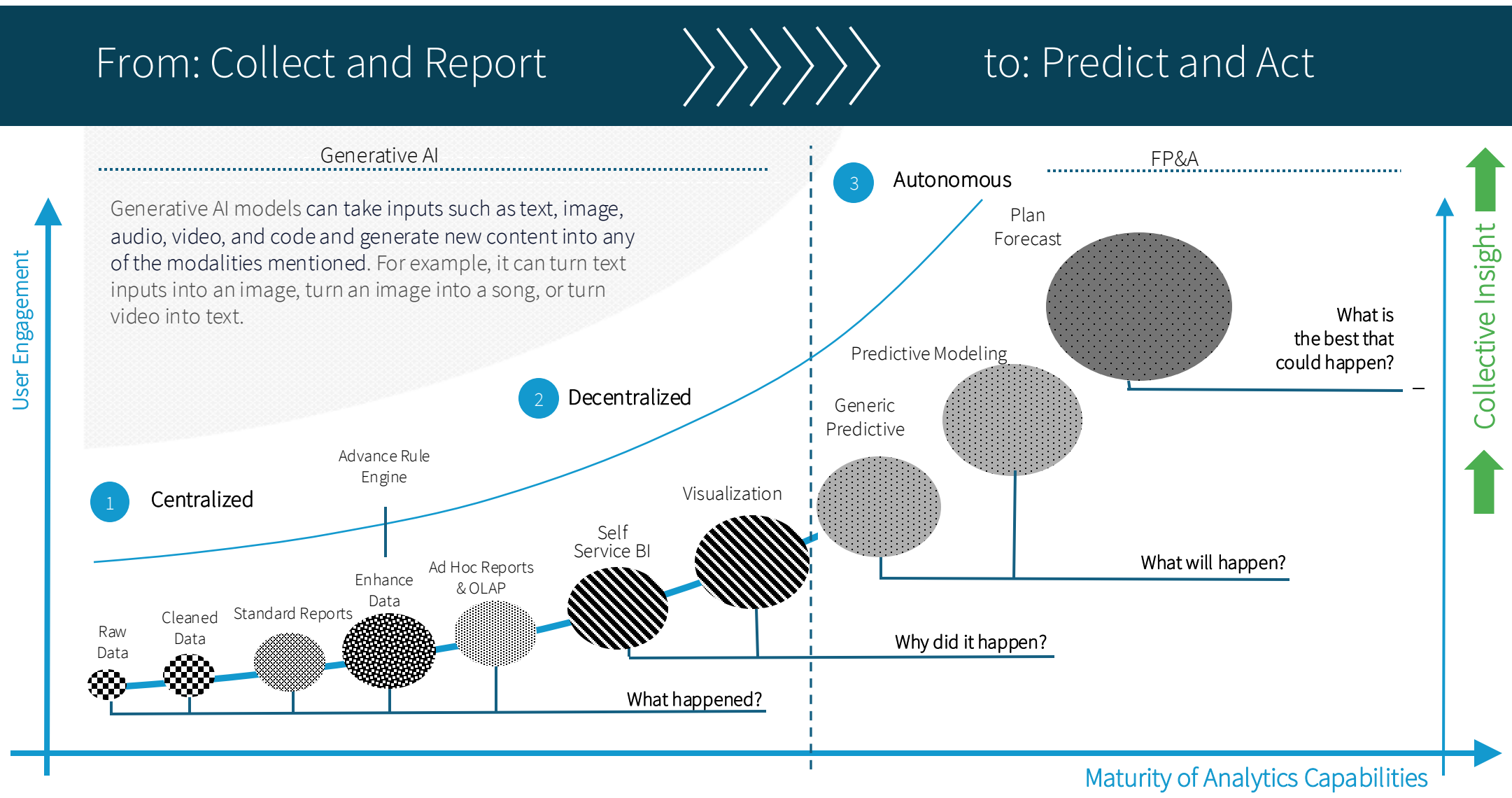
THE ROLE OF AI IN SAP BUSINESS DATA CLOUD

SAP's AI strategy is designed to move companies beyond traditional retrospective analytics, enabling them to shift from merely understanding what just happened to proactively shaping what could and should happen.

