SOLUTION BUILDERS®

BOOK TWO
THE RISE SERIES

· I IS FOR INTEGRATED

BUILT

Why connected technology is the engine of the modern business, and how one designed environment turns a pile of tools into a seamless orchestra.

R RESILIENT
I INTEGRATED
S SECURE
E EVOLVING

RISE

· I IS FOR INTEGRATED

Integration is not plumbing. It is how a business moves as one.

Picture a hundred brilliant musicians, each playing a different song. That is the modern business technology stack. Old equipment next to new, servers next to SaaS, apps the staff downloaded that leadership has never heard of, and three different tools quietly doing the same job. Every piece works. Almost nothing works **together**.

Here is the part most people miss. The businesses pulling ahead right now are rarely the ones with the most technology. They are the ones whose technology, data, and applications are **integrated on purpose**, designed around the way the business actually wants to work, protected at every connection, and feeding one source of truth. That is exactly what the I in RISE stands for, and it is the difference between owning instruments and hearing music.

R	I	S	E
Resilient	**Integrated**	**Secure**	**Evolving**
Cloud, continuity, backup	Integrations, infrastructure, services	Cybersecurity	AI

WHAT YOU WILL TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK

Four chapters, one promise. By the last page you will understand how your technology environment became a patchwork, why the fix starts with your ideal workflow instead of another purchase, how data bridges turn scattered platforms into one source of truth, and what an intelligently integrated business actually feels like to run. Practical, visual, and built to be read, not skimmed.

INSIDE THIS BOOK

Four chapters, one connected business.

01 Killing Frankenstein

How thirty years of piecemeal upgrades stitched a monster together, from the first beige box network to a stack of apps nobody mapped, and why you cannot patch a design problem.

THE MONSTER TIMELINE · SHADOW IT · ANATOMY OF THE PATCHWORK

02 The Workflow Comes First

Flip the order. Start with the way the business wants to work, then design the technology environment around it, protected at every connection and built for the outcomes you actually want.

DESIGNING BACKWARDS · OLD WAY VS NEW WAY · ONE SEAMLESS ORCHESTRA

03 Data Bridges

Your most valuable data is stranded across a dozen platforms. Bridge every one of them into your main line of business system, one source of truth, and watch decisions get easier.

ONE SOURCE OF TRUTH · HUB AND SPOKE · FROM DATA TO DECISIONS

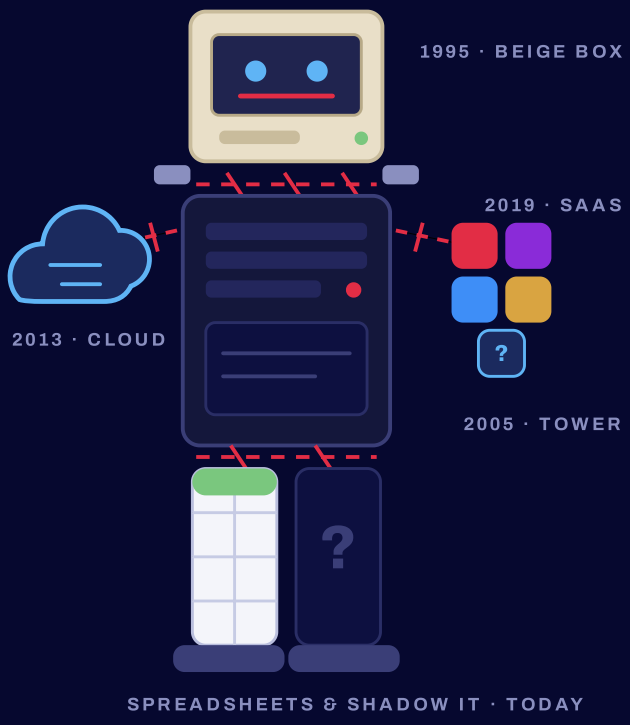
04 The Integrated Enterprise

The whole story in one place. The integration maturity ladder, the dividend a connected environment pays every single day, and exactly how your first ninety days should look.

THE MATURITY LADDER · THE INTEGRATION DIVIDEND · YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS

Read it straight through, or jump to the chapter that hurts.

Retyping data all day? Start with Chapter 3. Every new tool made things messier? Chapter 2. Want the origin story? Chapter 1. Every road leads to Chapter 4.



Killing Frankenstein.

Nobody set out to build a monster. It was assembled one sensible upgrade at a time, over thirty years, until the business was running on a creature nobody fully understands. This is how it happened, and why it matters now.

