

WHY LOW CODE SHOULD BE YOUR STRATEGY FOR 2020



#1

Why Low Code



” The only sustainable advantage you can have over others is agility.”

This quote, which is often attributed to Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, is an important reminder that technology alone is not enough to compete effectively in an increasingly digital world.

Your closest rivals are already adopting business processes and employing robust platforms to further their digital transformation maturity. For your organization to stay ahead of these competitors, you must be able to conceptualize, create, and implement new technology quickly.

Enter **low code**, a software development approach that focuses on efficiency and accessibility. Low-code platforms provide IT with the tools to more quickly deliver tech solutions in house. In addition, app creation is no longer solely in the hands of technically inclined software developers — everyday business users can even use low-code platforms to create apps themselves.

With low code, drag-and-drop user interfaces replace line-by-line coding. Automation replaces manual efforts. And, most importantly, speed replaces lengthy development timelines. In fact, Forrester indicates that low-code platforms can make software development as much as *10x faster than traditional methods*.¹ It’s no wonder the market for low-code platforms is growing by an estimated 40% annually, with spend expected to surpass \$21 billion by 2022.²

Low code is here to stay, and more and more organizations are embracing it as a strategy to achieve sustainable success and compete effectively. Read on to learn more about low code, its impact on organizational agility, and steps you can take to choose a low-code platform that’s right for your organization.



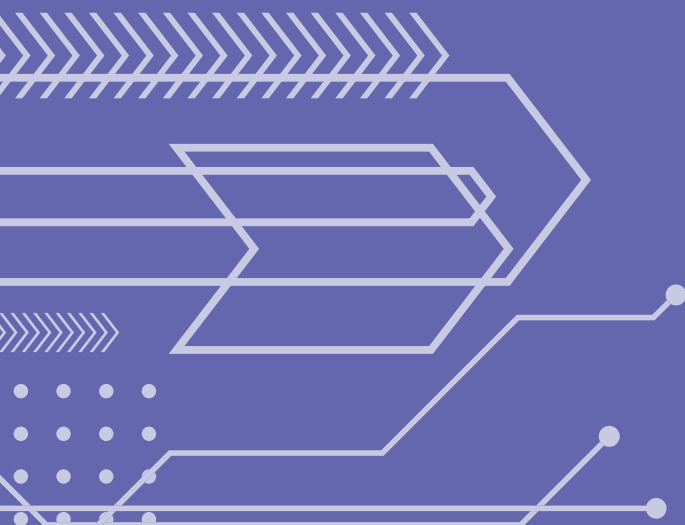
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#2

Accelerating App Development



Helping developers address their competing priorities

Every day, your IT department is swamped with requests from across the organization to create or modify tech solutions that address pressing business problems — whether it's in sales, marketing, accounting, or human resources. The larger your organization, the more frequent and complex the requests tend to be. Needs differ from department to department, and even between individual teams and users.

IT has limited bandwidth and an ever-growing backlog of requests. Not to mention the current technical skills gap in the market—there are over 200,000 software developer job openings in the U.S.³ but only about 30,000 computer science majors graduating per year.⁴

These factors result in overwhelmed developers who aren't able to create the custom apps business users need to overcome their business challenges in a timely fashion. Ultimately, this results in a slow-moving organization that is unable to keep up with more agile competitors.

Low code provides much-needed relief for time-strained developers by automating many of their manual programming tasks and reducing the need for hand coding. This is because smart low code platforms:

- **Use visual approaches.** Instead of needing to hand code everything, developers can use low code's visual models and drag-and-drop interfaces to save lots of time.
- **Include pre-built components.** Coding interface objects from scratch takes time. Low-code platforms come with pre-designed objects that can be easily reconfigured and updated.
- **Have cross-platform functionality built in.** Developers typically have to build an app and then adjust the code for different devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, phones) and operating systems (e.g., Windows, Android, iOS). With low code, apps are automatically deployable across platforms, meaning developers only have to build once.
- **Simplify the development lifecycle.** There are multiple phases to development, and each requires time and effort. Low-code platforms help developers get from planning to deployment faster by providing an easy, quick way to prototype, iterate, and update apps.

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#3

Empowering business users to create

As for the people making requests to IT — everyday business users — low code is a boon for them too. Even without deep technical knowledge, a marketer or accountant can use a low-code platform to quickly create an app that addresses their specific needs — transforming them into what are commonly called citizen developers. And these citizen developers are becoming more commonplace — a Gartner report indicates that by 2020, 70% of enterprises will have *citizen development* policies in place.⁵

So what can these business users do with low code? Consider a marketer who needs a dashboard to pull together results from the numerous campaigns they monitor. Instead of repeatedly checking multiple sources and collating that information into a spreadsheet or other tool, their efforts could be streamlined with a customized solution.

