Microsoft Power Platform

EBook

The CIO's Guide to Low-Code Innovation

Accelerate your innovation strategy using low-code solutions

Introduction to low code

Organisations seek to achieve greater productivity by empowering their employees with digital tools that enable them to be effective and efficient whenever and wherever they work. Opportunities exist for both the digitisation of existing processes and business-led transformation. The true value of low-code solutions comes from transforming processes to find new efficiencies and delivering differentiated capabilities.

This eBook explores why it is critical for any CIO's toolkit to include low code. It also explores how organisations can empower and accelerate innovation by considering and strategically using low-code tools, patterns and practices.

Low-code solutions are force multipliers enabling organisations to digitise and optimise critical systems and processes more rapidly. They help organisations adapt, invent and innovate by rapidly building and iterating new tools and processes that will empower their work tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

CIOs must seek to accelerate innovation and reduce costs simultaneously. Doing so requires innovation in the way we design, build and maintain applications and systems, as well as the processes the systems themselves deliver. 89% of CIOs and IT pros surveyed said low code effectively increases efficiency.[1]

Digitisation is expanding and rapidly evolving. This is happening both internally and externally to the organisation with customers, partners, suppliers and more. As digital demands rapidly grow, a significant opportunity exists for CIOs to lead, securing greater business impact at the board level as strategic agents of change.

IT must move beyond operating technology to empower the business in its transformation. Doing so requires a fundamental shift in how and at what scale value is created by information systems. Plus, business agility is needed to put those systems to use.

Low code helps create additional value from existing and upcoming technology investments. Acting as the capstone to cloud investments and engineering capabilities, low code can help reach the last mile of digital transformation. Low code helps ensure that the power and value of a cloud-powered organisation reach those throughout the business who need it and can receive the most value from it.

Well-integrated, well-governed low-code solutions can drive success, empowering organisations to achieve more by bringing together Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS), the application programming interface (API) economy, AI and cloud and hybrid computing.

1 Richard Riley, 'Low-Code Signals 2023', Microsoft Power Platform Blog, April 17, 2023, https://cloudblogs.microsoft.com/powerplatform/2023/04/13/low-code-signals-2023/

Defining low code

Low code is a method of software and application development. With low-code development platforms and approaches, organisations can create enterprise-grade business apps using drag-and-drop functionality and visual guidance. Through the power of AI-infused low-code platforms, developers can create apps by simply describing the desired application functionality in natural language – they just describe it, and the core of the application is built automatically.

The low-code approach requires little or no coding experience or knowledge. It is important to realise the benefits of a suitably flexible, scalable, no-cliffs, low-code platform for non-technical business personnel and professional developers.

A well-structured low-code platform provides capabilities above and beyond those that more traditional customer compute products (such as spreadsheets) and early, point-solution low-code products offer. A low-code application platform should:

- **Save time:** enabling any permitted person in an organisation to develop apps rather than waiting for a professional development team to do it for them.
- **Boost productivity:** freeing up professional development teams to focus on the apps or components of a larger application ecosystem, which require professional development skills.
- **Reduce costs:** empowering existing business staff, those with domain knowledge of the process the app serves, to rapidly create the applications they need rather than hiring more developers.
- **Increase agility:** enabling the rapid creation and iteration of apps that help organisations deliver differentiating business capabilities to market quickly.

Empower professional developers to deliver more apps in less time and rapidly enhance, scale and integrate the applications business users have built as they grow in criticality to the organisation.

A successful low-code platform will enable these capabilities while providing the telemetry, insights, governance and control that enterprise IT demands from professionally developed solutions.

Why low code?

In 2019, Satya Nadella estimated that 500 million new apps will be created in the next five years – more than the total created in the last 40 years.[2] This trend has resulted in demand growing 5× faster than IT departments can deliver.[3] We must find ways to empower a greater population within our organisations to satisfy this demand.

Technology has repeatedly addressed this need before. As developing applications moved from hardware-level programming to specialised languages to modern languages such as C# and Java, each iteration enabled a greater audience to participate. At each step, the ability to digitise processes and transform organisations has expanded, bringing more professional developers into the process. The demand for this digitisation of processes and the delivery of the applications those processes need has continued to accelerate, beyond the capacity of professional developers alone.