By integrating AI-driven insights directly into core business processes, SAP empowers organizations to anticipate trends, optimize decision-making, and drive innovation. At the heart of this strategy are three key components: Joule, the Joule Cockpit, and Just Ask.

Joule is SAP's generative AI copilot, embedded across SAP applications to provide intelligent recommendations, automate tasks, and surface contextual insights. It helps businesses move beyond static reports by delivering predictive and prescriptive analytics, allowing leaders to act before issues arise. A major advancement in SAP's AI strategy is the Joule Cockpit, a dedicated platform where companies can configure and manage AI-driven agents tailored to their unique needs. AI agents are specialized digital assistants that perform automated tasks, analyze real-time data, and trigger proactive responses.

From: Collect and Report >>>>>> to: Predict and Act



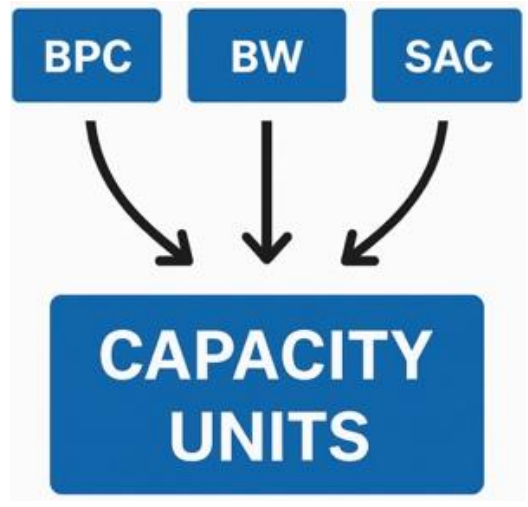
For example, in Finance, AI agents can monitor cash flow, predict revenue fluctuations, and recommend cost-saving measures. In HR, they can automate talent acquisition, suggest workforce optimization strategies, and enhance employee engagement through AI-driven coaching. In Sales Management, AI agents can analyze customer interactions, generate personalized sales strategies, and forecast demand.

Just Ask, on the other hand, simplifies user interactions with AI by enabling natural language queries within SAP systems. Instead of relying on complex dashboards or manual data analysis, users can simply ask questions and receive instant, AI-driven answers.

Together, Joule, the Joule Cockpit, and Just Ask transform enterprise intelligence by enhancing agility, reducing inefficiencies, and fostering proactive strategies. SAP's AI-powered approach ensures that businesses don't just react to the past but shape a smarter, more predictive future.

CAPACITY UNITS: A NEW APPROACH TO CONSUMPTION-BASED LICENSING

We've outlined a robust vision of how organizations can, and must, drive new opportunities and continue streamlining their ability to compete. But how do customers address the rollout and implementation of this plethora of on-premises and cloud-based solutions? Can I look to phase my approach?



The answer to these questions comes in with the introduction of Capacity Units. SAP Business Data Cloud offers a flexible, consumption-based licensing model, ensuring organizations pay only for the resources they use.

The introduction of capacity units is often aimed at solving problems related to scalability, pricing transparency, and resource allocation in cloud and enterprise software environments. Here are the key problems it addresses:

01 Simplifying Pricing Models
- Traditional pricing models based on individual resources (CPU, memory, storage, etc.) can be complex.
- Capacity units bundle these resources into a single metric, making it easier for customers to estimate costs.

02 Optimizing Resource Utilization
- Users may over-provision or under-provision resources when working with separate quotas for CPU, RAM, and storage.
- Capacity units allow for a more balanced and flexible allocation of resources based on actual usage.

03 Easing Scalability & Performance Management
- Instead of manually adjusting multiple resource parameters, capacity units enable auto-scaling based on demand.
- Helps businesses scale their applications without worrying about individual component limits.

04 Unifying Multi-Cloud & Hybrid Environments
- Different cloud providers have different ways of measuring resource consumption.
- Capacity units provide a standardized metric, simplifying multi-cloud deployment and billing.

Example*

A customer has BW, BPC, and SAC as the core tools to addresses their Financial Planning and Consolidations needs. Portions of BW, and BPC can be converted to Capacity Units and these units can then be used to implement a Proof of Concept using Datasphere to address some Data Quality Challenge.

