

Building Customer Success on a Global Platform

How United VARs Drives Global SAP HANA Adoption in the Cloud

by Nicole D'Angelo, Contributing Editor

It is inevitable — companies are, and will continue, transitioning to SAP HANA. And as they do, many will be moving to the cloud with an eye toward avoiding the expense of an on-premise deployment. To ensure a smooth and successful migration, these organizations, which often have a global presence and a distributed infrastructure, would benefit from working with a unified SAP provider that has a global footprint and can offer consistency in architecture, service delivery, and support.

United VARs, in partnership with Symmetry, meets that need. As the world's largest alliance of value-added resellers (VARs) of SAP software, United VARs is a tight, trusted affiliation of more than 40 SAP channel partners from more than 80 countries that have come together to offer a true platform for digital transformation. Since its inception in 2006, United VARs has evolved into a robust organization that provides unmatched benefits to both its members and its customers — and the alliance is dedicated to continually increasing these benefits as its customers undergo digital transformation.

As companies move to SAP HANA in the cloud, United VARs is available with a platform to support that transition in this new digital era. The alliance has built a global presence and combined forces with technology provider Symmetry to deliver the services and support that customers need, regardless of size or location.

A Platform for the Future

Value-added resellers have been key contributors to the SAP landscape for decades, providing software expertise and implementation guidance for countless customers.

At a Glance

Goal: Create a global platform for collaboration, project management, and infrastructure-as-a-service offerings to benefit companies with international operations

Strategy: Assemble the leading partners in each of more than 80 countries and collaborate with a global cloud hosting provider

Outcome: Uniquely offers a state-of-the-art global platform for project execution, infrastructure, and application hosting to facilitate SAP HANA adoption in a private managed cloud with the United VARs Cloud Solution

With businesses undergoing globalization through expansion, mergers, and acquisitions in recent years, many VARs were struggling to meet the needs of their customers with international subsidiaries. This situation prompted the formation of United VARs, which dedicates itself to ensuring that companies with an international presence have the support of trusted vendors in any country in which they operate. This means, for example, that if a German customer of alliance member All for One Steeb opens a subsidiary in Spain, fellow alliance member Seidor will support that subsidiary with the same level of service that All for One Steeb gives to the customer's headquarters in Germany.



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Its commitment to its clients drove United VARs to take a close look at what customers are demanding in today's digital economy. Its member organizations realized what many other businesses are also realizing: Because of the increasing popularity and comfort level with the cloud, on-premise IT systems are becoming less and less common. Instead, businesses are investing in managed services. "As customers digitally transform and move to SAP HANA, we expect that, in the future, very few customers will have their own data center with their own hardware," says Detlef Mehlmann, Head of International Business Development at All for One Steeb and Director for United VARs. "And what these customers are doing is requesting full service from their vendors."

However, full service — including data centers and private cloud solutions — was not something that most United VARs members were equipped to offer, and asking each member organization to build the necessary functionality was simply unrealistic. Yet, United VARs still needed the ability to offer such services to provide the level of support its customers expected.

To meet customer needs and provide a global private cloud offering, United VARs entered into a partnership with SAP technical services and cloud hosting provider Symmetry, a company with a 22-year heritage serving global SAP customers. As a US market leader in SAP private managed cloud hosting services, Symmetry was selected to help United VARs transition to its service-based era of IT. The company provides United VARs with technological capabilities and managed services that it never would have been able to obtain otherwise, while United VARs gives Symmetry a new international presence. And now, United VARs not only offers its customers a first-class global platform for collaboration and project management, it can also offer a state-of-the-art, high-availability, secure SAP cloud hosting platform.

"We recognized in our first meetings with Symmetry that they are at the next step of developing their business internationally," Mehlmann says. "They are implementing aggressive plans to grow worldwide, and this is what we need. Our business goals and areas of strength were a perfect complement." As customers are deploying SAP HANA in the cloud, Symmetry is supporting the

United VARs Cloud Solution for SAP HANA and offering scalable, secure hosting services on a global basis.

With Symmetry's help, United VARs is stepping into the future and capitalizing on today's IT trends. United VARs can offer functional consulting as well as support for implementations, migrations, and cloud deployments on a global scale. The alliance is empowering its members to become one-stop providers for their customers. "In the past, United VARs was set aside if our customers or partners were satisfied with a project," Mehlmann explains. "Going forward, United VARs is a global platform, and the first step to this bigger, more comprehensive platform is our cooperation with Symmetry."

