The SAP ECC Deadline Is Real: Why 2027 Should Set Your Migration Timeline

SAP's mainstream maintenance for ECC and Business Suite 7 ends December 31, 2027, and most of the installed base still hasn't moved off it while the consultant and vendor support built around ECC keeps thinning as customers move on. That, not AI, is the reason to set your migration timeline now, though AI-assisted tooling is starting to make the move less costly for organizations that go early.

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Every SAP customer still running ECC or R/3 has heard the deadline by now: mainstream maintenance ends December 31, 2027, with a handful of extension paths reaching into the early 2030s for customers who qualify. What gets less attention is what happens around that deadline rather than on it. As more of the installed base moves to S/4HANA, the pool of consultants, systems integrators, and third-party specialists who know ECC well keeps shrinking, and the vendors currently selling extended ECC support are building that business on a customer base that will keep getting smaller. Waiting doesn't hold the situation in place. It just means fewer people who can help and thinner support once an organization finally does move.

What follows lays out where the ECC installed base actually stands today, why past SAP transformations have so consistently missed their budget, timeline, and quality targets, and what that record means for anyone still planning to wait. It closes with a shorter look at how AI-assisted tooling is starting to change the cost and risk profile of migrating, a real factor, but a secondary one next to the deadline itself and the shrinking bench of people who can help organizations get there.

A Deadline That Keeps Slipping Toward Us

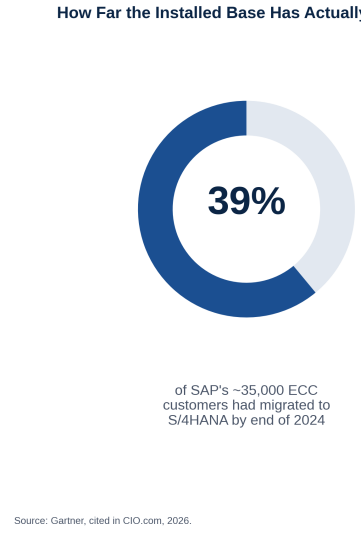
SAP has held its line on the 2027 end of mainstream maintenance for ECC 6.0 and Business Suite 7. Select extended-maintenance and "SAP ERP, private edition" options are available to customers who meet specific criteria, in some cases pushing support into the early 2030s. None of that has translated

into a rush to the exits from legacy ERP.

By Gartner's count, only about 39% of SAP's roughly 35,000 ECC customers, call it 14,000 organizations, had actually migrated to S/4HANA by the end of 2024. Independent estimates from IDC and Forrester both put the share still expected to be running ECC beyond 2027 north of 40%. Basis Technologies' own modeling puts completion by the 2027 deadline at only 57% of the base, with the rest of the installed base not fully migrated until the mid-2030s.

~50%

of SAP's ECC installed base is projected to still be running legacy ERP when mainstream maintenance ends in 2027: roughly 17,000 organizations, by Gartner's estimate.



Migration progress across the SAP ECC installed base, end of 2024.

Why the Old Playbook Keeps Producing the Same Result

The stall isn't purely inertia or budget cycles. Much of it comes down to what organizations have watched happen to the peers who went first. A 2025 study by the consultancy Horváth, covering 200 companies with at least €200 million in annual revenue across the DACH region, Northern and Eastern Europe, and the US, found that S/4HANA transformations take 30% longer than planned on average. Fewer than 10% of projects finish without exceeding their original timeline.

The same study found that 65% of organizations experienced significant budget deviations, and 65% reported strong-to-very-strong quality deficits in what they ultimately received. More than 60% of companies missed on budget, schedule, and result quality all at once. One bad vendor or an under-resourced IT team doesn't explain numbers like that. It points to a structural pattern across a large, well-funded sample of enterprise transformations.

Research from Prosci points to a specific reason why: organizations consistently under-invest in the human side of change. Their 2025 study found that organizations spend an average of 92% of ERP budgets on technology and roughly 8% on change management, even though those same leaders say the people side of the project accounts for 36% of what they'd do differently in hindsight. Prosci puts a number on the gap: human factors matter roughly six times more than technical factors in determining whether an ERP program actually delivers its benefits.

60%+

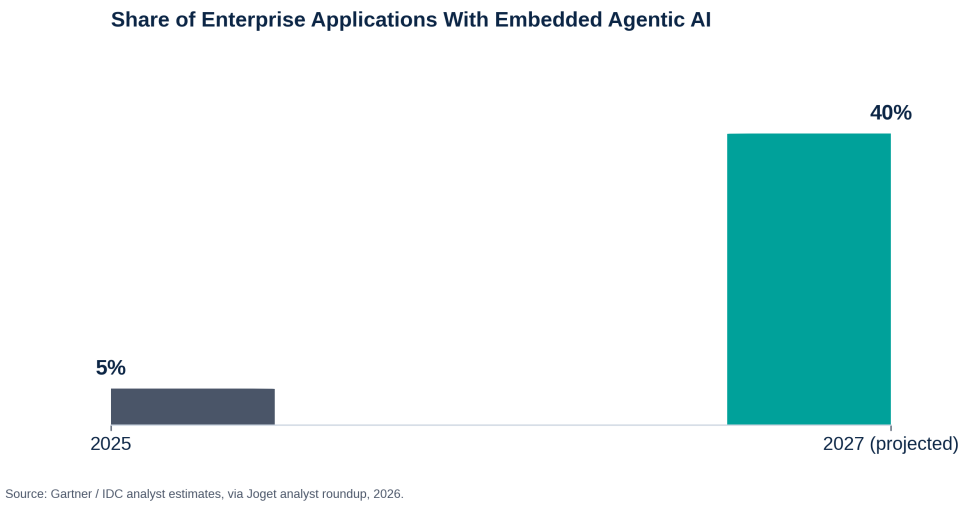
of SAP S/4HANA transformations report deviations across budget, timeline, and result quality at the same time, not just one of the three. (Horváth, 2025)