By leveraging Capacity Units, enterprises can maximize the efficiency of their cloud investments while ensuring optimal performance for mission-critical applications.

**Footnote – Calculations on how BW, BPC, or SAC would be converted to Capacity Units have yet to be confirmed by SAP.*

DATA PRODUCTS AND INSIGHT APPLICATIONS: DRIVING BUSINESS INNOVATION

SAP Business Data Cloud also introduces the concept of Insight Applications and Data Products, designed to enhance business agility and innovation.

- Data Products provide the trusted, structured data that Insight Applications use.
- Insight Applications consume and analyze Data Products to generate business insights.
- SAP Datasphere is central to both, as it enables data governance, modeling, and accessibility.

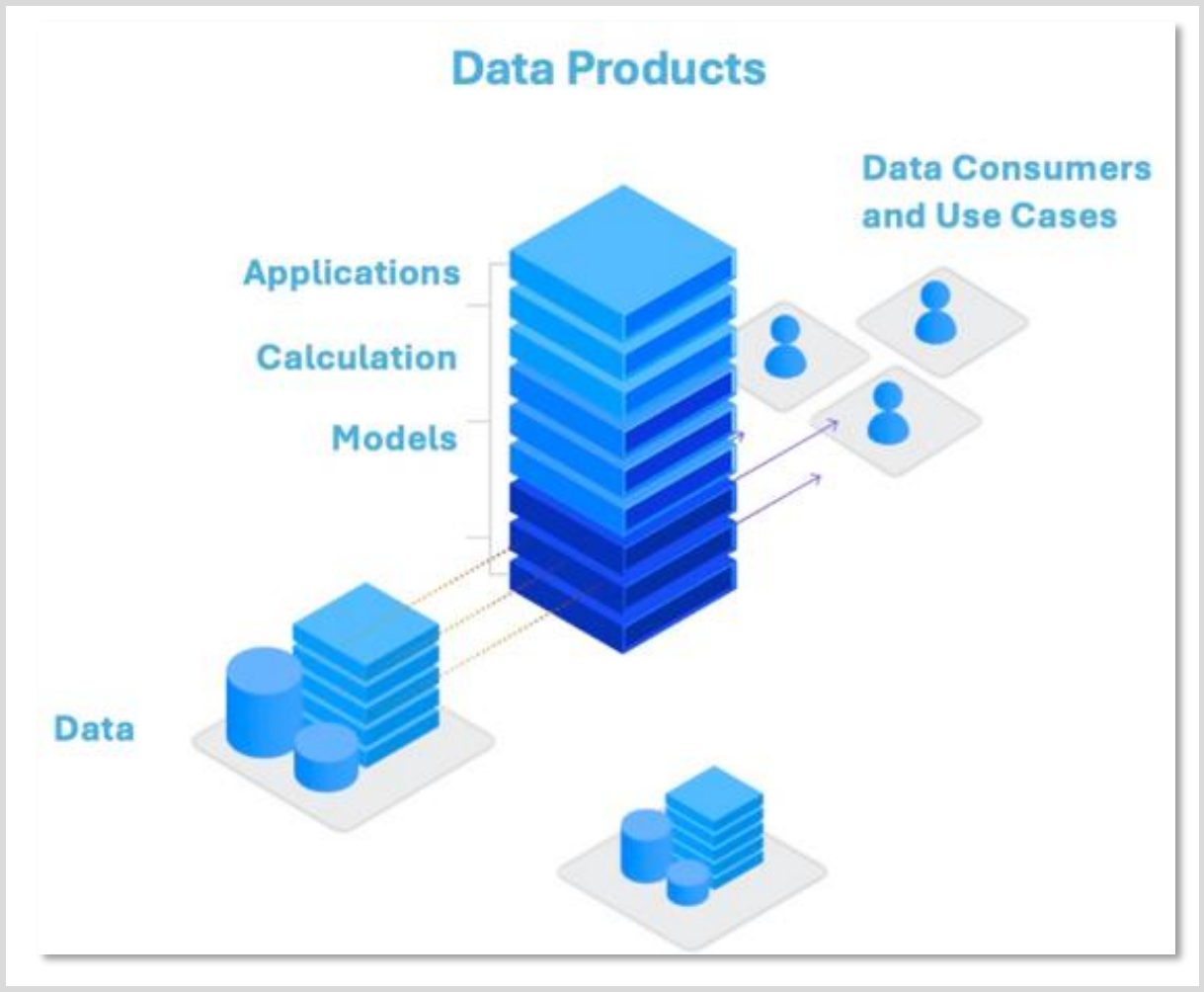
Think of Data Products as high-quality ingredients (clean, structured data) and Insight Applications as the finished dish (an analytics tool that makes the data actionable).