The United VARs and Symmetry platform is strategic. "A customer can go to a unified provider and experience consistency in service delivery, disaster planning, and support in a unified, scalable architecture by which to move its mission-critical SAP (and even non-SAP) workloads to a private managed cloud," says Pete Stevenson, Chairman and CEO at Symmetry. What's more, over time, companies can benefit from the flexibility of hybrid cloud solutions. Persistent workloads can be delivered on a private managed cloud, while non-persistent workloads can be delivered in a public cloud — and, at some point, workloads can be optimized for either the public or private cloud and managed through a single pane of glass, according to Stevenson. (For more details on Symmetry, refer to the sidebar at the end of the article.)

Global Presence, Local Expertise

The network and relationships established by United VARs give customers notable benefits due to the combination of local attention and international resources. Among these benefits are the centers of excellence that United VARs partners have worked together to establish. Now there are six centers of excellence within the partnership, including ones for SAP S/4HANA and SAP Business ByDesign as well as solutions for customer engagement, analytics, and more. "These centers of excellence are headed by one partner, normally a partner who is very experienced with these products," Mehlmann says. "This partner has a direct counterpart at SAP, and the center of excellence has the clear vision to drive each

particular product into the community.” Through these centers of excellence, United VARs can provide top expertise to customers.

Providing expertise to customers and partners around the world is part of what makes working with a United VARs member so beneficial to a business. When one considers the collective network of United VARs member companies, almost the entire SAP portfolio is covered. This means that no matter what a customer wants to implement, a member partner can most likely gain information about it through the network. Members can also offer their customers applications and methodologies that otherwise never would have reached the customer’s country. “It doesn’t make sense to keep reinventing the wheel in different locations and countries,” says Alejandro Daniel O’Davoren, Deputy General Manager at Seidor and Director for United VARs. “Let’s invent things once and then spread the knowledge around the network.”

Mehlmann adds that this spreading of knowledge provides small and midsize enterprises (SMEs) with a level of service and expertise that is usually exclusive to large companies contracting with large service providers. “United VARs is the only worldwide vendor for SAP customers that understands the SME business,” he says. “We have specific industry solutions for SMEs that other big consulting companies don’t have. And we are doing this business, which is normally done locally in one country, on a worldwide basis.”

Despite the global presence, each subsidiary customer works with a local partner, which gives the experience a local feel for that customer. This means, for example, that customers are not charged global rates, but rather pay local rates that are appropriate for their country. It also means that individual partners know about country-specific information or legislation that can then be communicated not just to the local subsidiary customer, but also to the customer’s other subsidiaries around the world. And because the partners are local, they are fully committed to each subsidiary — to them, that subsidiary is also a customer, not just an offshoot of one. With its global platform, United VARs has the unique distinction of being able to offer this localized, regional expertise in combination with global resources for SAP cloud infrastructure and application management.

A Network of Global Trust

United VARs follows a few guidelines to guarantee that its partners provide the very best services to SAP customers. The first is to ensure, through research and consultation with SAP, that the organizations in the alliance are among the very best in their regions. To join United VARs, partners must have a proven track record of helping SAP customers achieve results.

The second is that, with a few exceptions, there can only be one partner per country. This rule is maintained to ensure that the various partner organizations can trust each other, explains Mehlmann. “We do whatever we can to avoid competition among our partners because competition is the enemy of trust,” he says. “If you’re in competition, you won’t trust the other partners — and from my perspective, United VARs is so successful because all these partners trust each other.”



United VARs, LLP

Headquarters: Ratingen, Germany
(registered in Manchester, UK)

Industry: Global SAP service, sales,
and innovation

Employees: 21,000, including
10,000 consultants

Revenue: \$2 billion

Company details:

- Founded in 2006
- 40 resellers of SAP solutions operating in 80 countries
- Serves 8,000 customers
- Board of Directors: Detlef Mehlmann (All for One Steeb); Alejandro Daniel O’Davoren (Seidor); John McGrath (Answertthink); Ronnie Sung (DynaSys Solutions)
- Members received 15 SAP Regional Awards for Partner Excellence in various categories in 2017
- www.united-vars.com

SAP solutions:

