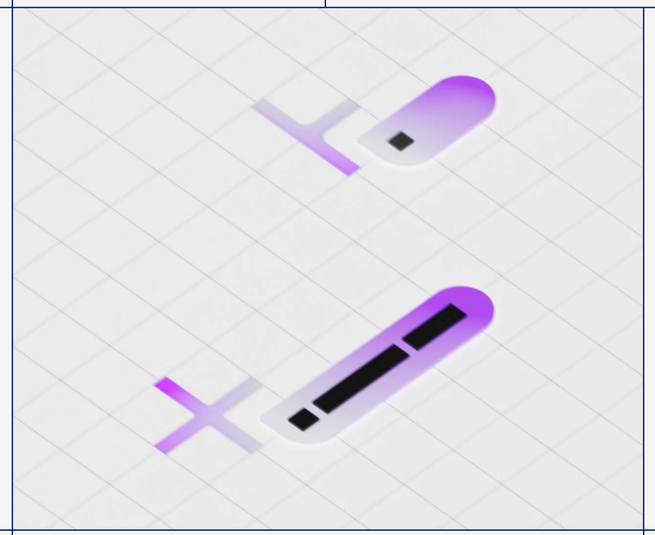
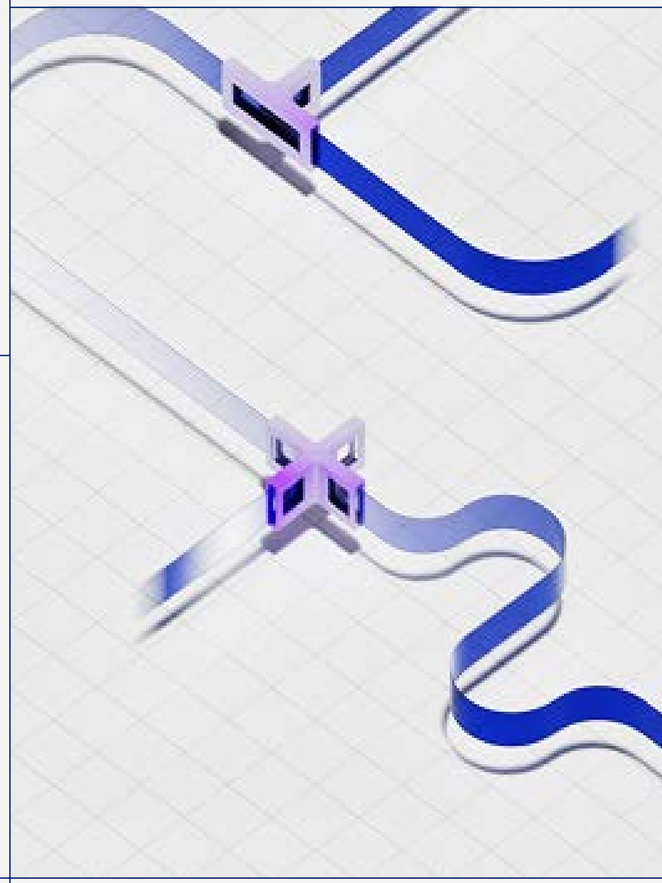
iPaaS Buyer's Guide

Building the right integration strategy in the era of AI





IBM

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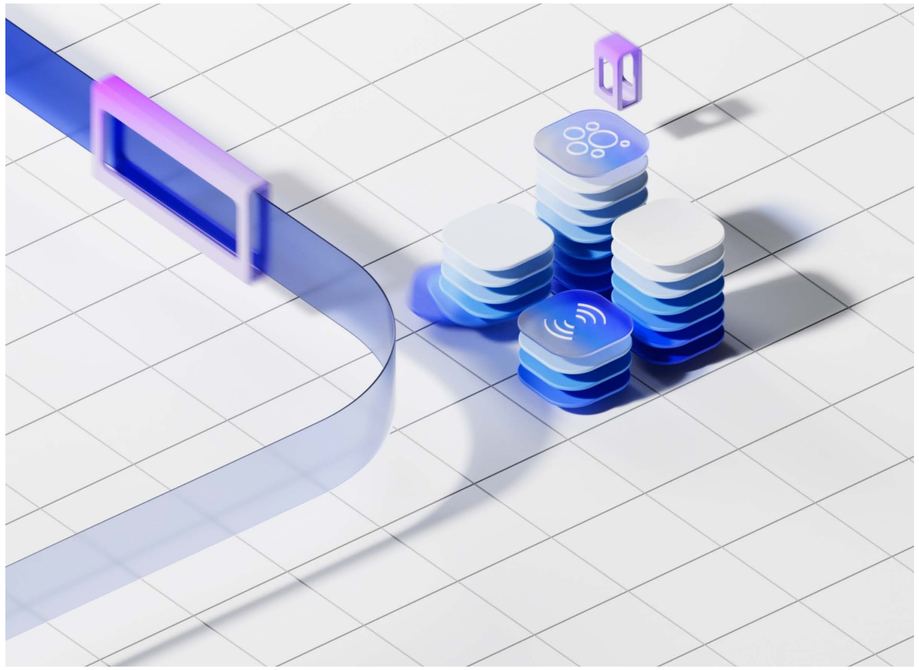
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01