Organisations need to look beyond simply scaling up the number of professional developers employed to build these applications. They also need to look beyond the simple efficiencies that better programming languages can offer. A different kind of abstraction should be considered – one that allows organisations to include an even wider audience in the value-creation process of software development. Doing so requires an approach that empowers the business to build and maintain solutions independently and to work in closer partnership with professional developers.

A robust, scalable, secure, well-integrated low-code platform is needed to move the business forward faster with lower development, integration and service costs. Such platforms, infused with next-generation AI capabilities, can help accelerate and scale an organisation's ability to meet the increasing demand for application and process development.

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2 Satya Nadella, 'Microsoft Fiscal Year 2019 Fourth Quarter Earnings Conference Call', Microsoft, July 18, 2019, https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/Investor/events/FY-2019/earnings-fy-2019-q4.aspx

3 Amanda Silver, 'Achieving business resilience with cloud application development', Azure Blog, September 23, 2020, https://azure.microsoft.com/blog/achieving-business-resilience-with-cloud-application-development/

Why now?

As the introduction mentioned, low code can act as a capstone, building upon current technology investments and bringing them together to create business solutions. Critical mass for low code is being reached through the confluence of cloud capabilities reaching maturity and evolving.

Wide-scale adoption of software accelerated as modern programming languages matured, enabling a greater community of developers to deliver greater value in less time. As the underlying technologies required to deliver valuable, productive applications and processes with low-code platforms reached their inflection point, so did the opportunity for impact through low code.

This inflection point is enabled by three compounding traits of modern enterprise architecture.

Data ubiquity

The ubiquity of data – not only its existence and storage but also its accessibility, governance and security – acts as fuel for creating applications that can find, operate upon and store new data without needing an advanced degree in distributed systems.

61%

of IT decision-makers report increased security and visibility around data connections[4]

Compute on demand

The ability to define a process by its inputs, actions and outputs rather than the infrastructure required to perform it. Compute is provisioned, managed and decommissioned on demand. This allows the building of systems in terms that are more favourable to the business user who owns the process than the needs of a programmer.

4 'The Total Economic Impact™ Of Microsoft Power Platform Premium Capabilities', August 2022, https://clouddamcdnprodep.azureedge.net/gdc/gdcyc75Gp/original

58%

of IT decision-makers report increased revenue[5]

The API economy

While APIs started as an interface for programmers, many are now wrapped in easy-to-consume connectors that group together common underlying technical functions into more outcome-based functions – such as 'Send an email', 'Retrieve a document', 'Recognise data within this scanned form' and so on.

These functionally defined connectors enable less-technical makers to consume services and compose the applications and processes they need rather than code them in the traditional sense.

Next-generation AI with Copilot

With the power of AI in tools such as Copilot in Microsoft Power Apps,[6] creators are able to build an app, including the data behind it, by simply describing what they need in a few conversational steps. This broadens the pool of people who can engage in app creation significantly while accelerating development for more experienced creators and developers. Combining this with the ability to surface conversational AI functionality within the applications they're authoring and the apps anyone in the organisation builds can have an exponentially greater impact.

5 'The Total Economic Impact™ Of Microsoft Power Platform Premium Capabilities', August 2022, https://clouddamcdnprodep.azureedge.net/gdc/gdcyc75Gp/original

6 Ryan Cunningham, 'Announcing a next-generation AI Copilot in Microsoft Power Apps that will transform low-code development', Microsoft Power Apps, March 30, 2023, https://powerapps.microsoft.com/blog/announcing-a-next-generation-ai-copilot-in-microsoft-power-apps-that-will-transform-low-code-development/

Low-code economies of scale

The case for low code is strengthening due to both capability and need. Supply and demand are both growing. The maturing capabilities outlined previously enable low code to deliver more value than ever. The scope and scale of organisational transformation are driving demand to innovate faster with lower operating costs.

The increased demand for innovation – for agility in an organisation's ability to invent, iterate and operate systems, processes, products and services – demands that organisations focus their energy on what matters most. They should ensure that business users and processes are empowered with the right tools to be efficient and effective.