However, the marketer's request for IT to build that solution could take weeks or months, forcing the marketer to find an alternative solution outside of IT (re: shadow IT) or just "deal with it." The former option represents a potential security issue, while the latter option means less efficiency and more potential for error. Either case is not ideal.

Some of the same low-code platform features that help developers save time provide an opportunity for the marketer to create their dashboard *while staying connected* to IT. Such features like drag-and-drop remove the technical barrier inherent in traditional programming.

Thus, business users like sales reps, service professionals, and human resource personnel can create, configure, and deploy customized apps without software development skills. Not only does this save time for business users, but it also reduces the burden on IT and ensures all users can better contribute to the organization's success.



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#4

Ensuring App Flexibility

Tackling change

There are many reasons as to why an app may take longer to create, but a design change is a common culprit. Design changes are often unavoidable and can happen for many reasons:

- The developer may have misunderstood the business user's intent with requirements.
- The business user's needs may have evolved.
- The business user may have changed their mind about certain aspects after seeing or using the app.

Whatever the case, design changes can significantly delay an app's development timeline as developers are forced to go back and recode — at least with traditional methods.

As mentioned previously, smart low-code platforms make the development lifecycle more seamless and enable developers to easily prototype and iterate. In this manner, business users are able to see the app as it develops and ask for changes along the way. In addition, these change requests can be quickly and easily addressed with the platform's other features (like drag-and-drop), eliminating the need to recode. Delays are then negligible by comparison.

Enabling full customization

Saved time and customization are mutually exclusive. Low code focuses on making app development simpler and quicker. But that doesn't mean customization is out of the question.

The drag-and-drop feature helps save time in building the app, but robust low-code platforms also generate source code as a base for customization. While this may exclude business users from the process, a developer can still use the platform to significantly reduce most of their coding efforts and simply add to the generated code for niche customization needs.

#5

How to Choose a Low-Code Platform



Step 1:

Determine your requirements.

Assemble a selection team that accurately represents key areas and functions of your organization. You want input from multiple stakeholders to ensure your selected platform considers a broad assortment of needs.

As a team, put together a list of requirements for the platform, keeping in mind your strategic objectives. Determine the types of features the platform will need to have. To help prioritize, group your requirements into categories, such as mandatory, important, and nice to have.

TIP: *Develop a number of use cases based on your business processes and specific business goals. This will help flesh out what the platform must be capable of accomplishing to fit within your organizational context.*

Step 2:

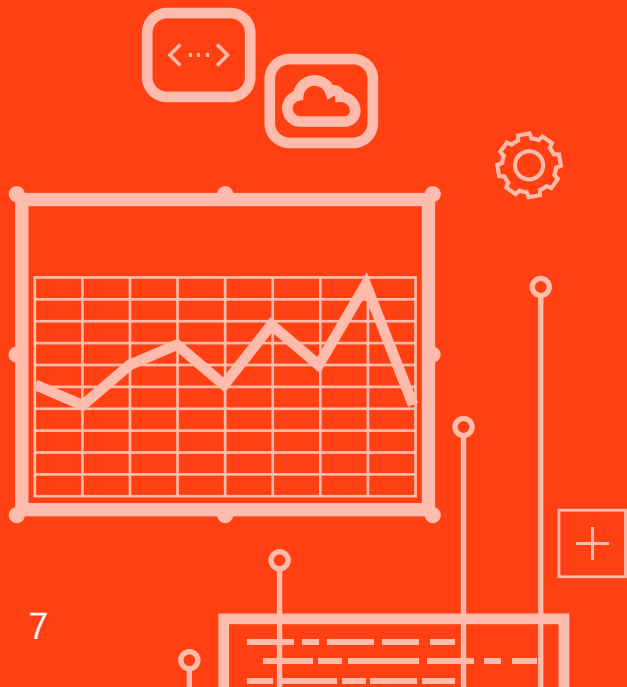
Research the market using analyst reports.

Leading analyst firms like Gartner and Forrester will be great guides for identifying and summarizing standout low-code platforms. These firms are well-known and respected for their thoroughness and unbiased analyses of enterprise technology.

With their reports as a backdrop, research the low-code platform market and start collecting comparison information. Work with your selection team to come up with a rubric for accurately assessing and comparing your options.

#5

How to Choose a Low-Code Platform



Step 3:

Assess, shortlist, and select a platform.

Once you've identified potential platforms, use your rubric to assess and shortlist them. Recall your requirements. You want a platform that's robust and scalable, but not one that has a lot of unnecessary bells and whistles. You don't want to pay for features you don't need.

In general, the more requirements a platform meets—and how well it meets them—the better choice it is. Though you'll also consider other aspects, such as overall cost, timeline to implement, and how well it integrates with other enterprise systems.

TIP: Vendors should showcase how their platforms address the use cases you created. This will present an opportunity to see how the platform performs in practice.

In the end, choose a platform that offers the best overall value between feature set, price, and other factors you deem important for your organization.

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