Introduction



Introduction

AI is rapidly transforming how businesses operate and how integration strategies must evolve. This guide is designed to help IT leaders and integration architects evaluate and select the right Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) solution to support enterprise-scale orchestration.

Whether you're managing complex hybrid environments, modernizing legacy integrations or enabling AI-driven workflows, this guide will help you navigate modern iPaaS setups that can scale with the future of technology.

Integration with AI-enabled orchestration can no longer be an afterthought. With the right iPaaS solution, your organization can manage the diversity of applications, data, events and agents across cloud and on-premises deployments, accelerating innovation while managing governance, performance and trust.

02

The role of iPaaS in modern enterprise automation



Shifting from point-to-point to scalable platforms

For years, enterprise integration relied on brittle, point-to-point connections and custom-coded scripts. The solutions were often built for specific use cases and maintained by a handful of developers. These approaches created technical debt, were difficult to scale, slowed innovation and made it nearly impossible to respond quickly to changing business needs. With the current rate of technological evolution, modern iPaaS platforms are becoming more and more critical. Modern iPaaS solutions offer several benefits.

- A unified orchestration layer for apps, files, APIs, events and B2B workflows
- Low-code and no-code tools for business technologists and full control for developers
- Built-in governance for compliance, security and lifecycle management

These platforms are now evolving to support agentic AI, intelligent automation and hybrid architectures across cloud, on prem and edge.

Traditional iPaaS selection criteria are changing

Historically, iPaaS platforms were evaluated on a narrow set of criteria: connectivity, cost and scalability. These were the pillars of integration success in a world focused on linking applications and data across environments. As enterprise needs have grown more complex—and as AI becomes central to business strategy—these criteria alone no longer suffice.

What's changing in the selection criteria
iPaaS selection used to focus on:

- Connector availability
- Data movement speed
- Cost efficiency

Now, buyers must also consider:

- How AI agents that come with an iPaaS solution can make the integration team more productive
- How intelligent monitoring can help identify issues before they lead to negative business outcomes
- How iPaaS solutions can serve as the foundation for the agentic enterprise by providing access to and governance of enterprise systems
- How well the iPaaS solution supports the building of new AI agents; for example, how compatible it is with agent frameworks, AI gateways and large language models (LLMs)

The right iPaaS solution will help support current needs and create a foundation for a future-state architecture.

Quick take
IBM® webMethods® Hybrid Integration:

- Unified experience across agents, apps, events, messages, files and B2B
- Powerful agentic AI capabilities for the full development lifecycle of enterprise-grade governance measures with federated management and lifecycle control
- Designed to accelerate time to impact with secure, scalable orchestration

The AI angle: new workloads and new expectations

Generative AI and intelligent agents are changing how work gets done. As AI becomes embedded in enterprise strategy, integration platforms must evolve to support entirely new types of workloads. Traditional integrations focused on connecting applications and data. Today, organizations need to orchestrate interactions between AI agents, LLMs, event-driven systems and human users, all in real time.

Gen AI also creates new integration requirements:

- AI agents need secure, governed access to enterprise systems.
- Workflows must support autonomous decision-making with human oversight.
- Integration platforms should enable agent-to-agent and agent-to-tool communication.