Data Products

SAP's data product approach aligns with the broader industry trend of treating data as a managed, reusable, and consumable asset. In the SAP ecosystem, data products are structured, governed, and delivered as reusable datasets or services to support analytics, AI, and business processes. In essence a Data Product becomes a collection of models, data, calculations, and tools that work together with applications to addresses specific use cases.

How Data Products will be delivered, maintained, and priced is still an unknown, at least to this writer, but it promises to be a new way to align data and products to address more specific requirements.

SAP applies the data product concept mainly in its SAP Datasphere and Data Fabric strategies. These focus on making enterprise data more accessible, trustworthy, and actionable across different systems and business units.



01 Data as a Product, Not Just Raw Storage
- Instead of treating data as a byproduct of applications, SAP structures it as a product with clear ownership, governance, and purpose.
- Example: A Financial Planning Data Product could integrate SAP S/4HANA and SAP Analytics Cloud (SAC) to provide a clean, governed dataset for FP&A teams.

02 Semantic Enrichment & Business Context
- SAP enhances raw data with metadata, business rules, and governance to make it meaningful for end users.
- Example: Instead of raw sales data, an SAP Sales Performance Data Product might include revenue breakdowns, quotas, and predictive insights.

03 Interoperability Across SAP & Non-SAP Systems
- SAP's data products can connect across different systems, including non-SAP sources.
- Example: A Supply Chain Data Product could combine SAP IBP (Integrated Business Planning) data with external supplier APIs.

04 Self-Service Consumption via SAP Datasphere
- Business users and data teams can discover, access, and use these data products through SAP Datasphere's marketplace-style interface.
- Example: An HR Analytics Data Product might allow HR teams to pull workforce insights from SuccessFactors without needing IT support.

05 Governance & Security Built-In
- Data products follow role-based access, compliance standards (GDPR, SOC2), and lineage tracking to ensure trust and security.

Aspect	*Data Products*	*Insight Applications*
Definition	Curated, reusable, and governed datasets designed for consumption across different use cases.	Data-driven applications that provide actionable insights through analytics, AI, and business logic.
Purpose	Standardize and structure data to be used by applications, analytics, and AI.	Enable real-time decision-making by analyzing and visualizing data.
Components	Data models, transformations, governance, and access controls.	Dashboards, reports, predictive models, and embedded analytics.
SAP Tools Used	SAP Datasphere, SAP Data Intelligence, SAP HANA	SAP Analytics Cloud (SAC), AI Core, SAP BTP
End Users	Data engineers, IT teams, and business analysts who need clean, structured data.	Business users, executives, and analysts who need insights for decision-making.
Example	A Customer Data Product that consolidates CRM and transaction data for marketing teams.	A Customer 360 Insight Application that provides real-time customer behavior analysis and recommendations.

Data Products and Insight Application Example

1. **Eliminates Data Silos** – Enables seamless data integration across SAP & non-SAP environments
2. **Empowers Business Users** – Provides self-service analytics without needing deep IT expertise
3. **Enhances Decision-Making** – Ensures real-time, governed data for AI and analytics
4. **Supports AI & Automation** – Provides structured, quality data to fuel AI/ML model

CONCLUSION

SAP's Business Data Cloud represents a groundbreaking shift in enterprise planning, integrating SAP Datasphere and SAP Analytics Cloud to provide seamless data connectivity, AI-driven intelligence, and a flexible consumption model through Capacity Units. By embedding Inside Applications and Data Products, organizations can drive greater agility, innovation, and efficiency in their planning processes.

As enterprises continue to navigate an increasingly complex business environment, SAP Business Data Cloud offers a robust, intelligent, and future-ready platform that transforms data into actionable insights, ensuring long-term success.

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