Inside SAP S/4HANA

From Product Experts to Product Experts

Presented by
openSAP
open.sap.com

Podcast Inside SAP S/4HANA - Transcription

Inside SAP S/4HANA Episode 99: How Inetum Leverages Localization as a Self-Service for Midsize Customers in Africa

Katrin: [00:00:00] Hello and welcome to our podcast inside SAP S/4HANA. There is no customer success without product success and project success, and this episode is called "How Inetum leverages localization as a self-service for midsize customers in Africa". And today, I have the pleasure to talk to Amine Drissi, Pre-sales Director at Inetum Business Solutions, about his company's experiences with localization as a self-service, our offering for localization extensibility in SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. As we all know, localization is one of the cornerstones of success when companies are expanding into new markets, and this great solution not only enables customers and partners to enhance SAP delivered local versions, but maybe even more importantly, it also enables them to create own customer local versions for regions where there is no local version from SAP available or on the roadmap. And this episode today is actually the second one in an exciting three part series dedicated to localization as a self-service. The first one has been published already and is an introduction to localization as a self-service in SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public edition. We discussed there, for example, the different options for localization extensibility that we provide, and we also share plans for the future.

Katrin: [00:01:30] Now in our episode today, the second one in our series, we will be much more hands on. As mentioned, I will talk to Amine from Inetum Business Solutions. The company is one of the first SAP partners that created a customer local version of SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, with localization as a self-service for an African country. So today you will get to know the specifics of the African market. You will learn about the benefits and challenges that Inetum encountered when using the solution for their customers, and you will hear what recommendations they have for customers and partners. So if this sparks your interest, you should definitely listen to this episode. And before we begin, let's start off with a short round of introduction. So my name is Katrin Deissner and I have the honor to be the host of this episode. You know me from previous podcasts already, and I'm a product manager for SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. And as revealed already today, I'm joined by Amine Drissi, Pre-sales Director at Inetum Business Solutions. So welcome to this podcast episode. Amine, great to have you on board today.

Amine: [00:02:47] Hi, Katrin. It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me.

Katrin: [00:02:50] Perfect. Amine, now, before we dive into localization as a self-service in SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, it would be great for our listeners if you could shortly describe what your role at Inetum comprises.

Amine: [00:03:05] Sure, Katrin, Sure. As a pre-sales director within Inetum Business Solutions, I actually have the responsibility to ensure that we are proposing to our prospects and customers here in Africa the best suited SAP solution that meets their evolving requirements and help them achieve their goals. I am constantly in contact within this role with all aspects of our internal businesses, be it sales, delivery, management and also all the experts to make sure that we bring all forces together for the benefit of our customers. As you mentioned in your introduction, there is no customer success without product success and project success. I am usually at the source of both products and projects within Inetum.

Katrin: [00:03:55] It sounds interesting. So you're so to say in the center of it, right, in the middle. And um apart from your professional life, is there also something personal that you would like to share with us.

Amine: [00:04:08] I was actually born in Casablanca in Morocco, a little bit over 40 years ago, and I lived abroad about half of that time, mainly in Spain, France and USA. So besides Morocco, obviously. So I'm always curious about cultural differences between countries. I have learned over those years to value the strength of each culture, rather than miss what is lacking in a specific country, which was a struggle at the beginning, to be honest. So it is all a matter of perspective. A glass half full rather than half empty. And I try to bring this positive mindset with me to the business so we can achieve much more in a positive, dynamic environment, I believe.

Katrin: [00:04:51] Well. So you're really a true cosmopolitan with a positive attitude. I can imagine that this is also for your role as pre-sales director, really beneficial if you look at things from the positive side. Now, getting to know you better or a bit better as a person. It would be great for our listeners to learn more about Inetum business solutions. Of course. Can you explain to us what your company offers to its customers?

Amine: [00:05:22] We are a European technology leader, a top tier IT services, solutions and innovation player with a global presence. So we are around 27,000 consultants spread over 27 countries, of whom over 2600 are SAP experts. We have a solid presence in Africa. Almost 200 of our SAP experts are located in two countries, mainly in Morocco and in Tunisia, to address the African market. So we covered the complete value chain from audit to support services as well as consulting integration of course. So throughout the whole value chain. Inetum has been a trusted partner in Africa for a SAP for the last 15 years, and during this time we've worked on several projects in different countries. So Morocco and Tunisia, as mentioned earlier, but also countries just such as Ivory Coast, Cameroon, just to name a few. And as you can imagine, through this we managed to build extensive expertise in many SAP solutions such as SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, of course, but also Ariba and Successfactors. I guess it is needless to say that in almost all of these projects, the localization of business processes played a major role. In addition, we pride ourselves in our mission to make access to SAP best assets more democratic in a market that always seeks excellence with limited budget. So this forces us to stay on top in terms of operational excellence. So in activities such as cost control, innovation, continuous improvement. And with regard to our topic today. So standardization and localization packs of course. For this reason. Uh, localization as a self service is exactly what led us to optimize our offering around SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. Even for mid-sized companies, rather than opting for other SAP solutions like business one.