Providing organisations with the ability to compose the applications and processes they need to participate in the value creation of application development is a critical way to drive innovation at scale.

55%

faster solution quoting through better data integration[7]

Successful low code adoption requires security and appropriate governance. It requires simple apps born in the business to have a natural roadmap to scale, integrating professionally developed services and components where appropriate. These capabilities are now available at scale and differentiate between a low-code cul-de-sac and an innovation-fuelling business transformation superhighway.

7 'The Total Economic Impact™ Of Microsoft Power Platform Premium Capabilities', August 2022, https://clouddamcdnprodep.azureedge.net/gdc/gdcyc75Gp/original

Drivers for low code

Lighting up the shadows

Often, business users are frustrated by the pace of improvement in the tools they use to achieve their goals. Developers and IT teams can be equally frustrated by unclear requirements and a lack of empathy from internal stakeholders, who need help understanding why engineering takes time and effort.

Without intervention to help bridge this divide, businesses see the build and purchase of applications creeping in without specific organisational approval – shadow IT. It's common to see organisations building business-critical spreadsheets[8] that have little visibility, control or governance, as well as third-party point solutions being purchased. While these shadow IT solutions may serve the purchasers' immediate needs, the value of the data within them is siloed from that of the rest of the business, and risks around compliance, security and reliability are too easily overlooked.

8 A spreadsheet may become critical if its disclosure, or an error in it, would pose a significant financial risk; it represents or manages future planning, forecasting or demand planning; it contains customer or employee data; or it isn't itself critical, but feeds into a critical spreadsheet.

Productivity
(by value)

- Tooling
- Automation

Quantity
(# of devs)

- Skilling
- Hiring

Inclusion
(in value creation process)

- Empowerment
- Collaboration

Scaling innovation

To scale innovation in our organisations, the capability to innovate must be pervasive. The first dimension of scale that many consider is quantity. The ability to innovate through software can be increased by hiring a greater number of developers, engineers, testers and IT technicians. However, to truly scale and drive agility and pervasive innovation, it's important not to be constrained by or entirely dependent upon the scarce and expensive skillsets of developers and engineers.

The second dimension is productivity – empowering these finite resources to be as productive as possible and removing as many non-value-adding tasks as is practical. Scaling in these two dimensions can help increase agility, but we can only scale the size of our development teams and automate and enhance their capabilities so far.

Your IT and development resources are likely sized and suited to managing the application estate they know about. They may need help looking into these shadows to determine the highest priority applications (those that deliver the greatest business value or that present the greatest risks).

This is where the third dimension of scaling innovation through development is critical. This third dimension is inclusion. Low-code solutions can add incredible value by empowering more people in your organisation to contribute to application development more directly.

When embraced correctly, low code can facilitate truly cross-functional teams. Business users and professional developers can collaborate more directly through low-code tools, breaking down communication barriers, enabling rapid prototyping and iterating solutions.

Your business users can begin creating an application through a description in natural language, such as 'Design an app with a table summarising site inspections'. Then, they can use Copilot to help refine simple commands, such as 'Add a column named Location and populate with data', and suggest additional options to enhance the application. That's when app creation accelerates.

Through an established centre of excellence (Co),[9] business-incubated applications can be readily monitored for their utilisation and performance – unlike a folder full of spreadsheets. Their lifecycle can be managed. When an innovative application gains traction in the organisation, professional developers and IT can intervene to ensure appropriate controls and architectural and resilience reviews are undertaken to support the business and help the application scale with an appropriate operating model.

9 Manuela Pichler et el., 'Centre of Excellence (CoE) overview', Microsoft Learn, March 15, 2023, https://learn.microsoft.com/power-platform/guidance/coe/overview?source=recommendations

Beating the backlog

The opportunities and potential upsides for digitised, transformed applications and processes are limitless. So are the demands on development and IT to realise these opportunities, leading to ever-longer backlogs of applications that need to be built, enhanced, replaced or rewritten for a different era.

As the CIO, low code presents an opportunity to engage the business as part of the solution, helping to ensure IT is correctly perceived as a driver for positive change.

