



Q3 2018

SuccessFactors Review

Foundation

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Whereas many of the specific modules in this release are receiving low volumes, small updates, or a combination of the two, the underlying platform functionality for SuccessFactors is receiving a wide array of updates including many significant ones. Normally we'd go deep on just the key ones, but this time around, it's going to be a wider whirlwind tour.

User Interface & User Experience

Across the suite, improvements have been applied to the user interface (UI), and in this release, some significant changes around the general UI, as well as the people profile and home page, are available for preview before its full release in Q4 2018.

The UI is getting a visual refresh and will standardise the look and feel across several SAP solutions, not just SuccessFactors. The big news, however, is probably in the new home page.

The home page functionality will include updates to tiles to provide things such as actionable and advanced 'to do' activities, selectable e-mail links, and direct integration of third-party system information allowing users to be more efficient. Tiles can also be grouped and 'to do' tiles disabled on a more granular basis, making administration quicker and easier.

The next generation Onboarding module, still in development, also

allows new hires access to the home page before the start date. This is a very interesting development that makes the onboarding process a much more integrated experience and allows new hires to engage before their hire date.

Finally, for those who have [SAP Enable](#), the context-aware training tool, this is also now compatible with SuccessFactors.

Security

Off the back of implementing GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) features, SAP is continuing to push on features that are securing system data. At a base level, these include additional validation and stricter change management (on legally sensitive personal data (LSPD)). Beyond that, changes are captured in audit logs, and many additional login features are now available including second-factor authentication access to provisioning and various improvements around the SAP Cloud Platform Identity Authentication Service (IAS) and the SAP Cloud Platform Identity Provisioning Service (IPS).

A nice development for identity services is that the single sign-on (SSO) logs are now available without having to go to SAP support, and the identity provider (IdP) configurations can now be uploaded using standard (XML) configuration files. This will eliminate a lot of issues and delays regarding the configuration of SSO.

Data Purging

Data Retention Time Management (DRTM) processing is also getting some updates to streamline purge requests. The purge process can now bypass default retention times, be applied to multiple users (by ID) in a batch and there's no longer a requirement to sync the termination date between Employee Central and platform in order to trigger the run. Even

the purge approval e-mails now deep link to the required approval.

Admin Tools

A couple of useful things for admins are the introduction of some 'Check Tool' checks and a master list for role-based permissions (RBP).

The Check Tool has seen many updates across the SuccessFactors suite, and the updates from a platform perspective are certainly not insubstantial. The updates include a set of four new checks relating to metadata framework (MDF) objects via a new MDF Extension Centre application selection option, and a plethora of role-based permission checks provided within a new Role Based Permissions (RBP) application selection option. The Check Tool also includes some limited support for 'Integration Centre, SuccessFactors' increasingly versatile utility for carrying out middleware operations like file transfers and basic data conversions. The Check Tool can now check the functionality available to it for accessing a secure storage area (i.e. one accessed using the secure file transfer protocol (SFTP)).

While the MDF and RBP checks I feel will be ones that could definitely help administrators in tracking down issues, I'm not overly convinced by the file transfer related checks. In my experience, the sorts of file transfer errors it can be used to check for are relatively straight forward to identify when a job fails, and in the main, SFTP issues (other than password expiry) typically occur at implementation rather than on an ongoing basis when an administrator might need to address such an issue.

As a final point, I was a little bemused to see the inclusion of a [homograph URL](#) checking tool. The fact is that admins must choose to use it; it isn't applied to all URL fields. Given the abundance of such checkers online (e.g. [punycoder.com](#)), I'm struggling to see much benefit with this addition.



Digital Assistant

The Digital Assistant for SuccessFactors is now in beta and is probably one of the most significant updates to the suite we'll see this year. With machine learning and automation currently being some of the biggest areas of technology investment, it's exciting to see this appearing in SuccessFactors. The Digital Assistant provides relevant interactive insights based on a user's role, their system context and the business data. The outcome is to save time and improve efficiency through improving engagement and productivity within the workforce. It's a prime example of SAP's re-engineering efforts to focus the products on the people rather than the processes.

The Digital Assistant is effectively an [SAP Co-Pilot](#) chatbot that uses natural language processing to interpret requests from a user. It then uses [SAP Leonardo's](#) conversational artificial intelligence (AI) functionality to determine a course of action based on the request. For example, by providing information, asking a question or taking action in the system. See *Figure 1.1*.

Triggering the assistant is as easy as picking out co-pilot action items in the Action Search or triggering the co-pilot icon in the SuccessFactors page header. See *Figure 1.2*. In the beta, only English will be available as

the language for interactions, but that will, of course, expand in time once it is out of beta.

