DEALCRAFT ADVISORY

THE DATA RUNS PLAYBOOK

How many data runs does your ERP programme need?

Planning mock loads that protect your go-live. The run ladder, the sizing rules, the cost of a missing run, and ten questions to put to every supplier.

For CFOs, programme sponsors, procurement teams and business owners choosing an ERP supplier, and for the system integrators bidding to them. Print it, fill it in, bring it to your next supplier clarification meeting.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Data is where go-live dates are decided.

Ask five suppliers how many data runs your programme needs and you will hear five answers, usually the one that keeps their price lowest.

57%

say data migration regularly delays their SAP projects

Xmateria via SAPinsider, 2026

10–25%

typical slip to the timeline when it does; nearly a third slip by up to 50%

Xmateria via SAPinsider, 2026

>60%

of data migration projects overrun on time and/or budget

Bloor Research

$12.9M

average yearly cost of poor data quality to an organisation

Gartner, 2020

Across 30+ years of SAP and ERP deals, the pattern behind those numbers is consistent. Data is rarely late because the tools are poor. It is late because too few full rehearsals were planned, the ones that were planned had no exit criteria, and nobody priced the time between runs to fix what each one found.

FIVE THINGS TO TAKE AWAY

1. Start from three plus one. For a typical single go-live greenfield programme: a profiling run, three mock loads and a full dress rehearsal.

2. A run isn't finished until the business signs the reconciliation. Loading data is not the same as accepting it.

3. Every run needs a fix window. Three to five weeks per cycle on a mid-sized programme. Back-to-back runs repeat the same defects.

4. Complexity adds runs. More sources, poor data, regulated processes, a tight cutover window and multiple waves each need their own rehearsal.

5. Compare what the price includes. Data runs are the easiest line to trim from a bid and the most expensive one to put back after go-live slips.

How to use this playbook

1	**The run ladder**: what each run must prove, at what volume, and who signs it off.
2	**Sizing rules**: how to adjust the number of runs for your programme, with worked examples.
3	**The cost of a missing run**: a worksheet to put in front of your steering committee.
4	**Data RACI and run readiness**: who does what, and what must be true before each run starts.
5	**Supplier scoring sheet**: ten clarification questions, and how to read two bids side by side.

TOOL 1 · THE RUN LADDER

Six steps from legacy data to go-live.

A data run, also called a mock load, test load or trial conversion, is a complete pass through the migration: extract from the legacy systems, cleanse and transform, load, then reconcile back to the source. Each run in the ladder has a different job, and each feeds a test phase.

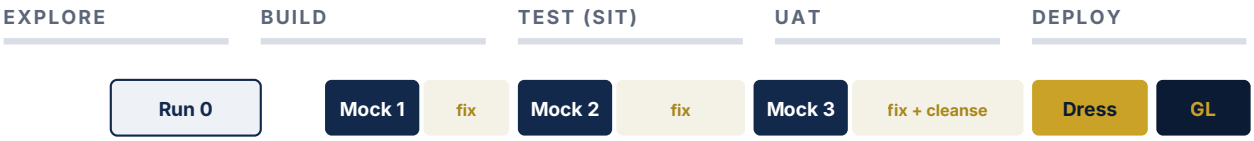
RUN	PURPOSE	VOLUME & ENVIRONMENT	EXIT CRITERIA (TYPICAL)	SIGNED OFF BY
0 · Profile	Understand the legacy data before mapping: completeness, duplicates, formats, volumes.	Full extract, analysed not loaded. Sandbox or profiling tool.	Object list agreed; mapping drafted; cleansing backlog sized; owner per object.	Business data owners, data lead
1 · Mock 1	Prove transformation rules and load sequence end to end.	All objects, sample volume. Build environment.	Every object loads; all defects logged and owned; ~85% first-time success.	Supplier and client data leads
2 · Mock 2	Give integration testing real data; first full reconciliation and timings.	Full volume, all objects. QA environment.	Reconciliation per object; ~95% first-time success; cleansing mostly done; run-time measured.	Data owners; test lead
3 · Mock 3	Users test on their own data; business formally accepts the converted data.	Full volume, production-like environment.	~99% first-time success; 100% reconciliation of balances and open items; cleansing complete.	Process owners, finance
DR · Dress rehearsal	Rehearse cutover to the minute, with interfaces off, backups, checkpoints, sign-offs.	Full volume in pre-production, by the real cutover team.	Critical objects 100%; inside the cutover window with contingency; go/no-go criteria met.	Cutover manager, sponsor
GL · Cutover	Execute the rehearsed runbook in production.	Production; final delta and open items.	Reconciliation signed; go-live decision against agreed criteria.	Sponsor, on owners' advice