Traditional engineering takes time. This can be at odds with the business need for agility, creating tension between stakeholders. Engaging the business in developing applications, from leadership to individual contributors, helps shine a light on the complexity of their needs and engages their domain expertise in addressing and simplifying their solutions.

Low-code solutions can help you accelerate delivery against the backlog of opportunities for transformation in four key ways:

Business self-service – simpler business applications can be built self-service by those who need them. Where professional developers have built and published APIs, and IT has permitted the use of appropriate connectors into other business systems, the business user can compose ever more advanced applications with little or no intervention needed by professional developers or IT. This reduces time to market and demands on your resources.

Accelerated professional development – with low code, professional developers can rapidly assemble much of the application without spending time on mundane tasks such as styling and user interface build-out. This helps them focus on only those components of the solution that need their expertise the most, reducing labour and accelerating delivery.

Working together – with business users and professional developers collaborating as a fusion team – can take this further. Business users compose much of the scaffolding of the application, perhaps through the power of Copilot AI-assisted development. Professional developers can code advanced features such as custom connectors and components of the solution more suited to professional development. These pro-code components surface their capabilities as an API that low-code apps can consume.

Incubation – in a truly innovative environment, it may not be clear at inception which applications will deliver the most value. Until they meet their market, we may not know which will attain great traction and adoption across our organisation and which will remain valuable, small-scale personal or team productivity helpers.

By reducing the barrier to entry, low code enables the creation and ideation of applications with minimal initial investment. An application may start with a couple of hours invested by a business user to create something that simplifies their workflow or that of their team.

"From an innovation standpoint, we can use Power Apps to spec and build a solution and continuously improve it, rather than waiting for someone else to do the work."[10]

– Christopher Hitt, Field Technical Operations, Toyota Motor North America

Other adjacent teams may recognise its value and seek to adopt it or invest some time in extending its capabilities further. This can repeat at scale, delivering value, capability or efficiency from tens to hundreds or thousands of users.

By starting small and proving its value before scaling, the idea has been incubated by the business, enabled by your IT function.

As such, incubated applications gain traction, and telemetry and insights in a low-code platform can help IT to gain insights into what's hot. They have a catalogue of who's authoring and updating the application and insights into who is using it, how often, where and when – and most critically, how the application performs. This insight helps prioritise proactive interventions by IT. It creates opportunities to enhance the application as it scales – perhaps introducing caching or scaling the backend services and APIs the application consumes. This improves performance and makes for the proactive delivery of value to the business.

Focusing on business user experience and building resilient systems offers the opportunity to make IT the hero.

10 'Build Apps for your Business', Microsoft Power Apps, https://powerapps.microsoft.com/landing/developer-plan/?ef_id=b9dcc84f872817362226ab9a186c1851%3AG%3As&OCID=AIDcmmgly95xrd_SEM_b9dcc84f872817362226ab9a186c1851%3AG%3As&msclkid=b9dcc84f872817362226ab9a186c1851

What's in it for CIOs?

Throughout this guide so far, we have focused on the organisational benefits of low code, but what's in it for leaders who shape and drive a low-code strategy within their organisations?

Between IT and business, a balance of power and impact can be tough to keep in check. However, CIOs looking to increase their influence in strategic initiatives that are important to the organisation's strategy can use low code to build the connective tissue between business demand and IT supply.

Low code can accelerate an application's time to value and deeply engage business professionals in the process of building and maintaining the applications in use.

The CIO's opportunity with low code is as a strategic leader. By championing early initiatives – starting with targeted workloads, building the governance framework, and proving the pattern with strong candidate applications – the CIO can be the heart of transformative initiatives that deliver on the organisation's strategy while driving efficiency and maintaining the governance that enterprise IT demands.

Executing and scaling this strategy can help elevate the CIO's political capital in the boardroom. Low code can help you ensure your work and expertise are aligned with key business priorities. This tends to happen naturally with low code because of the very business-driven nature of low-code initiatives. The incubation model fosters innovation and naturally selects applications that deliver the greatest business value. The CIO providing the vision and enablement for this approach has a profound opportunity for impact at scale.

Setting up your organisation for innovation with low code

Getting started

As with any technology adoption, success is achieved through the combination of people, processes and the technology itself. As CIOs and IT organisations pivot from technology gatekeepers to enablers of business change and innovation with low code, it's important to consider the operating models you have in place today and how a low-code operating model will interact with them.