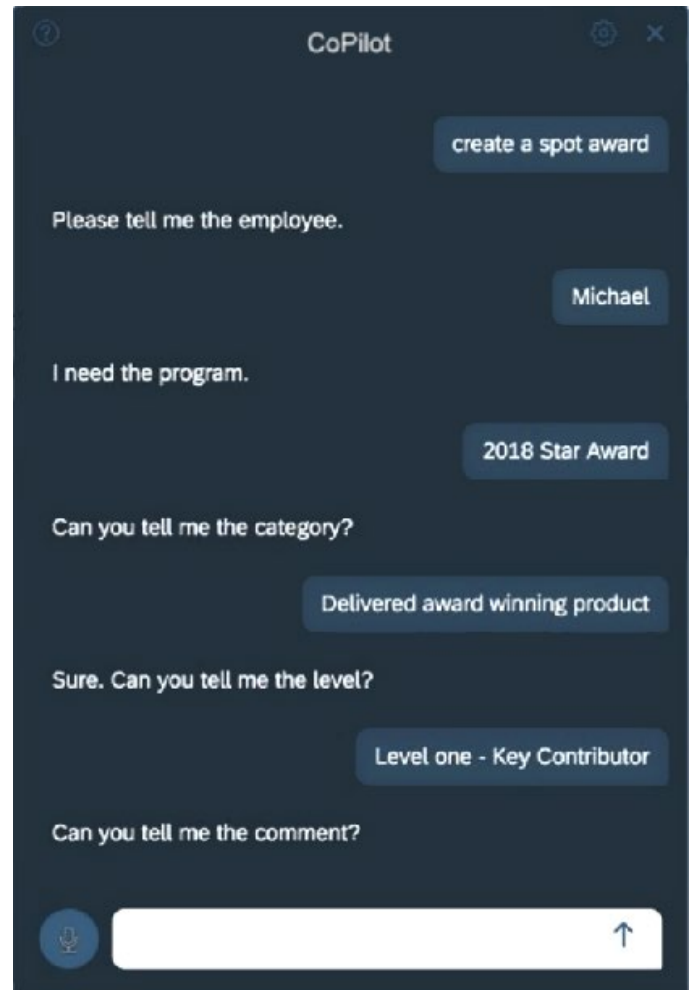


Figure 1.1

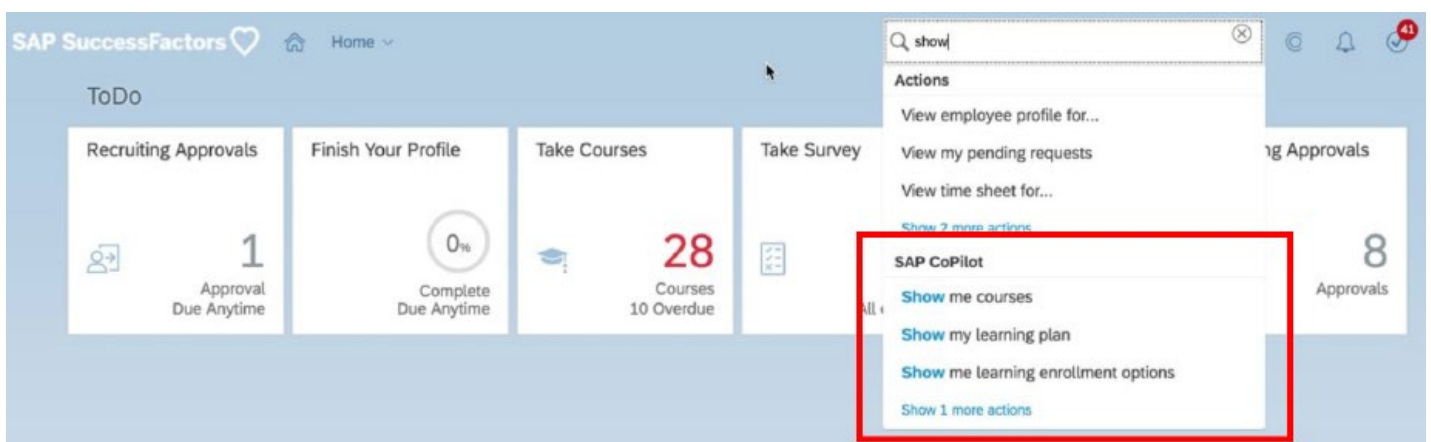


Figure 1.2



Conclusion

As I mentioned initially, there are a huge number of platform technology updates in this release. The remaining ones can primarily be grouped as follows:

- Job scheduler improvements
- Simplification of complex business rule definitions.
- MDF (Metadata Framework) performance improvements, including access via OData.
- A more self-service approach around instance synchronisation set-up with the introduction of Instance Sync for admins.

This last item is something that seems to be coming through alongside the general standardisation and performance improvements in this release. SAP do seem to be putting some not inconsiderable effort into enabling customers and partners to carry out tasks that have previously been reliant on intervention by SAP support. A self-service first approach should not only free up SAP support to work on more important requests, but significantly cut down on the inevitable pauses that occur in projects where SAP interventions are required. I'm certainly hoping that alongside the standardisation and performance updates, SAP continues to apply the development resource to making even more functionality available on a self-service basis. After all, a large part of the SuccessFactors model is to empower the end user.



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- **Business Process Services** - for if you are looking for operational support with your HCM processes.
- **Training Services** - for if you are not getting the most out your SuccessFactors system.

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