Success targets are first-time load rates we commonly agree with clients. They are practitioner benchmarks, not a published standard. Agree your own in the contract.

WHAT SAP'S OWN GUIDANCE SAYS

SAP PRESS recommends at least two productive load tests under go-live conditions, data cleansing completed by the last of them, and the whole migration and cutover tested at least once before go-live. SAP Community guidance adds that mock runs should complete around the start of system testing, with a reasonable gap between runs for defects to be found and fixed.

Where the runs sit, and why each needs a gap.



Mock 2 completes before SIT starts, so testers work on converted data.

Mock 3 completes before UAT, so users test on their own records.

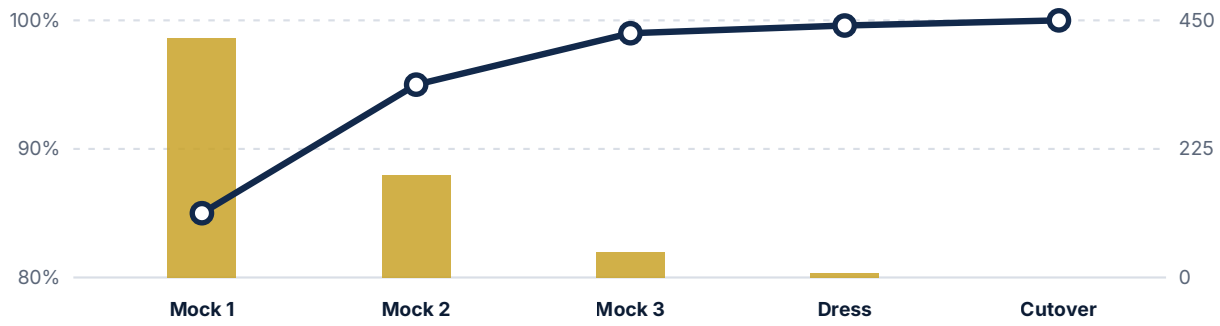
Cleansing finishes before the dress rehearsal: nothing new should be learned at cutover.

A failed exit criterion moves the next run, not the test phase it feeds.

Illustrative single go-live greenfield plan. Fix windows typically three to five weeks per cycle on a mid-sized programme.

A healthy data track

The shape you are looking for is load success climbing towards 100% while open data defects fall towards zero. When the curves don't move between two runs, the problem is usually cleansing ownership, not technology.



Illustrative. Navy line: first-time load success (left axis). Gold bars: open data defects (right axis).

From the field. The most common failure we see is not a missing run but a compressed one: Mock 3 starts two weeks after Mock 2 because UAT dates were fixed first. It then reproduces the Mock 2 defects at full volume, and UAT starts on data nobody has accepted.

TOOL 2 · SIZING RULES

Three plus one is a starting point, not a rule.

Begin with the baseline for your approach, then add a run for each factor that applies. Each extra run should retire a specific risk, and its exit criteria should say which one.