THE MONSTER, ASSEMBLED

130+

SaaS applications running inside the average company, most of them never mapped

BETTERCLOUD

28%

of business applications are actually integrated with each other. The rest work alone

MULESOFT CONNECTIVITY BENCHMARK

30 to 40%

of technology spending now happens outside the IT department, in the shadows

GARTNER

How the monster was made.

Rewind to the late nineties. A business owner hires a tech person to come in and install the company's very first network. A server in a closet, a row of beige machines, a printer everyone fights over. It feels like the future, and in a way it is.

Here is the detail everyone forgets. Technology back then was **very limited**. There were only so many things it could do. So the owner did the smart thing, the only thing, and **designed the company's processes around those limitations**. Orders got printed because the system could not send them. Data got rekeyed because the systems could not talk. Approvals moved on paper because there was nowhere else for them to go.

The limitations quietly became the process. The process quietly became the culture.

Then technology started improving, fast. And the business kept up the only way a busy business can, **piecemeal**. A new server here. Beige boxes swapped for black towers there. Email moved to the cloud one year, files half moved a few years later. Each team downloaded its own favorite apps. Every change was reasonable on its own, and every change stitched one more limb onto the creature.

Thirty years later the average company runs old equipment beside new, multiple applications doing the same job, and data scattered across dozens of SaaS platforms and web tools. Very little of it is integrated in any intelligent way. It all technically works. It just does not work **together**.

> **The processes were designed around the limits of 1998 technology. The limits are long gone. The processes remain.**
>
> THE FRANKENSTEIN PROBLEM, IN ONE SENTENCE

3×

Companies routinely pay for two or three tools that do the same job, because each one arrived solving a moment, not a strategy

SAAS PORTFOLIO AUDITS, ZYLO

53%

of paid SaaS licenses go unused in a typical month. The monster eats budget even while it sleeps

ZYLO SAAS MANAGEMENT INDEX

20 to 40%

of the value of a typical technology estate is technical debt, the accumulated cost of piecemeal decisions

MCKINSEY

Nobody is to blame. Everybody is paying for it.

Every stitch on Frankenstein was a rational decision made by a smart person solving that day's problem. That is exactly why the monster is so hard to see from the inside. It does not look like a monster. It looks like Tuesday.

Thirty years of stitches: a timeline.

Five eras, five layers of technology, one creature. Almost every established business will recognize itself somewhere on this spine.

1995

The Beige Era

LAYER 01

The first server, the first network, the first login. Technology can only do a few things, so the owner designs every process around what it **cannot** do. Those workarounds become the official way of working.

2005

The Black Tower Era

LAYER 02

Beige boxes become black towers. The server closet grows into a rack. Software gets installed machine by machine, license by license. New hardware, same old processes, first real maintenance burden.

2013

Half in the Cloud

LAYER 03

Email moves to the cloud. Some files follow, some stay on the server, and suddenly there are two of everything. The business now lives in two worlds at once, and the stitching between them is manual.

2019

The SaaS Explosion

LAYER 04

Every team swipes a card and downloads its own solution. Sales, marketing, finance, and operations each build a private stack. Critical data starts living in apps the organization is not even aware of.

2026

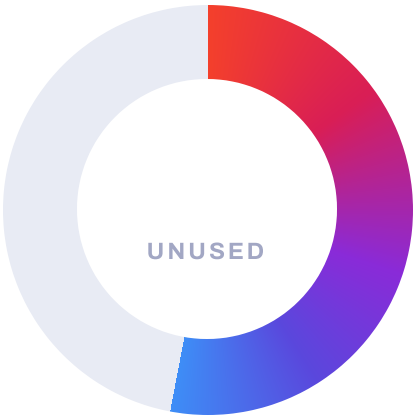
The Stitched Monster

TODAY

Old and new, side by side, held together by habits, exports, and hope. It all works. None of it works together. The good news: for the first time ever, the technology exists to design your way out.

Anatomy of the patchwork.

WHERE THE SOFTWARE BUDGET GOES



- **Licenses paid for, never used**
- Licenses in active use

In a typical month, more than half of paid SaaS seats sit idle. Multiply that across 130 apps and the monster's grocery bill comes into focus.

ZYLO SAAS MANAGEMENT INDEX

1,200

times per day the average worker toggles between apps and websites just to do one job

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

4 HRS/WK

lost per person simply reorienting after switching tools, roughly nine percent of the working year

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

You might be running a monster if...

