



Is a Digital Adoption Platform Right for Your Organization?

As companies endeavor to be more agile and responsive to a quickly changing environment, alternative approaches to upskilling are being developed to complement – or in some cases even to replace – traditional methods of training. The tools vary in the breadth of functionality offered but one thing they all aim to accomplish is faster learning to fuel faster productivity. The latest option, referred to as a digital adoption platform or DAP, shows special promise.

What is a "digital adoption platform" or DAP?

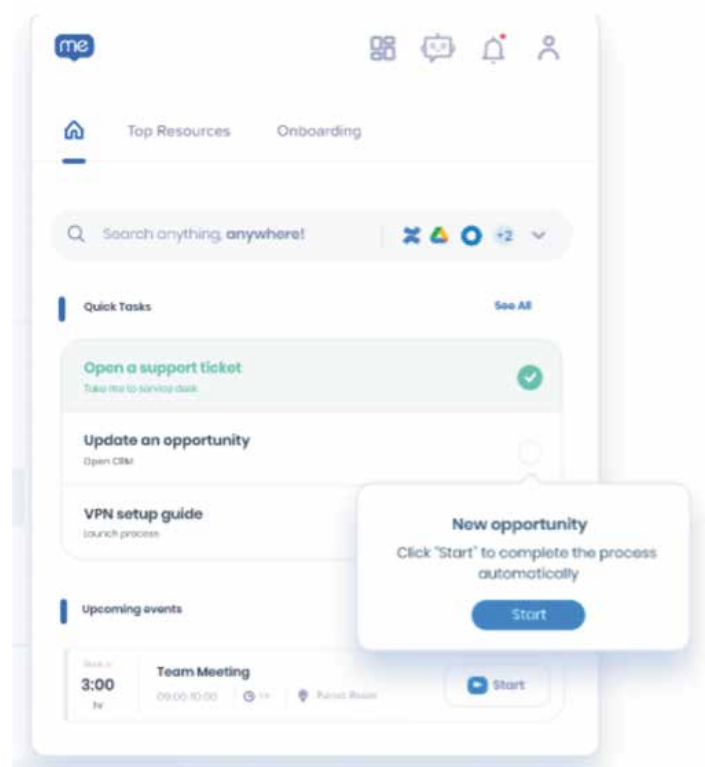
The power of this type of software is the potential to decrease the learning curve of adopting a new application. And indeed, this type of software is compelling for several key promises:

- Reduce the time and cost needed to develop training materials, perform “train the trainer,” and train end users
- Accelerate the speed at which users reach proficiency in the use of the new system or functionality
- By extension, reduce the costs involved related to Help Desk tickets and support

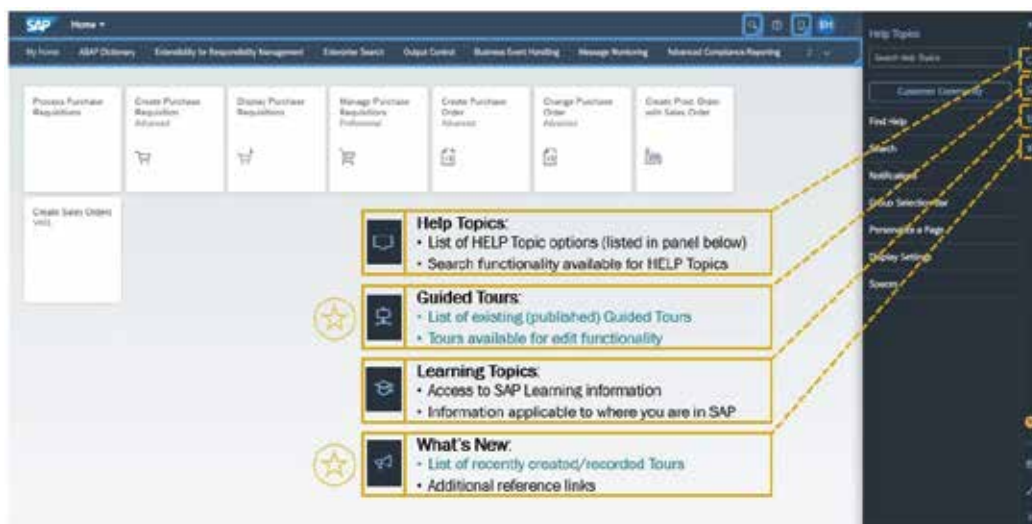
Because the DAP software is an "overlay" on top of the real system, the user remains in their workflow as they walk through the steps of their task. This is a significant benefit from the standpoint of learning. Rather than taking a student away from their workflow and outside of the system to demonstrate theory and increase knowledge through simulations, the user remains at the point of application as they learn or confirm previous learning.