FACTOR	ADJUSTMENT	WHY
Greenfield baseline	Profiling run + 3 mock loads + dress rehearsal	Each mock feeds a test phase: build, SIT, UAT.
Selective transition baseline	Profiling + 3 test transfers + dress rehearsal	Each transfer proves the selection rules as well as the data.
Brownfield baseline	Sandbox conversion + 2 mock conversions + dress rehearsal	Runs are technical conversions of a production copy; timings drive downtime.
4 or more legacy sources	+1 run	Prove de-duplication and merge rules across systems.
More than 60 data objects	+1 run	Stabilise dependencies and load sequence.
Poor data quality	+1 run	An extra cleansing cycle; cleansing must finish before the UAT load.
Regulated / validated (GxP, SOX)	+1 run	A documented, validated load under change control.
Cutover window of 48 hours or less	+1 dress rehearsal	Prove the runbook fits the window with contingency.
Each additional go-live wave	+1 mock and +1 rehearsal per wave	Each wave brings its own data, owners and cutover.
Good data, 1 source, under 30 objects	−1 mock (greenfield only)	Two mocks can be enough if both pass their exit criteria.

Worked examples

4

Mid-market distributor

Greenfield, one legacy system, 40 objects, mixed data, single go-live, long-weekend cutover. Baseline holds: 3 mocks and a dress rehearsal. Data track around 12 to 20 weeks.

7

Irish pharma manufacturer

Greenfield, three sources, 70 objects, mixed data, GxP-validated, 48-hour cutover. 3 + 1 (objects) + 1 (validated) mocks, plus 2 rehearsals.

4+4

Public body, three waves

Brownfield core then two rollout waves, poor data. 2 + 1 (cleansing) mock conversions, 1 rehearsal, then a mock and rehearsal for each later wave.

TOOL 3 · THE COST OF A MISSING RUN

One more run, or a later go-live?

When suppliers compete on price, data runs are one of the easiest lines to trim. Each one is a few weeks of a small team. Putting the time back once go-live slips is never small, because the whole programme team is waiting on the data. Use this worksheet to make the trade-off visible to your steering committee.

WORKSHEET		YOUR FIGURES
A	Programme budget (€)	
B	Data team cost per week (€)	
C	Weeks per extra run (load, reconcile, fix, re-test)	
D = B × C	Cost of one extra run	
E = A × 10%	Cost of a mild slip (lower end of the reported range)	
F = A × 25%	Cost of a typical slip (upper end of the reported range)	
G = E ÷ D	How many extra runs a mild slip would have paid for	

WORKED EXAMPLE

A €4M programme with a data team costing €18,000 a week. One extra four-week run costs €72,000. A 10% slip costs about €400,000; a 25% slip about €1M. Even the mildest slip would have paid for more than five extra runs.

The slip scenarios assume the programme keeps spending at its planned rate while it waits. They exclude the cost of a delayed business case, extended licences or legacy support, which usually come on top. The 10–25% range is the typical slip reported in Xmateria's 2026 research; nearly a third of delayed projects slipped by up to 50%.

Questions for your steering committee

- [ ] Which run would we drop first if the budget were cut, and what risk would that leave unretired?
- [ ] Is a contingency run priced, or would a failed run become a change request?
- [ ] Who on the business side is accountable for cleansing, and is their time in the plan?
- [ ] What is the cost to the business case of each month of delay?

TOOL 4 · DATA RACI

Who does what between client and supplier.

Most unpriced data risk hides in one phrase: "client responsible for data". Agree this table before contract, and attach it to the statement of work.

ACTIVITY	CLIENT BUSINESS	CLIENT IT	SUPPLIER	NOTES
Define objects in scope and history to migrate	A	C	R	Retention rules apply to what you don't migrate
Extract from legacy systems	I	A/R	C	Name the extract owner per source
Profile data and size cleansing	C	C	A/R	Output feeds the cleansing plan
Cleanse data in source	A/R	C	C	Tools and support from the supplier?
Mapping and transformation rules	A	C	R	Business signs each mapping
Build and run loads	I	C	A/R	Per run, to agreed exit criteria
Environments for each run	I	A/R	C	Often the hidden cause of slips
Reconciliation reports	C	I	A/R	Readable without a consultant
Reconciliation sign-off	A/R	I	C	Named signatory per object
Cutover runbook and rehearsal	C	R	A/R	Timed against the real window
Go/no-go decision	A	C	C	Against criteria agreed in advance

R = responsible, A = accountable, C = consulted, I = informed. A typical split; adjust to your contract.