- ✓ Someone on your team **retypes data** from one system into another every single week
- ✓ Two departments pay for **different tools that do the same thing**, and neither knows it
- ✓ Exactly **one person** knows how the invoicing spreadsheet actually connects to anything
- ✓ Monthly reports are **assembled by hand** from exports out of four different platforms
- ✓ Nobody in the building can produce a **complete list of every app** the company runs on

Every unmapped app is a door. Every manual handoff is a crack. The monster is not just expensive, it is exposed.

WHERE INTEGRATED MEETS SECURE

You cannot patch a design problem.

Frankenstein does not need another upgrade bolted on. He needs a blueprint. The next chapter is about drawing one, starting not with technology, but with the way your business actually wants to work.

The workflow comes first.

For thirty years, businesses shaped their processes around what technology could not do. That era is over. Today a great provider starts with your ideal workflow, your desired business outcomes, and designs the entire environment backwards from there.

40%+

of workers spend at least a quarter of their week on manual, repetitive tasks a designed environment would erase

SMARTSHEET

70%

of technology transformations fall short, usually because tools were bought before workflows were designed

MCKINSEY

1st

question that matters: not what should we buy, but how do we want to work

THE WORKFLOW FIRST PRINCIPLE

Design backwards from the outcome.

Here is the flip. Instead of asking what technology can do and bending the business around the answer, a modern MSP sits down with the owner and asks a better question: **in a perfect world, how would work flow through this company?** Then the technology environment gets designed around that answer, so it supports the desired workflow and reaches the desired business outcomes faster and more cost effectively.

	THE OLD WAY · TECHNOLOGY FIRST	THE NEW WAY · WORKFLOW FIRST
Starting point	Whatever the last tech person installed	The owner's ideal, desired workflow state
The question asked	"What can this system do?"	"How do we want work to move?"
How tools get chosen	One at a time, as pain shows up, by whoever feels it	As one designed environment, each piece chosen for how it connects
How processes form	Around the limitations of the tools	Around the outcomes of the business
The result	Frankenstein: it works, but nothing works together	An orchestra: every piece supporting the same performance

THE WORKFLOW FIRST DESIGN LOOP

01
Map the ideal workflow
Sit with leadership and chart how work **should** move, order to cash, lead to client, ticket to resolution.

›

02
Audit everything you run
Every app, every server, every subscription, every shadow tool, on one map for the first time ever.

›

03
Design the environment
Keep what serves the workflow, retire what does not, and choose every new piece for how it connects.

›

04
Integrate, secure, support
Bridge the data, protect every connection, and keep the whole environment managed as one.

Notice what step four is not. It is not the end. The loop keeps turning, because the business keeps evolving, and the environment is now designed to evolve with it instead of against it.

One seamless orchestra.

A hundred instruments do not make an orchestra. A conductor does. When the environment is designed as one, three things happen at once: **all your applications work together** instead of side by side, **all your data points talk to each other** instead of hiding in silos, and **the network stays protected** while it happens, because every connection was built with security in the blueprint, not bolted on after.

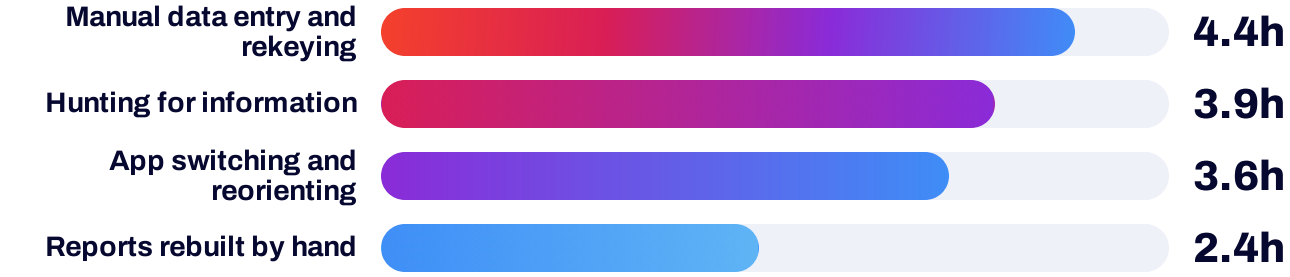
That last part deserves its own sentence. New technology and new integrations mean new doorways, and a doorway is only an asset if you control the lock. Workflow first design treats every bridge between systems as something to **secure on day one**, which is exactly where the I in RISE shakes hands with the S.

This is also where a managed service provider earns the word **partner**. An MSP that lives in this work brings the assessment, the roadmap, the professional services to build the bridges, and the ongoing management to keep the whole orchestra in tune, so the owner gets to think about the business instead of the wiring.