What's Actually Changing the Cost of Migrating Now

None of the failure pattern above is news to anyone who has lived through an ERP transformation. What's different for organizations migrating today is that the playbook itself has matured. Thousands of ECC-to-S/4HANA projects have already happened, and the industry has learned, sometimes the hard way, what actually drives the failure points that show up in study after study: bad and duplicated master data, undocumented custom ABAP code of unknown business value, manual regression testing cycles that eat months, and change management programs chronically under-resourced relative to the technical workstream.

AI-assisted tooling is one part of that maturing picture, and a genuinely useful one. Gartner projects that agentic automation will be embedded in more than 40% of enterprise applications by 2027, up from under 5% in 2025. Inside SAP specifically, tools like Joule and its associated developer and process agents are starting to show up in benchmarked pilots: KPMG has reported a 20% acceleration in project sprints when Joule assists ABAP and BTP development tasks, and EY has cited a 30% reduction in delivery timelines using Joule Studio agents on discrete implementation tasks. These are early, vendor-adjacent numbers, best read as directional. Combined with more experienced delivery teams and better-documented lessons learned across the industry, they're a meaningful piece of why migrating now generally costs less, in time and risk, than it cost the organizations that went first.

In practice, that maturity shows up across nearly every phase of a migration: more disciplined master data cleansing, faster fit-gap analysis against SAP's simplification list, AI-assisted profiling of legacy data and custom ABAP code, automated regression testing, smarter cutover sequencing, and change management practices carried over from prior projects instead of built from scratch. None of it changes what the 2027 deadline requires. It changes how much the move costs, in time and risk, for organizations that start now rather than waiting until the deadline is close.



Source: Gartner / IDC analyst estimates, via Joget analyst roundup, 2026.

Projected share of enterprise applications with embedded agentic AI capability, 2025 vs. 2027.

A Note of Caution

It would be easy for an article like this to slide into treating AI as a fix for problems that are, at their root, organizational rather than technical. The data doesn't support that reading.

Gartner also projects that more than 40% of agentic AI projects will be cancelled by the end of 2027, specifically because of unclear ROI and weak governance, a rate roughly in line with the historical ERP failure rates cited earlier. AI tooling changes what's technically possible inside a migration. It does not fix a program that lacks executive sponsorship, a realistic timeline, or a change management budget that matches the size of the technical workstream. The deadline is still the reason to move. AI-assisted tooling is one input into how well that move goes, and it works only inside a disciplined program, never as a replacement for one.

> **40%+**
>
> *of agentic AI projects are projected to be cancelled by the end of 2027 over unclear ROI and weak governance. (Gartner) AI changes the tools available to a migration program. It doesn't replace the discipline the program still needs.*

Where This Leaves You

The 2027 deadline is the reason to act, and the thinning consultant and vendor support around ECC is the reason not to wait until that deadline is close. Orpington Technologies has spent years delivering SAP transformations, and what separates the projects that land on time and on budget from the ones that don't usually comes down to delivery discipline and hands-on ECC-to-S/4HANA experience more than any single tool. AI-assisted delivery methods are one of several things we bring to a migration, alongside experienced program leadership and a track record clients can check for themselves. If you're

weighing where your organization sits against the 2027 deadline, or you've already started down the S/4HANA path and want a second, independent read on where the risk actually sits, that's the kind of conversation Orpington has with SAP customers directly, whether we end up leading the delivery or reviewing a plan someone else built. Learn more about Orpington's work across SAP, Oracle, Dynamics 365, NetSuite, and Odoo transformations at orpingtontech.com.

Sources & Further Reading

[1] SEIDOR — Understanding SAP ECC Deadlines: What 2026 and 2027 Mean for Your Business

[2] Rimini Street — No Extension to SAP ECC 6 and Business Suite 7 Mainstream Maintenance End Dates

[3] CIO.com — Nearly Half of SAP ECC Customers May Stick With Legacy ERP Beyond 2027

[4] Basis Technologies — The True State of S/4HANA 2025

[5] Horváth — Study: SAP S/4HANA Transformations Rarely Go As Planned (2025)

[6] Prosci — Why Do ERP Implementations Fail?

[7] Analyst roundup (Gartner / IDC / McKinsey) — AI Agent Adoption 2026: What the Data Shows