Run readiness: before any run starts

- ☐ Exit criteria from the previous run met or formally waived
- ☐ Fixes from the previous run deployed and re-tested
- ☐ Target environment refreshed and configured to the right release
- ☐ Extracts scheduled with source system owners
- ☐ Cleansing progress reported against the plan
- ☐ Reconciliation reports agreed and signatories available
- ☐ Run timings will be recorded for the cutover runbook
- ☐ Defect triage meetings booked for the days after the run
- ☐ The test phase this run feeds knows its start date depends on it
- ☐ Interfaces and jobs that could disturb the load are paused

TOOL 5 · SUPPLIER SCORING SHEET

Ten questions to ask every supplier.

Put these to every bidder in clarifications and score each answer: 0 = not answered, 1 = vague, 2 = clear and in writing, 3 = clear, written and priced.

#	QUESTION	BIDDER A	BIDDER B
1	**How many full data runs are priced, and what volume does each one load?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
2	**What are the exit criteria for each run, and who signs them off?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
3	**How long is the fix window between runs?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
4	**Who cleanses the data, using whose tools, and by when?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
5	**Which runs feed which test phases?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
6	**What happens, commercially, if a run fails its exit criteria?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
7	**Has the dress rehearsal been timed against our actual cutover window?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
8	**Who provides and refreshes the environments for each run?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
9	**How is historical and open-item data handled, and what goes to an archive?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
10	**Which reconciliation reports do you deliver, and in what format?**	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	Total out of 30		

Two bids, same headline price

Bid A · €3.85M

Looks 4% cheaper

- Two mock loads, volume not stated
- "Client responsible for data cleansing"
- No exit criteria per run
- Repeat runs treated as change requests
- Dress rehearsal "if time permits"

Bid B · €4.0M

Shows its working

- Profiling run, three mocks, full dress rehearsal
- Shared cleansing plan with named owners
- Load and reconciliation targets per run
- One repeat run priced in as contingency
- Rehearsal timed against your cutover window

For system integrators. Make the runs visible in your proposal: name each one, give it exit criteria, show the fix windows and price a contingency run. Evaluators comparing two similar prices will trust the bid that shows how data reaches go-live, and it protects your margin as much as the client's timeline.

SOURCES

Where the numbers come from.

1	**SAPinsider**, reporting Xmateria's research "The True Cost of Data Procrastination", July 2026. More than 100 SAP customers and experts surveyed over six months. sapinsider.org/blogs/sap-data-migration-delays-xmateria-research
2	**Bloor Research**, Data Migration. bloorresearch.com/?p=10700
3	**Gartner**, Data Quality, citing Gartner research from 2020. gartner.com/en/data-analytics/topics/data-quality
4	**SAP PRESS**, What are the data migration phases for an SAP S/4HANA project? blog.sap-press.com
5	**SAP Community**, Planning the data migration track of an SAP project, 2014. blogs.sap.com

ABOUT THE BENCHMARKS IN THIS PLAYBOOK

Run targets, cycle durations, sizing rules, the RACI and the illustrative charts reflect our practitioner experience across SAP and ERP programmes, not a published standard. Every programme is different: agree your own run plan, exit criteria and responsibilities in the contract.

Related reading

The interactive data run planner that applies these sizing rules: dealcraftadvisory.ie/insights/how-many-data-runs-erp-implementation

Starting Your ERP Journey: Greenfield, Bluefield or Brownfield? A 12-page whitepaper on choosing your path before you choose your vendor. dealcraftadvisory.ie/insights/erp-journey-greenfield-bluefield-brownfield

Draw the Line: why scope boundaries decide both the price and the delivery. dealcraftadvisory.ie/insights/draw-the-line-scope-boundaries

DEALCRAFT ADVISORY

Choosing an ERP supplier? Make every bidder price the same runs.

Dealcraft Advisory provides independent buy-side tender support for organisations procuring ERP, and senior bid direction for the system integrators bidding to them, drawing on 30+ years of SAP and enterprise deal-making across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

We build the data track into your requirement, so proposals are comparable, risks are visible and the plan you sign is the plan that gets delivered.

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