Culture

Merriam-Webster's dictionary provides one definition of culture as "the set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterises an institution or organisation."[11] If we're looking to adopt new technologies and approaches to the building of applications and processes, we must recognise that we will be changing some goals and practices – iterating our culture.

As we seek agility in our organisation's capabilities and outcomes, we might consider how we create a culture of agility in arriving at those outcomes. To do this, we must know that we may not have all the answers yet. It is necessary to know where we want to get to, embrace the change required to get there and believe we can improve. As conceived on an individual level by Carol Dweck, this growth mindset can be applied to not only our people but also our teams, our functions and our whole organisation.

While this can seem daunting – now I need to change my culture, not just my technology? – the journey can start with small steps. Embracing a growth mindset necessitates accepting that we don't know everything and must therefore learn and grow on the journey. First, we can establish guiding principles and high-level outcomes. Then, with a balance of trust and empowerment, we can enable teams to start, learn, adapt and iterate quickly before growing the scope and scale of adoption.

To realise the value of a transformation, you must start the journey. Start soon, test often and fail fast to minimise waste – learn, iterate and repeat.

11 'culture', Merriam-Webster.com, 2011, https://www.merriam-webster.com (24 May, 2023)

Operating models

Two clear models exist: citizen-developer-led and professional-developer-led. Citizen-developed apps are those built by business professionals who are not formally trained in IT disciplines, but are empowered to create, deploy and update applications or technology solutions themselves. The latter, usually considered traditional software development, is led by experienced technical experts and likely already exists in your organisation.

Citizen-developer-led applications can achieve the desired balance of agility and control through a low-code centre of excellence. Once established, business-incubated applications can be readily monitored for their utilisation and performance by the CoE. Appropriate interventions can be made to ensure the application's effectiveness, compliance and performance.

"The main purpose of what we do is to make Power Platform secure so that people can build applications that simplify their own work."[12]

– Andy Kunz, Global IT Solution Architect, Zurich Insurance Group

The CoE should also act as an enabler of low code adoption – an internal customer success unit – raising awareness of capabilities, driving skilling activities and playing an active role in supporting the adoption of low code. A high-performing CoE takes a train-the-trainer approach, diffusing skills and experience into the wider organisation to help people help themselves.

This will require resourcing and planning, and it's important to establish clear objectives and the key results you seek from the CoE. It's often helpful to identify known areas for growth in the organisation and seed the development of low-code solutions in these areas to build organisational capability and help prove value early. These should be an initially small set of meaningful, essential applications with quantifiable business impact to avoid the 'so what?' argument.

12 "Finding the sweet spot between robust governance and meaningful enablement", Microsoft Customer Stories, May 20, 2022, https://customers.microsoft.com/story/1505315121638915892-zurich-insurance

"Dootrix defined a comprehensive new operating model for Heathrow's use of the Power Platform for application development. Defining a roadmap for how Heathrow can set new standards, guidance and policies for its use of the Microsoft Power Platform."[13]

– Andrew Isenman, Head of Innovation, London Heathrow Airport

While the intuitive value of low code sits with building out the citizen-developer-led operating model, it is important to recognise the opportunity presented by fusion teams. Citizen developers address the user or customer experience of the application, while professional developers work with them to enrich the functionality and provide release engineering, scaling, reliability and integration expertise. They do this as one scrum team with clear roles and responsibilities between them.

When embraced correctly, low code facilitates truly cross-functional teams. Business personnel and professional developers can collaborate more directly through low-code tools, breaking down communication barriers, enabling rapid prototyping and iterating solutions.

"We support the community. We help them through the lifecycle and provide the governance: making sure the user interface is right; making sure they use the right tables; making sure they do thorough user acceptance testing."[14]

– Lia Nowodworska, Head of Information Management, Balfour Beatty plc.

Some apps will be built by IT, some by citizen developers and some in partnership.

