

Integrator stories

What lessons would Bank of Montreal (BMO) pass on to peers setting out to implement Alliance Integrator?



At the start of the Sibos week, Anna Ngai, technology head, the Bank of Montreal, shared her bank's experiences with Alliance Integrator – an add-on for Alliance Access that helps connect a customer's business applications to SWIFT.

The selection of Alliance Integrator was the result of a rigorous process lasting two to three months. "BMO has a very tight and formal approach to vendor selection, depending on size, complexity and cost," says Ngai. "We will normally create a shortlist of vendors, usually three to five providers who we feel could meet our needs, and then do a deep dive through an RFI or RFP."

Don't feel bad about going out and asking for help.

Anna Ngai, technology head, Bank of Montreal

"We already have Alliance Gateway and that was a plus, because we knew that if we had any problems, we would be dealing with one vendor," said Ngai. "If you have multiple vendors, it is sometimes difficult to get them on the same page when there's an issue. We also have a long history of working with SWIFT and the support we have received over the years has always been excellent." "Professional services is another thing we were looking for, because we knew we didn't have all the technical skills needed for the project," she commented. "SWIFT Consulting services provided an excellent service in that regard and we found its cost estimates extremely realistic." Implementation took nine months from contract signing to rollout. Ngai has a word of advice to peers embarking on a similar process: "Don't be afraid to admit any concerns about your own level of technical resources and don't feel bad about going out and asking for help. That is one of the key success factors."

Pragmatic painkillers

The standards developer kit (SDK) helps take the pain out of implementing MT standards.

It's rare for SWIFT to create a product specifically for developers, but Adam Moulson, head of implementation standards, SWIFT, says the standards developer kit (SDK) will not only facilitate adoption of MT standards, but also reduce the costs to banks of implementing them. "We recognised that taking the pain out of implementing standards would increase harmonisation," he says. "So we did something pragmatic: we captured the description of a standard in a technology the whole world can understand."

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Adam Moulson, SWIFT

Now SWIFT is working with seven banks and market infrastructures to capture bank- and region-specific implementation. "We're trying to bring information to people who need it so they can easily understand what the market practices are," says Moulson.

SDK extends the documentation of standards that SWIFT provides through the SWIFT User Handbook to include processable content in support of flexible standards implementations, from analysis through design, build, document and testing.

Left to right: Adam Moulson, Felina Solomon, SWIFT. Danette Fleming, Paulette A. Kaczmarek, Justin Chapman, Northern Trust. Jeffery Eck, SWIFT.



An open pilot of the next version, scheduled for completion in Q2 next year, will begin in November. In the meantime, Moulson and his team are already looking ahead to the

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next development – specifically, what SWIFT can do in the testing space.

A related project is looking to leverage data on how the standards are being used. "How can we use that data to understand how payments are being processed, for example? How can banks use it to see how they're working internally – or to ensure a consistent customer experience?" he says. "We want to eliminate costs to the community – not to move them around the business, but really to eliminate them. Of course we charge for our products, but the net impact is a significant benefit for the community."

Among the banks that have recently agreed to license SDK is Northern Trust, which will use it to simplify the MT annual maintenance. "We see both SDK and MyStandards as particularly promising initiatives for SWIFT customers," says Danette Fleming, vice president, worldwide operations & technology, Northern Trust.