> **You stop buying instruments and start hearing music. That is the whole difference.**
>
> WORKFLOW FIRST, IN ONE LINE

WHERE THE HOURS COME BACK · TYPICAL WEEK, PER EMPLOYEE

ILLUSTRATIVE, BASED ON PUBLISHED TASK RESEARCH



Every one of these hours is a stitch on the monster. In a workflow first environment they are handled by the bridges between systems, which means **fourteen plus hours a week, per person**, walk back through the door.

Designed, integrated, protected, supported.

That is the full sentence. An environment designed around your workflow, integrated so every system talks, protected at every connection, and supported by one accountable partner. Next up: the bridges the data travels on.

Data bridges.

Your most valuable asset is scattered across a dozen platforms, and most of it never gets used. Data bridges link every one of those platforms into your main line of business system, one source of truth, where amazing things start to happen.

68%

of the data available to businesses never gets analyzed or used at all

SEAGATE · IDC RETHINK DATA

$12.9M

average yearly cost of poor data quality per organization, silos are a leading cause

GARTNER

30%

of the workday spent just hunting for information that already exists somewhere

IDC

One source of truth.

Right now, critical data is roaming around your business in specific applications where nobody can find it or use it when it matters. Customer history in one platform, invoices in another, support tickets in a third, project notes in a fourth, and the glue between them is somebody's memory.

A data bridge fixes that by linking each platform into your **main line of business application**, whether that is a CRM, an ERP, or whatever system your company treats as home base. Every tool keeps doing its job. The difference is that its data now flows home, so the whole business reads from **one source of truth**.

THE HUB AND SPOKE MODEL · EVERY PLATFORM BRIDGED HOME — ILLUSTRATIVE



Each gradient line is a bridge: a secured, automated connection that moves data home in both directions. No exports, no rekeying, no waiting on the one person who knows where the file lives.

0

exports, imports, or copy paste handoffs once a bridge is live. The data simply arrives

THE POINT OF A BRIDGE

2 WAY

flow. The hub learns from every spoke, and every spoke reads back the same clean truth

BIDIRECTIONAL SYNC

1

place to look for the answer, for everyone, from the front desk to the boardroom

ONE SOURCE OF TRUTH

From data to decisions.

Bridged data is not just tidier. It is the raw material for **business intelligence**. When all the data points talk to each other, BI dashboards stop being art projects and start answering real questions: which service line actually makes money, which customers are about to leave, which job types blow their estimates. Leaders stop making decisions on gut feel and start making them on evidence.

23×

more likely to acquire customers. Companies with a real data culture simply see opportunities first

MCKINSEY

19×

more likely to be profitable, because pricing, staffing, and spending run on evidence

MCKINSEY

6×

more likely to retain the customers they already have, the cheapest revenue there is

MCKINSEY

	STRANDED DATA	BRIDGED DATA
Where answers live	In seven apps and three people's heads	In one system everyone can see
Monthly reporting	Days of exports, formulas, and hope	A live dashboard, always current
The customer view	Fragments: a ticket here, an invoice there	One record showing the whole relationship
Forecasting	Last year plus a guess	Trends drawn from every data point you own
When someone leaves	Their knowledge walks out the door	The truth stays in the system
AI readiness	Nothing to feed it but fragments	Clean, connected fuel, ready for the E in RISE

When the data starts talking to itself, leaders stop guessing.

THE BI DIVIDEND

Bridges are built secure, or not at all.

Every bridge moves your most sensitive asset, so every bridge gets encryption, access controls, and monitoring from day one. Connected does not have to mean exposed. Designed right, it means the opposite.

The integrated enterprise.

The whole story, told once, start to finish. Where the monster came from, what replaces it, how to know where you stand today, and what the first ninety days of the climb actually look like.

One.

environment, designed on purpose, feeding one source of truth for the whole company

THE DESTINATION

4

stages on the integration maturity ladder, from Stitched all the way up to Orchestrated

THE MAP

90

days from first conversation to a working blueprint and the first bridges going live

THE FIRST CLIMB

From Frankenstein to orchestra, in five beats.

1
A business builds its processes around the **limits of old technology**, then upgrades piecemeal for thirty years.

2
The result is **Frankenstein**: 130 plus apps, duplicate tools, shadow IT, and data stranded everywhere.

3
The fix flips the order: map the **ideal workflow** first, then design the environment around it.

4
Data bridges link every platform into one source of truth, securely, and BI turns it into decisions.

5
The business runs as **one orchestra**, reaching its outcomes faster and more cost effectively.

THE INTEGRATION MATURITY LADDER · WHERE DOES YOUR BUSINESS STAND?