13 'Heathrow Enterprise Power Platform Application Lifecycle Management', Dootrix, https://dootrix.com/work/heathrow-enterprise-power-platform-application-lifecycle-management/

14 'Balfour Beatty transforms construction to meet tomorrow's challenges with Power Apps', Microsoft Customers Stories, October 26, 2022, https://customers.microsoft.com/story/1548929841358384364-balfour-beatty-other-power-apps-en-united-kingdom

Building your CoE to cater to both citizen-led and fusion teams will help your low code adoption realise the value in a greater number of scenarios. This might be achieved by building capabilities in one low-code CoE for both operating models, establishing distinct CoEs for each model and adding a mechanism by which they pool ideas and collaborate. You may opt to start with one before expanding to the other.

To give a concrete example of the power of fusion teams, we can look at EY's PowerPost[15] project, which streamlined general ledger (GL) entry and approval processes. Using Power Platform's pre-built SAP ERP connector, EY built a proof of concept application in a matter of weeks.

With the concept proved, a combination of business subject matter experts (citizen developers) worked closely with professional developers. The citizen developers knew their process, its needs, where the bottlenecks were and how to overcome them. The professional developers brought expertise in using the APIs available within the organisation and building additional components to extend capabilities where required.

A world-class solution was developed and rolled out to global finance teams within three months.

"Enabled by Power Platform, PowerPost is a significant improvement to our existing document entry process for the EY organisation. We can reduce costs, increase efficiency, reduce our processing time, improve our month-end closing process and create a better experience for our finance teams."

– Ajith Haripaul, EY Global Controlling Transformation Leader

15 'EY helps enable entry at source for a global finance process with Power Platform, reducing lead times by 95%', Microsoft Customer Stories, June 21, 2022, https://customers.microsoft.com/story/1517917618455612643-eyzilla-professionalservices

Rationalising existing technologies

It's also important to consider your current technology portfolio and explore which existing applications would benefit from migration to or augmentation with low code.

This is an area that can rapidly deliver tangible value. Existing applications needing modernisation may have quantifiable enhancement or redevelopment costs, timelines and defined benefits that are already known. Using low code, perhaps in a fusion team, to shorten the development lifecycle, reduce the professional developer labour cost and minimise the operating costs once it is built can quickly demonstrate a return on investment and a compelling business case.

As we review the applications in our organisation, several possible treatments per application or workload may exist. Often referred to as the five Rs[16], these treatments provide options to consider when looking to transform systems.

We won't go into them in detail here, although for this discussion, we're referring to the following:

- Rehost
- Refactor
- Rearchitect
- Rebuild
- Replace

The five Rs of rationalisation are a great way to label a potential future state for any workload that's being considered as a cloud candidate. Strictly speaking, leaving an application as is isn't modernisation, but it's a potential outcome worth consideration.

16 Martin Ekuan et al., 'Cloud rationalisation', Microsoft Learn, March 2, 2023, https://learn.microsoft.com/azure/cloud-adoption-framework/digital-estate/5-rs-of-rationalization#Rationalization%20context

Encapsulation is a popular approach when core systems are not ready to be retired, but their pace of change or scalability hamper innovation. Mainframe and legacy ERP systems often benefit from this treatment.

In exploring the potential of low code, we see two groups of application treatments where low code can help accelerate delivery, reduce the cost to implement and, perhaps most critically, reduce the time and cost to maintain.

Low-code-led modernisation – when we're examining the potential impact of modernising a workload by either rewriting or replacing an existing solution with a new one, we should consider the possibility of doing so with all or some of the development being undertaken with a low-code-first approach.

This can be achieved through the close collaboration of the CoE with the business subject matter experts. We define the development using the desired capabilities and outcomes, create clarity on the business value and work in a tight-knit team with the CoE: sharing expertise, transferring skills and facilitating the business' creation of their application. By doing so, we bridge the gap between business and IT. The CoE and, by extension, the CIO and IT department become integral to the business' achievements.

Fusion development, with low code being a component of the modernisation – when we're looking to rearchitect, refactor or retain and encapsulate, low-code options accelerate key components of the solution. Low code presents an opportunity to reduce the efforts of professional developers and the associated labour and costs.

Professional developers can focus their energy on core engineering by enabling business users to develop key components of the solution more directly. They can expose functionality via APIs, custom connectors or tailored widgets for the user interface that business users can then compose as required.