What does this look like for an end user?

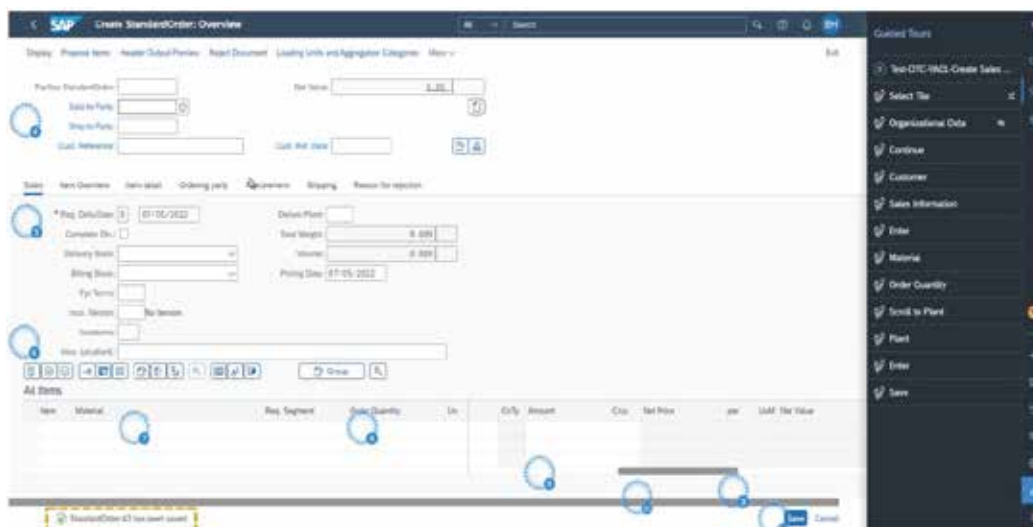
To the right, you'll see an example of step-by-step guidance from WalkMe, a DAP Vendor:



SAP also has its own product called [SAP Companion](#), which serves end users the same way. Users can tap into guided tours when executing a task for step-by-step guidance on what to click or enter.



In SAP Companion, hotspots are used as a visual signal to end users to indicate more information is available for that field or area of the window. In the below example, a circular hotspot is the visual cue.



The style might vary, but DAP vendors use various signals to indicate to the end user where to look for assistance, whether it be a deep reference material, a quick help video, or simply where to click to gain more information on the use of a particular area of the screen. And while this might sound like in-app help (anyone remember [Microsoft's Clippy?](#)), it's actually a bit more.

In the case of a DAP, a user embarks on a task and, with a simple click, can have the platform point out the steps, one by one, in the required or suggested sequence, along with tips on the best choices for entry or data selection, all while on task. In some cases, by design that's informed by end-user needs, guidance is triggered without the end user actively seeking help – landing on a certain page within the system can initiate step-by-step guidance to better target users who are unaware that help is readily available.

Also referred to as in-app learning as opposed to in-app help, the tool functions as "just in time" learning or performance support for reinforcing learning. This is especially useful if the formal training

occurred some length of time before the end user needed to use the new skills or techniques. While it's too soon to say if it makes sense to toss out your entire formal training program, the concept does lead one to ponder how much traditional training is needed after all if this type of performance support is available.