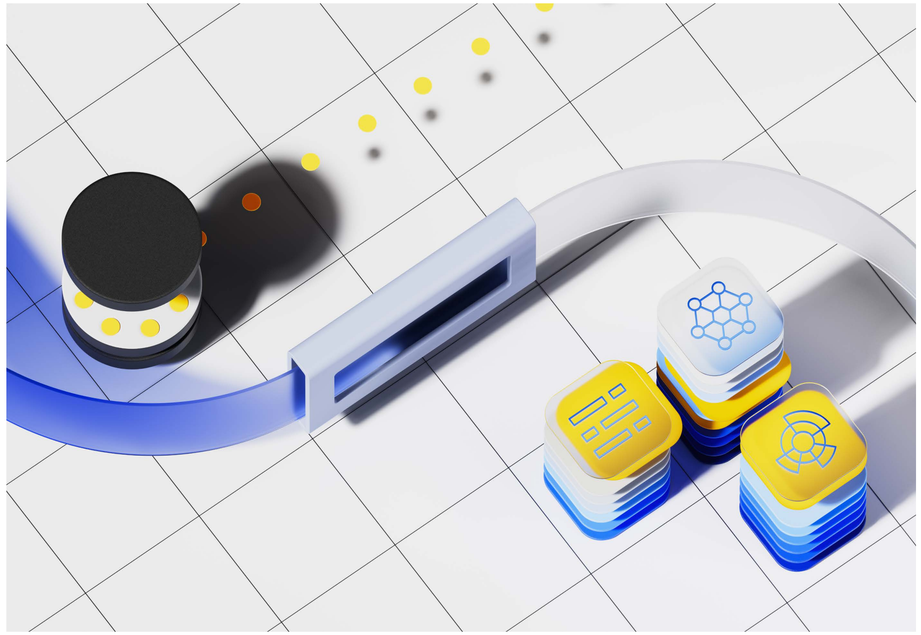
Yesterday's iPaaS criteria such as connector count and throughput are no longer enough. The new priority is AI-native orchestration. This shift introduces new expectations.

Integration flows must be intelligent, adaptive and capable of learning from context. Monitoring and error-handling must be automated while still keeping humans in the loop. Governance must extend to AI-driven decisions. Performance must scale to support inference workloads, not just transactional throughput. And, with the increasing number of available integrations, a unified view with deep visibility and governance across all connections and environments are a must.

iPaaS platforms are increasingly expected to serve as the connective tissue between AI and the rest of the enterprise, enabling agentic workflows, embedding models into business processes and helping ensure AI operates within secured, compliant boundaries.

03

Core evaluation criteria for iPaaS selection



What to look for in a modern iPaaS

Integration platforms must support a wide range of technologies, environments and use cases while actively reducing friction and enabling seamless connections and interoperability. All of which is a pretty tall order, but it can certainly be done.

A strong iPaaS solution offers extensive coverage across SaaS, on-prem, cloud and edge environments. It should include a deep catalog of secured, prebuilt connectors and also have the flexibility to extend to custom endpoints or emerging technologies.

This level of connectivity allows teams to move much faster. It reduces the need for manual workarounds and enables consistent integration patterns across the organization. When platforms support APIs, events and AI agents natively, they become a foundation for easy orchestration.

The goal is to simplify complexity while maintaining robust governance and enabling third-party vendors. A well-designed iPaaS solution helps teams unify systems, streamline operations and prepare for what’s next.

What to look for



Connectivity and ecosystem coverage
A strong iPaaS solution offers deep connectivity across your ecosystem. That means several benefits for the organization.

- Support for **custom connector development** to extend reach
- A wide range of **prebuilt connectors** for SaaS, on-prem and legacy systems
- Compatibility with **event-driven, API-led, hybrid cloud and multiple integration styles**

Look for platforms that publish connector catalogs and offer transparency around connector quality and availability. Quantity alone doesn't guarantee coverage.



No-code agility with developer controls
Enterprises see a rising demand for integration. Integration teams drown in requests to build and change integrations. By enabling a broader group of people to build integrations, more integrations can be rolled out. That's why integration should be accessible to both developers and business technologists. A modern iPaaS solution supports technologists and developers equally.

- Enables business technologists with **low-code and no-code tooling** to safely create simple workflows.
- Empowers integration developers to create complex workflows efficiently, with custom logic, scripting and debugging.
- The best platforms significantly reduce onboarding time and support collaboration across roles.