STAGE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	HOW DATA MOVES	WHAT LEADERSHIP FEELS
1 · Stitched	Tools bought one crisis at a time, nobody owns the full list	Exports, rekeying, and memory	"Why does everything take so long?"
2 · Connected	A few point to point links between favorite apps	Some sync, plenty of gaps and breakage	"Better, but I still cannot get a straight answer"
3 · Integrated	Environment designed around the workflow, bridges into one hub	Automatically, both directions, secured	"I can finally see the whole business"
4 · Orchestrated	One managed environment, BI on top, automation throughout	As one living system, feeding dashboards and AI	"We decide in hours, not weeks"

Two honest notes about the ladder. First, almost every established business sits at stage one or two, so there is no shame in the diagnosis, only in ignoring it. Second, you do not climb it by buying more software. You climb it with a **blueprint**, and a partner who has drawn hundreds of them.

> **The ladder is not about technology maturity. It is about how fast your business can make a good decision.**
>
> WHY THIS LADDER MATTERS

The integration dividend.

An integrated environment is not a project you finish. It is a dividend the business collects every single day, in six currencies at once.

SPEED
Work flows straight through instead of waiting at every handoff.

COST
Duplicate tools retired, idle licenses gone, hours returned to real work.

SECURITY
Fewer unknown apps, every connection locked and watched.

INSIGHT
One source of truth feeding dashboards leaders actually use.

EXPERIENCE
Staff stop fighting tools. Customers feel one company, not five departments.

SCALE
Growth means adding to the design, not adding to the pile.

YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS · HOW THE CLIMB ACTUALLY STARTS

DAYS 1 TO 30
Discover
Inventory every app, server, and subscription, including the shadows. Sit with leadership and map the ideal workflow. Name the source of truth.

DAYS 31 TO 60
Design
Draw the blueprint. Decide what stays, what goes, and what gets replaced. Plan every bridge, with security requirements written into each one.

DAYS 61 TO 90
Deliver
Build the first bridges, retire the first duplicates, stand up the first dashboard, and train the team. Momentum takes over from there.

And here is the door to the next book.

An integrated business is an AI ready business. Clean, connected data is the fuel every intelligent tool runs on, which is exactly where the E in RISE picks up the story. But first, the bottom line.

THE PAYOFF

Integrated is not the goal. It is what makes everything else possible.

An integrated environment makes the business efficient, an efficient business generates clean and connected data, and clean data makes every decision, every dashboard, and every future AI tool smarter. That chain is the whole point of the I in RISE.

Integrated ONE ENVIRONMENT › **Efficient** HOURS RETURNED › **Insightful** ONE TRUTH, REAL BI › **Momentum** OUTCOMES, FASTER

YOUR INTEGRATION BLUEPRINT, ON ONE CHECKLIST

- **A complete app inventory** — Every tool on one map, shadows included
- **Workflows designed on purpose** — Built around outcomes, not old limitations
- **One named source of truth** — CRM, ERP, or your core platform, chosen on purpose
- **Every integration secured** — Encryption, access control, and monitoring on every bridge
- **Duplicate tools retired** — One job, one tool, budget back in your pocket
- **Dashboards leaders actually use** — BI answering real questions in real numbers
- **Data bridges into the core** — Every platform flowing home, both directions
- **One accountable partner** — Design, bridges, security, and support under one roof

SOLUTION BUILDERS®

· I IS FOR INTEGRATED

Your integrated environment starts with one conversation.

Solution Builders designs technology environments around the way your business actually wants to work, the workflow, the bridges, the source of truth, and the security woven through all of it, managed as one. Let us show you where you sit on the maturity ladder, and exactly what your first ninety days would look like.

TALK TO A SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT

www.solutionbuilders.com

BOOK A FREE DISCOVERY SESSION

No pressure, just a blueprint

RESILIENT · INTEGRATED · SECURE · EVOLVING

RISE

Figures cited from the MuleSoft Connectivity Benchmark, Zylo SaaS Management Index, BetterCloud State of SaaS, Harvard Business Review task switching research, Gartner and IDC data and shadow IT research, McKinsey technical debt and data culture research, Smartsheet automation research, and the Seagate and IDC Rethink Data study. Charts marked illustrative are for explanation, not forecasts. Solution Builders is a 2026 MSP501 Top Managed Service Provider.