- 100+ SAP industry solutions (250+ add-ons)
- Global access to the full SAP portfolio, including SAP S/4HANA; SAP HANA; SAP Business One; SAP Business All-in-One; SAP Business ByDesign; analytics, mobility, and SAP cloud solutions; and more

Symmetry Delivers Global Cloud Platform to Fuel Digital Transformation

To offer a platform for its worldwide customers, United VARs partnered with Symmetry to serve as its infrastructure provider for the United VARs Cloud Solution for SAP HANA. With deep expertise and experience in SAP application management, Symmetry provides secure and scalable cloud hosting services for the growing global network of United VARs customers. Working in lockstep with United VARs, Symmetry enables customers to move to SAP HANA in a private managed cloud.

“One key benefit of the United VARs and Symmetry partnership is that customers now have a global platform that enables them to have a highly qualified, experienced provider manage mission-critical workloads,” says Pete Stevenson, Chairman and CEO of Symmetry. “At Symmetry, we have deep domain expertise — we live and breathe SAP. We design, deliver, and operate our infrastructure with high availability, high reliability, and high security as fundamental pillars. Most importantly, we are invested in each customer relationship — a customer is a relationship, not merely a contract number.”

An SAP partner since 2005, Symmetry is certified in SAP hosting, cloud, and SAP HANA operations. As a true extension of IT teams, Symmetry places a laser focus on the customer’s experience and offers highly flexible, tailored solutions to meet the unique business needs of enterprise clients. Symmetry supports global enterprises across all industries through a customer-centric, high-touch approach that delivers deep technical expertise combined with a scalable, redundant, high-availability cloud infrastructure supported by a 24x7x365 operations support model.

With a long history and proven methodology for delivering hybrid solutions comprised of a managed private cloud hosting infrastructure with enterprise application management services, Symmetry delivers IT solutions that help reduce the total cost of ownership and maximize the performance and security of its customers’ most mission-critical systems.

For more details, visit www.symmetrycorp.com.

To illustrate the importance of this trust, Mehlmann explains that because members of United VARs frequently find themselves transferring a customer relationship to another partner whenever an international subsidiary is involved, they have to know they can trust that partner with their customer as well as with their intellectual property. If there were any chance of that customer or that intellectual property being stolen for the international partner’s own gain, United VARs could not operate.

To monitor this cooperation and ensure that the partnership is working as it should, United VARs has three levels of leadership: the members’ assembly; a 10-member supervisory board consisting of nine representatives from United VARs organizations and one from SAP; and a group of four directors — two in Europe, one in North America, and one in Asia — all of whom are leaders at United VARs partner organizations. The leadership and other members of the partnership meet throughout the year, and when meeting in person is too difficult, the members communicate via SAP Jam, a cloud-based SAP solution for enterprise collaboration.

Daniel describes how members of United VARs can quickly share expertise across the international community by using SAP Jam. “It helps us when we have to push some important information into the network, and when we need that information back very fast,” he says. Whether developing in-person relationships or getting real-time help from international colleagues, the member organizations of United VARs are frequently sharing expertise and knowledge while building the trust needed to support their mutual customers. United VARs is likewise dedicated to sharing expertise and building relationships with SAP to better support customers. The alliance has a close relationship with SAP that helps it obtain valuable recommendations when looking for new partners to add, gives it access to information on the latest releases, and grants every partner within the alliance SAP platinum partner status.

Looking Ahead

Moving forward, according to Mehlmann, United VARs is considering partnerships with other types of complementary solution providers. Also on the agenda is the development of a solution marketplace that will bring each partner’s individual offerings into one online space to provide customers with a broader range of solutions to choose from and to give partners a new audience.

Daniel explains that United VARs is, for the most part, done growing in size. Instead, it is focused on growing in substance. Creating a solution marketplace, expanding its technical capabilities through strategic partnerships, and leveraging the technology and expertise of Symmetry — all of these strategies are aimed at building the network into something even more valuable to the customers it serves. “The bottom line is everything is aimed at giving more value to the network, which is the value the members put into it,” he says. “And that’s the reason why we are currently moving forward and running new initiatives — to put more value into United VARs.”

This enhanced value starts with United VARs’ unique ability to offer a global platform that supports companies during their digital transformation. As companies transition to SAP HANA and choose to place their infrastructure in the cloud, both United VARs and Symmetry intend to be with them every step of the way. ■