Scalability and performance
As demand for integrations continues to expand, your integration needs will grow too. Your platform should be ready. Its key capabilities should include:

- Support for **high-volume transactions** and complex workflows
- **Global reach**, with distributed deployment options
- **Elastic scaling** to handle spikes and seasonal demand

True scalability maintains optimal performance and reliability as complexity increases.

What to look for

Security and compliance
Integration often involves sensitive data. Your iPaaS solution must be built for trust.

Look for:

- **Enterprise-grade governance** with role-based access control
- **Audit logging** and **monitoring** across all integration flows
- Support for **industry standards** such as GDPR, SOC 2 and ISO certifications

Security should be embedded, instead of bolted on. Platforms that offer federated management and lifecycle control can provide stronger oversight.

Total cost of ownership
Licensing is only part of the picture. For an accurate calculation of total cost of ownership (TCO) today, you need to consider:

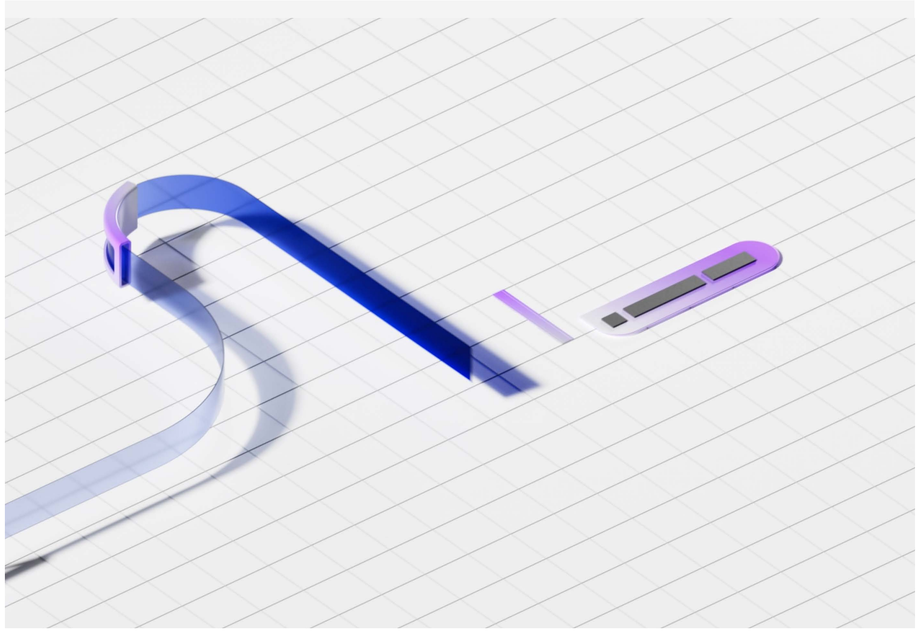
- **Hidden costs** tied to connector usage, data volume or premium features
- **Resource allocation** for setup, maintenance and training
- **Scalability pricing** that aligns with your growth plans

A platform that looks affordable up front may become expensive over time. Ask vendors for real-world pricing scenarios and usage-based estimates. The best scenario in many cases is an iPaaS solution that offers flexible, consumption-based pricing. Flexible pricing allows you to activate new capabilities on demand without renegotiating contracts.



04

The AI-driven criteria that can’t be ignored



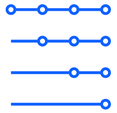
AI capabilities are reshaping how integration platforms operate. Instead of relying on manual configuration and reactive troubleshooting, teams can now use intelligent agents to build, monitor and optimize workflows. These capabilities improve speed, reduce effort and open the door to new types of automation. Your evaluation criteria should reflect this shift.



AI-native integration
Look for platforms that support varied needs.

- **Embedded AI agents** that can author, monitor and optimize workflows
- **Conversational interfaces** for building integrations through natural language and enabling business technologists to create integration flows
- **Agent-to-agent orchestration** and routing across apps, APIs, events and data pipelines
- **A trusted iPaaS foundation** for building custom AI agents

To avoid disruption down the line, integration flows should be designed with AI capabilities from the beginning. And that’s something that’s easy to do when you have a scalable iPaaS solution in place.



Automation and intelligence
AI should improve how integrations run as opposed to adding more complexity. Look for platforms that include these key built-in AI capabilities:

- **Self-healing flows** that detect and resolve errors automatically
- **ML-powered monitoring** for anomaly detection and performance optimization
- **Predictive diagnostics** that reduce downtime and improve reliability

These features reduce the burden on developers and operations teams, allowing them to focus on higher-value work.



