



# Integration Competency Center

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Whitepaper

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The paper discusses challenges of establishing an ICC group in an organization. We give a brief account to the reasons, requirements and challenges.

## Introduction

With 20 years of experience in business process integration, Frends Technology has a unique understanding of the practical and conceptual aspects of Integration Competency Center - ICC.

### *What*

ICC can be defined as a management and co-ordination group for a set of related projects and activities that collectively share some similarities that lead to the development of key knowledge in a given business area. ICC provides the direction, control, optimization, consistency and long-term focus for these projects. Moreover, ICC is responsible with different aspects of the whole integration effort as outlined in this paper.

### *Why*

Typical problems encountered in integration projects are communication, redundant processes and in some cases, a total processes absence.

### *How*

ICC approaches those problems by first breaking down the solution delivery into manageable components i.e. projects, deployment package and change request and then setting-up review points with aim to enhance the performance. Meanwhile, ICC is actively and continuously monitoring the progress of the activities in those components.

A proper ICC staffing is of great importance. Depending on the size and organizational structure companies may or may not have the roles as defined in this paper. We at FREnds do think that the key thing for any given company is to establish the ICC Group to take responsibility over the integration efforts.

### *Benefits*

By coordinating projects under ICC with an overall vision of the desired results – a broader knowledge of the business is established. This provides a means for sharing and re-using of key components among projects. Therefore an organization should try to reach a situation whereby ICC is seen as a shared service.

ICC should not be confused with any kind of project or process models. ICC is a shared service intended for companies who wish to design, develop and maintain integration solutions in an integration platform serving more than one business unit or project.

As in any industry or other professional field, best practices are mandatory for successful development and maintenance of an integration solution. We at Frends have recognized the following processes as key best practices to be followed in daily ICC activities:

- Cyclic Deployment and detailed testing procedures
- Practically tested Disaster Recover
- Formal and active communication

The above mentioned best practices are described in detail in our [ICC Management Guide](#) document.

ICC's responsibility is to define these processes and choose the essential roles for running system integration.

**But why ICC**

In most organizations - big or small - there are four typical problems encountered in most integration efforts: Lack of communication, pace and quantum of change, redundant work and undefined processes.

Communication is most of the times the main problem, even when there are well defined processes in place. By communication we mean the parties which should be involved, the flow/direction of communication and the content of what is being communicated at a given time.

In integration changes occur constantly and sometimes in big amounts. The continuous changes may lead to integration projects management chaos.

Lack of overall picture of the end results of all integration projects as well as lack of total knowledge of what is happening in each individual project is a potential pitfall for work duplication and overlapping work efforts.

Redundant processes are typical in big organizations. Thicker processes leads to bureaucracy and bureaucracy can be a dent in doing business especially within an organization and with organization's partners. On the other hand, absence of proper processes for critical business activity might later develop into an absolute explosive situation if steps are not taken.

ICC prepares and equips you to deal with afore mentioned problems and their related side effects. ICC develop, facilitate, follow and enhance organization's processes with the aim to make them lighter (agile), efficient (non-wasteful) and relevant (non-bureaucratic). ICC involves all stakeholders such as business people and main users in the continuous process development.

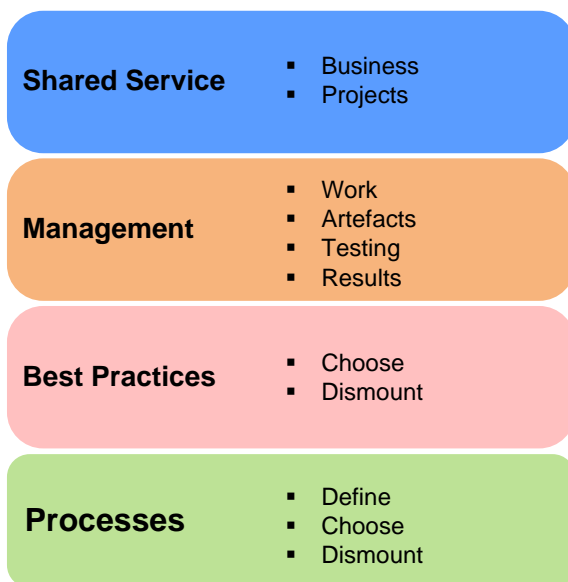


Figure 1

**ICC Benefits**

ICC provides the following key benefits:- **Quality** - through controlled processes executed by competent personnel (roles) using best practices, **Cost-savings** - through reusability, **Easier maintenance** - through reusability and quality and **Agility** - by keeping up with the increasing pace of changes.