For encapsulation, this can be particularly impactful. When you have a core system that you will retain – perhaps a mainframe platform or an established and entrenched ERP system – you don't have to maintain the status quo with your professional developers. You don't need highly specialised and scarce development consultants to build new applications and integrate them with the core system. The opportunity exists to take key functionality of the core system, secure it, expose it as APIs and support the business in building the applications and processes they need over those APIs.

This can reduce the upfront scope and cost of the encapsulation development. More importantly, it puts the power and agility to adapt, extend, modify and rework the applications and processes in the hands of the business owners of these apps and processes. This approach can embody the wisdom of 'give someone a fish' versus 'teach someone to fish'. When executed well, you've empowered the business to control their own destiny while retaining the governance and control that enterprise IT demands.

Tools to help you succeed

Before embarking on your low code journey, it's important to pause and think about your platform options. Many options exist that may meet simple requirements for your first project or two, but how will they scale? Will you reach a cliff and find you need to rework low-code applications as professionally developed solutions later as the applications gain traction?

Here are some key questions to keep in mind:

- Is the platform secure enough for B2B or B2C projects?
- Does it offer built-in security features for apps?
- Is it scalable? If we need to add more users later, is that easy to do?
- Does it allow us to create apps for different types of devices?
- Will it facilitate the blend of low code and professionally developed solutions we will require?
- Does it utilise AI to accelerate app development? And does it allow the easy embedding of advanced, next-generation AI capabilities into the apps our users will build?
- Can it be readily extended through managed APIs? And can we build custom connectors?
- Does the platform integrate with our wider data, AI, compute and security vision?

When exploring low code for innovation in your organisation, consider how the platform will provide an end-to-end portfolio. Your platform needs may start with the tangible apps and user experiences your organisation uses every day. They will likely expand to include process automation and more.

As the applications and processes deliver greater value and efficiency, you may need the ability to open the app experience to end customers with web portals or to automate responses to common questions through conversational bots. You'll want business intelligence reports and analytics to gain oversight of the whole operation.

With Microsoft Power Platform, all these apps work natively together, providing one platform experience. With Copilot in Microsoft Power Platform, next-generation AI is at your business users' fingertips to empower them to achieve more.

The tools required to execute your low-code vision go beyond the completeness and capabilities of the platform itself. The ability to achieve the vision is critical to success. You need guidance, training resources, proactive support, toolkits and accelerators and skills, not to mention seamless integration with existing security, modern work, data and cloud compute capabilities.

Microsoft Power Platform provides a comprehensive set of resources to help you execute your low code vision. A few are outlined as follows.

Microsoft Power Platform Centre of Excellence Starter Kit

One such capability accelerator is the Microsoft Power Platform CoE Starter Kit. The starter kit goes beyond the technical assets you can deploy. It provides guidance on governance and administrative best practices and step-by-step guidance on preparing your environment, establishing data loss prevention policies, data integration management and administrative analytics.

Start strong with the right support

Proactive support engagements are available to Unified Support customers to work closely with your team, set your CoE and program up for success and maintain close support as your low code journey evolves and scales.

Microsoft's extensive partner network is also on hand to provide expertise and experience to help you set up your organisation for success with Power Platform, short-cutting the learning journey and helping diffuse skills into your teams and the wider organisation.

Microsoft Learn

Beyond the guidance and assets of the Power Platform CoE, Microsoft Learn provides free-to-all guided learning and certification paths on a broad range of topics, such as PL-900: Microsoft Power Platform Fundamentals.

For qualifying customers, our Enterprise Skills Initiative[17] can provide training and certification resources beyond your development and IT teams. It provides skills development and recognition to help retain and develop your top talent by empowering their growth.

17 Ask your Microsoft representative about whether your organisation qualifies for the Enterprise Skills Initiative and what training options may be available to you.

Next steps

Microsoft Power Platform empowers your organisation to start creating innovative low-code solutions, with lower costs and greater flexibility.

- Take the Power Platform Adoption Assessment to see where your organisation is in the low-code journey.
- Explore Microsoft Power Apps in this self-guided demo and discover how to create low-code apps in minutes.
- Learn more about Microsoft Power Platform.