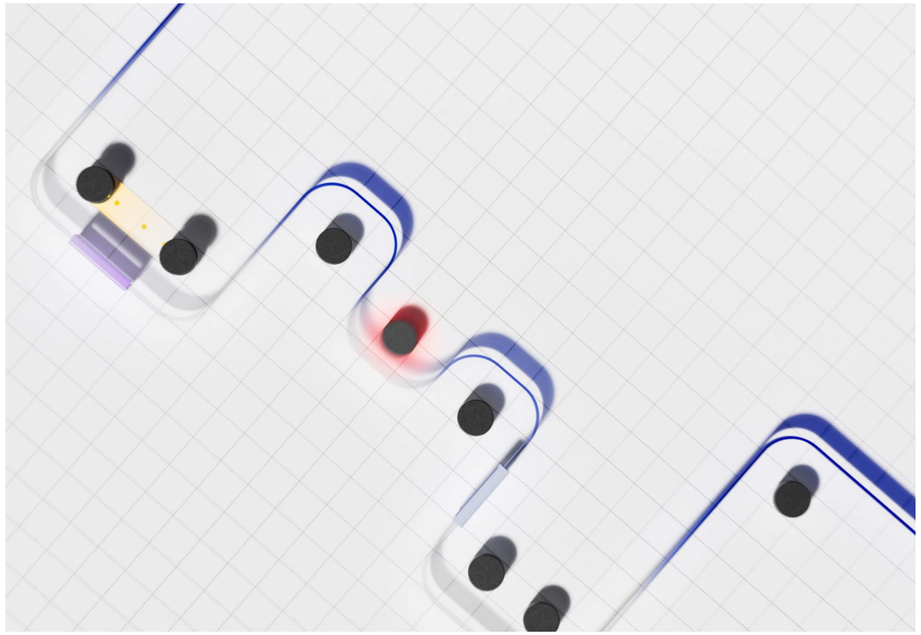
Future-readiness
AI is evolving at lightning speed. That means choosing an iPaaS solution that can connect and manage AI-driven applications as easily as any other system. Whether you’re working with LLMs, agent-based workflows or emerging AI services, the fundamentals remain the same.

- **Seamless connectivity** between AI endpoints and your broader ecosystem
- **Secured, governed data flows** to protect sensitive inputs and outputs
- **Lifecycle management** for models and AI services as they evolve

Platforms that treat AI as a core capability—and not a bolt-on—will be better positioned to support your business over time.

05

Common pitfalls and missteps to avoid



Selecting an iPaaS solution is a high-impact decision. With the right approach, teams can avoid common setbacks and move confidently toward a platform that supports long-term success. The following reminders are here to help you stay focused on what matters most.



Look for long term value
Budget is important, but value is the name of the game here. Instead of focusing only on licensing costs, consider how the platform supports your team's productivity, consolidates disparate integration solutions, reduces operational overhead and fixes errors—before they cause issues—and scales with your business. A well-matched iPaaS solution often quickly pays for itself in efficiency gains, faster delivery and frustration-free operations. As illustrated in a recent A Forrester Total Economic Impact™ Study, IBM® webMethods® can pay for itself in 6 months.

Plan for future needs
Today's requirements are only part of the picture. The most successful teams choose platforms that support evolving use cases, including agent-embedded workflows, task automation, hybrid deployments and expanded data ecosystems. Building with tomorrow in mind helps avoid costly rework and keeps your integration strategy aligned with business growth.

Prepare for migration
The right iPaaS solution can make the migration process significantly less painful by reducing complexity and risk. Look for a platform that supports an evolutionary approach to modernization—one that allows you to move at your own pace rather than forcing a disruptive "big bang" cutover. Strong onboarding and migration tools help simplify data mapping, workflow recreation and training, while hybrid connectivity helps you integrate across on-prem and cloud environments without compromise. This flexibility not only minimizes disruption but also sets the stage for future capabilities such as AI and advanced governance.

06

How to build your selection process



Following a clear iPaaS selection process can help speed up time to value and mitigate risk. From defining your integration strategy to weighting criteria, the following steps provide a practical framework for evaluating iPaaS solutions.

Step 1
Define your integration strategy, including future-state architecture.

Step 2
Establish criteria weights such as connectivity, AI capabilities, cost and so on.