**ICC Ecosystem**

Integration work always includes several parties. The most common setup is described in Figure 2 below. The figure illustrates the role of ICC - as a shared service that serves Business Units or Projects or both. ICC manages all communication and work assignments between internal business or projects and external System Suppliers, System Integrators and other parties who participate in integration. Managing acceptance and deployment testing and deployment itself is also a major responsibility of ICC.

**ICC Roles**

It must be pointed out that, the need and size of ICC group will vary with respect to the size of the company. For big companies, a full size ICC group is almost a must, whereas for smaller companies, the group can be sized down to one person.

That said, in smaller companies, where ICC is ran as a "one man band", there will certainly be benefits in subcontracting critical expertise to fill some of the crucial roles in the ICC group.

The most critical roles are ICC Manager, Functional Designer, Integration Architect and Business Information Specialist.

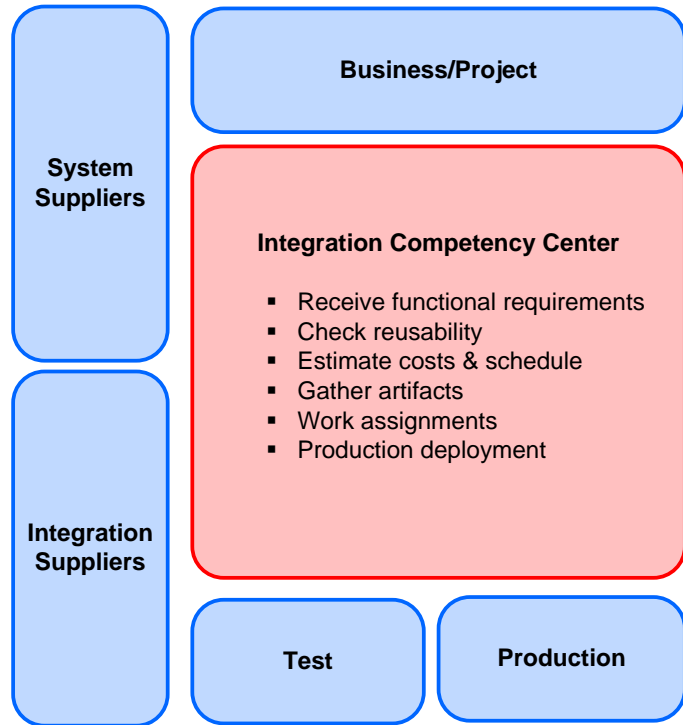


Figure 2

The **ICC Manager** has overall responsibility for planning and leading daily ICC work, whereas the **Functional Designer** acts as a link between the "business need" and the technical solution. He or she should analyze the "business need" and find the artefacts required by **Technical Designer**. The **Business Information Specialist** - is a representative of Business Unit or Project. He or she is responsible of identifying the need for integration and initializing the defining of requirement for ICC.

Other important roles - especially for big organizations - are ICC Director, Integration Architect, Security Architect, Technical Designer, Service Manager and Test Manager. For more details on ICC roles refer to our [ICC Management Guide](#).

**Delivery Models**

In contrast with software development projects, integration projects require a different approach in their development as well as deployment (*End-game i.e. delivery*). We have identified two possible delivery models. Those are **Artefacts Driven Model** and **Sprint Model**. The Artefacts Driven Model is meant for smaller projects, usually lasting 60 days maximum. The Sprint Model is for the project lasting more than 120 days.

## Summary

In this paper we briefly gave an account of the reasons, requirements and the challenges of establishing an ICC Organization. We went through the basic steps to establishing an ICC organization, defining and choosing the processes, communication procedures and systems.

Moreover, we laid out the ICC Ecosystem with its building blocks consisting of different roles. We described some of the roles and their responsibilities by applying our experience in numerous integration projects implementations. When developing a “shared service” such as ICC, it’s important that each role and the associated processes are precisely defined: in other words every member of the ICC group knows who is responsible and for what tasks.

Communication can be seen as the nerve center of ICC activities, therefore all business communication must be managed very closely by the ICC Group.

Any failure in communication will lead to mismatch between Customer’s expectation and ICC’s commitment and/or vice versa - which is a recipe for conflict.

Two FREnds delivery models were introduced - those are Artefacts Driven Model and Sprint Model. These models reflect our experience in integration projects

Testing and Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) should not be ignored by any integration project big or small. As we know, a small integration project will most likely grow big and even if it won’t, it will certainly need to be continually maintained; and if you want a smooth maintenance, then testing and cyclic deployment SOA are your best friends.

Best Practices can be achieved through crucial activities in FREnds development model. Those are Cyclic Deployment, Testing, Test-Driven Development, Artefact Review and SOA.