For new system implementations, the approach might be a bit different. Having folks jump into a system with zero preparation is a recipe for user frustration; therefore, some type of preliminary formal training would make sense. For enhancements or upgrades to an existing system, it's a wonderful way to inform end users of new functionality in addition to other forms of communication. You can see a variation of this with Microsoft's "Coming Soon" feature, which includes the ability to "Try it now."

Leveraging a DAP to Support an Organizational Change Management Effort

DAPs can be a useful enhancement to an overall organizational change management effort but cannot – yet – replace the stakeholder management that typically occurs long before training events. For example, if your system implementation involves changes in roles or responsibilities, especially those involving span of control, expect levels of resistance to arise if the end user only discovers this information when they are placed in front of the new live system.

However, in other areas, a DAP can be key to your overall change program. Companies can leverage DAPs to:

- ➔ Use as a communication vehicle and way-finding tool after traditional training has taken place.
- ➔ Leverage across multiple applications for consistency to reduce cognitive load.
- ➔ For DAPs that also provide analytics, use the behind-the-scenes data of where users struggle as feedback into continuous improvement and to update future communications and training.

Tips to Successfully Leverage Your DAP

Below, we outline a few more tips to ensure that you leverage your DAP successfully:

- Consider the impact of deployment on different browsers, user agents, and virtual desktops.
- Develop a governance procedure or process that includes management of intake and approval of the solution request or enhancements to ensure the correct stakeholders are aware of the changes.

- Recognize that testing and updates should be performed for all releases made by the platform service provider and should be conducted after internal releases as well.
- Ensure test accounts are available for the system to deliver to your DAP platform service provider to enable rapid responses to complex designs through the DAP's Help Desk.
- Pay extra attention to mass deployment – ensure you have mechanisms in place to automatically deploy to everyone's desktop. Users shouldn't have to do anything extra to view the content, such as adjust or enable settings.

One Last Thought

Keep in mind that the developer of the DAP interactions is overlaying another user experience on top of the user experience designed by the underlying application owner. A good deal of time, research, and effort goes into creating a pleasant user experience. The DAP developer is creating another layer that the user must navigate through, so the developer must be skillful in designing the features for the user to experience the DAP as simply part of the overall web page. DAP developers should be well versed in user experience design and avoid conflicting with the intent of the underlying application.

Key takeaways:

1. A DAP can be incredibly helpful as performance support for new implementations.
2. For enhancements in an application that already has the DAP rolled out, it can be leveraged as another vehicle for communicating to end users and highlighting new features in the system.
3. Don't toss out your blended learning approaches just yet. Rather, be open to how you can leverage a DAP to enhance your training program.
4. A DAP doesn't cover the other components of a comprehensive organizational change management approach, such as stakeholder engagement and leadership alignment, leveraging in-person communications, and the like – it's not a replacement for OCM. Yet.
5. DAPs are only applicable to systems-based implementations. Their strength is in assisting the users to execute their tasks in the system while not taking them outside their workflow. For changes that don't directly involve stakeholders needing to learn a new electronic system, the benefits aren't as obvious. For example, in a scenario where a significant change in strategic direction was the focus of the change and not a system implementation, a DAP would be hard-pressed to inform the stakeholders, explain the impacts to them, and explore the different ways they can be part of the new future state.

6. Be careful of using your DAP to publicize or promote information not in scope of the tasks at hand. Popping up a window about “New HR system coming soon” while a user is trying to create a Purchase Order in their ERP system is likely to annoy end users and be perceived as intrusive and irrelevant. Again, involve your experts in user experience design when developing components of your DAP.

A digital adoption platform is a strong choice to enhance the performance support area of the change management effort of any technology implementation across industries or functions. Choose and implement wisely to accelerate the speed of adoption of your next system implementation.

If you're looking to supplement your implementation initiatives, contact Clarkston to see if a DAP would be a good fit for your organization.

SAP Companion screen captures provided by Bill Hansen, OCM Manager at Clarkston Consulting.

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