Step 3
Consider relevant analyst reports, such as those provided by Gartner and Forrester.

Step 4
Shortlist and score vendors against those criteria.

Step 5
Run proofs of concept (POCs) that stress-test both existing and AI-enabled scenarios.

Step 6
Engage stakeholders beyond IT—business technologists, data teams, AI initiatives.

A step-by-step approach to choosing the right iPaaS

A well-defined selection process helps teams stay aligned, evaluate vendors fairly and make decisions that support long-term goals. This framework is designed to guide IT leaders navigate through each phase with clarity and confidence.

1

Define your integration strategy
Start by mapping out your current architecture and identifying where you want to go.

Consider:

- Which systems, data sources and workflows need to be connected
- How AI, automation and hybrid deployment models will factor into future plans
- What success looks like for your team and stakeholders

2

This step sets the foundation for everything that follows.

Establish criteria weights

Not all evaluation criteria carry the same importance. Assign weights based on your priorities. Here are a few examples:

- 30% connectivity and ecosystem coverage
- 25% AI capabilities and automation
- 20% cost and resource efficiency
- 15% developer experience and governance
- 10% vendor support and roadmap

Adjust these based on your organization’s goals and constraints.

3

Consider relevant reports
Analyst research provides an objective view of the iPaaS market and helps validate your shortlisting decisions. Reports from firms such as Gartner and Forrester offer insights into vendor capabilities, market trends and emerging technologies such as AI-driven integration.

Focus on:

Industry analyst evaluations
Understand vendor positioning.

Strengths and cautions
Identify areas of excellence and gaps.

Market trends
Look for commentary on AI enablement, automation and hybrid models.

A step-by-step approach to choosing the right iPaaS

4

Shortlist and score vendors
Use your weighted criteria to create a scoring framework. It will help you compare platforms objectively and identify top contenders. Include both technical and business considerations, and make sure each vendor is evaluated against the same standards.

5

Run POCs
Test your top choices in real-world scenarios. POCs are essential for understanding how aplatform will perform in your environment.

A strong POC should check these boxes:

- Validate performance, usability and extensibility.
- Reveal any hidden complexity or limitations.
- Provide hands-on experience for your team.

Include both existing integration use cases and AI-driven workflows.

6

Engage cross-functional stakeholders
Integration affects more than just IT. To make the right decision for your organization, it’s essential to bring in voices from across the organization.

- Business units that rely on connected workflows
- Data teams that manage governance and compliance
- AI and automation leads who will build on the platform

This step ensures buy-in and helps surface requirements that might otherwise be missed.

07

The road ahead: iPaaS in an AI-first world



Where integration is heading
Integration is evolving fast. With each passing moment, it's becoming more intelligent, more autonomous and much more dynamic. AI-driven orchestration is no longer a future concept; it's already shaping how systems communicate, how workflows adapt and how decisions happen in real time.

Platforms are already enabling agent-to-agent interactions, where digital agents collaborate across applications to complete tasks, resolve issues and optimize performance without manual input.

This rapidly escalating shift toward agentic enterprise requires platforms that can manage complexity without adding friction. The ability to coordinate multiple agents, monitor their activity and facilitate security-rich execution is quickly becoming a core requirement.

How to scale your decision
Choosing an iPaaS solution today means planning for tomorrow. The platform you select should be able to support new workloads, integrate emerging technologies and adapt to changing business models.

Look for signs of long-term viability: a clear product roadmap, regular updates and a commitment to AI governance and lifecycle management.

