

# Migrating to Aras Innovator SaaS

## Painlessly adding value to your PLM Deployment

### Takeaways

CIMdata research shows that SaaS-based PLM is starting to transition from early adopters to early majority.

Business value is the key driver to get companies to migrate from on-premises implementations to cloud-based SaaS solutions.

Aras Innovator SaaS brings all the things Aras customers appreciate from Aras Innovator and adds new features and capabilities such as a full suite of native DevOps capabilities which is unique within the PLM market.

Aras subscribers are migrating with positive experiences and strong benefits.

### Introduction

Moving enterprise software to cloud-based SaaS has been a “thing” for more than a decade. PLM has been slow to get there according to some business measures and especially in comparison to consumer software and enterprise CRM solutions. CIMdata is starting to see formal reporting in earnings calls with some of the solution providers saying that cloud revenue and adoption are starting to become material.

Migrating on-premises solutions that are the backbone of industrial product development and realization to the cloud-based SaaS is a tough problem.<sup>1</sup> Extensive tailoring capabilities are required to manage the complex data and processes PLM supports. Without robust tailoring capabilities, data will end up back in spreadsheets and file shares. Cloud computing architectures are quite different from on-premises servers of old. Writing code from scratch works well for startups, but solution providers with installed bases need to be much more careful. Migrating feature-rich on-premises solutions to a cloud-native minimum viable product is not a path to high customer satisfaction ratings.

Fortunately, cloud infrastructure providers and the ecosystems associated with them have created technology and migration strategies that help on-premises solution providers rearchitect their products so they can leverage the important cloud features of easy access, redundancy, security, scalability, and simplified administration. All the mindshare leaders can run on-premises versions of their solutions in

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<sup>1</sup> Research for this paper was partially provided by Aras.

cloud-based virtual machines enabling companies to derive some cloud benefits and all have programs to migrate their flagship products to run natively in the cloud as SaaS products and are at various stages of rollout. Early adopters are having success with these SaaS versions, so adoption should start to accelerate.

## Downside of SaaS

The negative aspects of PLM SaaS are both real and perceived. CIMdata most often hears about data security as the biggest issue. We believe this is primarily a perceived risk especially when considering security holistically. The hyperscalers that host SaaS applications have robust security strategies that address software, data, infrastructure, and physical security. The SaaS application providers have best practices for their application. When a company manages its security on-premises it is only as good as budgets and staff skills can deliver.

Cost is a complex issue. Savings based on internal IT costs (data centers, personnel, etc.) only go down if those resources are eliminated. Just moving a single solution to SaaS may not have any measurable savings, especially in the short term. Offsetting the lack of cost savings are the benefits described above: simplification, accessibility, security, scalability, and redundancy.

As PLM mindshare leaders transition their solutions to SaaS, many impose stringent limitations on customization. CIMdata defines customization as software code changes that necessitate extensive testing and may require modifications for new version upgrades. The spectrum of limitations varies, from outright prohibition to detailed guidelines governing permissible customizations. Typically, legacy on-premises solutions must undergo a process of de-customization prior to their migration to cloud-based SaaS platforms. The degree of flexibility lost in this transition can be significant, depending on the specific solution. While adherence to out-of-the-box (OOTB) software simplifies the upgrade process, there are instances where customization is warranted—particularly when the advantages far exceed the associated costs, such as the ability to swiftly address a problem or seize an opportunity.

## Aras Innovator SaaS

Aras Innovator SaaS has the same capabilities as the on-premises version with improvements that leverage the cloud and provide native DevOps capabilities. An on-premises implementation can be migrated directly to the cloud-based SaaS version unmodified. From the end-user perspective there is no change in experience. This is important because it minimizes the time to value for subscribers who chose to migrate.

In addition to the on-premises capabilities, Aras Innovator SaaS includes the [Aras DevOps capability](#).<sup>2</sup> DevOps is an optional product for on-premises<sup>3</sup> implementations but is included with the SaaS version. It enables developers to leverage the same continuous integration/continuous deployment (CI/CD) pipeline that Aras uses. CI/CD pipelines are often built using best-of-breed tools and can require significant resources to keep them operational. Aras delivers it out-of-the box, enabling developers to streamline and improve quality of their configuration process. DevOps also includes test automation capabilities so developers can incorporate test scripts to automatically validate the low code configuration avoiding manual regression testing.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cimdata.com/en/resources/complimentary-reports-resAdditionalyearch/commentaries/item/21586-aras-devops-commentary>

<sup>3</sup> On-premises release only contains the continuous integration portion of the DevOps product

Additionally, Aras Innovator SaaS runs on Microsoft's Azure cloud infrastructure and fully leverages Azure DevOps and Telemetry simplifying administration and monitoring of the underlying cloud platform. While cloud vs. on-premises security can provoke heated discussions, for most companies, ensuring that the underlying operating system and infrastructure configurations are properly set up and maintained is an improvement and the physical security and threat monitoring will be more robust on Azure.

Migrating from on-premises to cloud-based SaaS takes time because there are activities required to ensure smooth migration and production options. Migrating an on-premises instance of Aras Innovator to Aras Innovator SaaS has a typical duration of 45 to 90 days. Aras has a certified, disciplined, traceable, repeatable, and proven process to do this which includes steps such as security review, implementation planning, infrastructure provisioning, and multiple testing stages before going live. To support go-live and production, migration services also include a formal onboarding process, experienced support personnel, and change management.

In addition to low code configurability, Aras still performs upgrades no matter how much configuration was done just like they have done for on-premises clients for more than two decades. This long history of upgrading all manner of customer data and tailorings gives Aras subscribers confidence in cloud upgrades. Having the data within the Aras cloud and employing the DevOps process makes upgrades easier, faster, and more reliable. It's a win-win for Aras and their subscribers.

Aras has been a Microsoft Gold Certified Independent Software Vendor (ISV) for many years and Aras Innovator SaaS is available in the Microsoft Azure marketplace. One of the benefits of the partnership is customers can incorporate their subscription costs into their Microsoft Azure Consumption Commitment (MACC). As companies migrate to Microsoft's Azure products such as Office 365, bundling services can improve discount levels.

## Customer Example

At the recent Aras ACE 2024 event, Mr. Rasool Norman, Enterprise Solution Lead and Product Owner, from Svante, a leading carbon capture and removal solution from Burnaby BC, Canada, delivered an overview of Svante's migration from on-premises to Aras Innovator SaaS. Mr. Norman confirmed Aras' claims about the ease of migrating Aras Innovator to the cloud. The migration was complex but only in the ways that all IT migration projects are. Svante had a good project plan and a successful migration. From the user perspective there was no difference between on-premises and cloud-based SaaS. Svante's public presentation is an important data point for companies not wanting to go first.

## Conclusion

SaaS is an important topic in PLM because there are tangible business benefits. Most solution providers are moving their products to SaaS and expect customers to eventually migrate. Early adopters and new customers are choosing cloud-based SaaS. Legacy on-premises customers are slow to migrate due to real and perceived risks and need to be confident that expected business value will be achieved.

Aras Innovator SaaS brings all the capabilities and benefits Aras customers have enjoyed from Aras Innovator and adds new features and capabilities that further streamlines the CI/CD process. A robust migration work plan, DevOps capability, proven upgrade process, and experienced support enable a smooth migration and robust operation after go-live. Aras customers that are considering a move to the cloud should contact Aras to develop their SaaS migration plan.

## About CIMdata

CIMdata, a global strategic management consulting firm, provides services designed to maximize an enterprise's ability to design, deliver, and support innovative products and services. For more than forty years, CIMdata has provided industrial organizations, providers of digital technologies and services, and investment firms with world-class insight, expertise, and best-practice methods on a broad set of product lifecycle management (PLM) topics and the digital transformation they enable. CIMdata also offers research, subscription services, publications, and education through certificate programs and international conferences. To learn more, visit [www.CIMdata.com](http://www.CIMdata.com) or email [info@CIMdata.com](mailto:info@CIMdata.com).