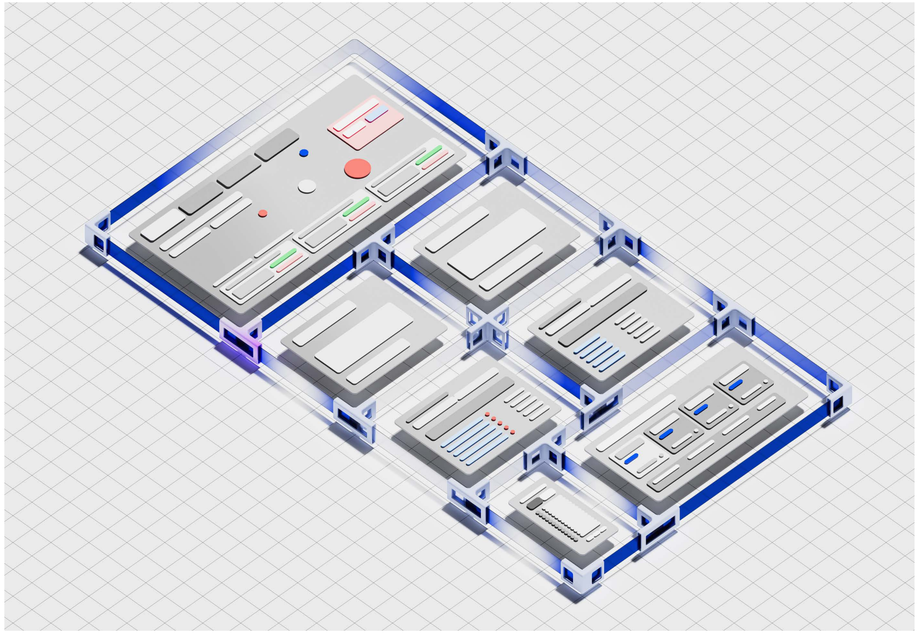
Consider long-term value as well as time to value and ease of implementation. A platform that can grow with your team, support new use cases and maintain trust across environments will continue to deliver value for years.

Final checklist for confident decision-making
Before you take the final call, revisit the essentials.

- [ ] Does the platform support both traditional and AI-led integration?
- [ ] Can it scale across hybrid environments and global operations?
- [ ] Is the developer experience strong enough to support complex workflows?
- [ ] Are governance, security and compliance management built into the platform?
- [ ] Does the pricing model align with your growth plans?
- [ ] Will lower costs now lead to high cost in the future?

08

IBM webMethods Hybrid Integration



A unified platform built for what's next
IBM webMethods Hybrid Integration brings together everything needed to support modern integration, from traditional systems to AI agents. And it does this all while delivering a single, cohesive experience. The platform helps teams reduce complexity, move faster and build intelligent, secured workflows that any business user can easily set up. It also enables developers to put guardrails in place, to manage safety and compliance for the whole system.

Here are some other key features:

- Supports app-to-app, event-driven, file-based and B2B integration
- Offers a consistent experience across cloud, on-prem and hybrid environments
- Is designed to simplify operations while expanding capabilities

Agentic AI at the core
The platform includes a suite of AI agents that support every stage of the integration lifecycle. These agents are designed to work across environments and can be guided by both developers and business users.

- Integration agents enable workflow creation through natural language.
- API agents simplify API design, deployment and lifecycle management.
- Monitoring agents provide real-time diagnostics and guided error resolution.
- Role-specific prebuilt agents help departments get started right away.
- AI gateway capabilities enable secured access to LLMs and other AI services.

Built for enterprise trust
IBM webMethods Hybrid Integration includes federated management, full lifecycle control and enterprise-grade governance. It supports secured execution of AI workloads and provides visibility across all integration flows.

Its additional capabilities include:

- Built-in role-based access control and audit logging
- Lifecycle management for agents, APIs and workflows
- Compatibility with compliance standards across industries

Making the right choice
Choosing an iPaaS solution is a commitment to the way your organization will connect, automate and scale in the years ahead. The platforms available today offer powerful capabilities, but the right choice depends on how well those capabilities align with your goals.

Core criteria
- Deep connector coverage and extensibility
- Intuitive low-code tools with developer flexibility
- Scalable performance across global environments
- Robust built-in governance, security and compliance management
- Transparent pricing and manageable TCO

AI-driven capabilities
- Embedded agents across the full development lifecycle
- Support for LLMs, agent frameworks and AI gateways
- Intelligent automation and self-healing workflows
- Future-ready architecture with lifecycle management

Selection process
- Define your integration strategy and future-state architecture.
- Weigh evaluation criteria based on business priorities.
- Shortlist and score vendors using real-world scenarios.
- Run proofs of concept to validate performance and usability.
- Engage stakeholders across IT, data and business teams.

IBM webMethods Hybrid Integration capabilities
- Unified experience across all integration types
- Agentic AI built into the platform
- Enterprise-grade governance and federated control
- Designed to accelerate time to value and scale with confidence

Start your iPaaS journey →

Get a free 30-day trial →

1. Forrester Total Economic Impact™ Study, November 2024

2. The Forrester Wave™: Integration Platform As A Service, Q3 2025

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