Katrin: [00:07:31] Right. And with all these factors that you just mentioned, I can imagine that this is a really challenging environment. And it also sounds to me like S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, and also the localization offering is actually a great fit for you. You just mentioned that you need to also addresses customers on the African market. What from your experience is specific about this market?

Amine: [00:07:59] Yeah, sure Katrin. The African market is very dynamic. It is constantly disrupted by the technological breakthroughs. Besides, organizations are becoming more sensitive to all ESG requirements, and digital transformations are at the heart of all ongoing transformations. We are completely within a Vuca context to which we add some African specifics. So our customers in Africa have very high standards. They always want the best in breed, but they have very high technical requirements, but at the same time limited

budgets. So new competitors appear frequently. And unfortunately, price is what initially makes the difference in customers decision making for partner selection. This is actually the type of environment in which we usually have to play. The result is that we have to be very creative. We have to become very creative and productive to meet all involved parties expectations. A very important point to keep in mind is that for the African markets, SAP S/4HANA Cloud offers only local versions for Egypt and South Africa, which means that we partners have a very strategic role to play in enabling these customers to adopt the solution. And for this reason, the localization as a self-service offering is, of course, very valuable for us as it allowed us, for example, to create a customer local version for our customers in Morocco. Or as you mentioned in the beginning, we are proud to say that we have been among the early partners to create customer local versions of SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition in the African market.

Katrin: [00:09:48] Wow. Congratulations, Amine. Really impressive. And I fully agree. Partners definitely play a key role here. Um, let me quickly add to what you just said. SAP S/4HANA Cloud currently and with currently I mean the 2308 release offers 55 SAP delivered local versions out of the box and with 2402, this is planned to increase even more as we have four additional local versions on the roadmap. So that's Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Oman and Slovenia. And for countries where there is no local version by SAP available and also not planned as you just mentioned, Amine, customers and partners now have the option to create their own customer local versions using the configuration localization tool shortly called CLT, which is part of our localization as a self-service offering. So if we look at Africa here, we have South Africa and Egypt as SAP delivered local versions which are running out of the box. And in addition, we so far have two customer local versions that are up and running, which have been created by SAP partners. One of them is Morocco, which has been localized by Inetum. Amine just mentioned it. And another partner has successfully created a customer local version for Togo. And in addition, they're of course currently many more implementation projects for African countries ongoing, for example, Senegal, Mauritius and Ethiopia.

Katrin: [00:11:27] Before we focus now on your experiences with creating customer local versions, let's first talk quickly about your experiences with SAP delivered local versions. As you know, they provide a lot of local business configuration content, country or region specific, and features and functions to help most of the enterprises to meet the respective local business and legal requirements, which, as we all know, quite often vary from country to country. Typical examples are tax codes and tax calculations, tax reporting. Uh, very importantly also country specific document numbering or e-invoicing so etc., etc.. I could go on and on here and and if a customer has additional legal compliance requirements which are not covered by the standard, we call these requirements the last mile localization requirements, customers can extend the respective SAP delivered local version. Amine, when you think about the SAP delivered local versions and the option to extend them, at Inetum, do you make use of this kind of localization extensibility? And is this something that you see as beneficial for your localization projects? And if yes, can you explain to us why?

Amine: [00:12:51] Yes, Katrin. So in Inetum Business Solutions in Africa we usually do not navigate in this scenario actually, as mentioned earlier, only South Africa and Egypt have SAP delivered local versions, and unfortunately, we have not had the chance to work on these geographies so far, maybe in the near future, who knows? Uh, that said, uh, extensibility is no secret in this market. There are actually numerous use cases in which we

have to develop custom assets on top of what SAP delivers. For instance, in Morocco, it is mandatory to have a breakdown by VAT rates in the invoices, which impacts the invoice edition form. So we actually cannot access the right format via the German Localizable items, which means we must go through extensibility and develop a custom form for the client. And this is something we actually have to do frequently. If I look at other geographies where SAP delivered local versions are available, I believe the bridge of localization is much shorter than what we experience here, as a majority of features and functions are already built in and are either directly accessible or via settings adjustments. So extensibility is kept to critical business requirements, which is, in my opinion, a really healthy balance to be in.

Katrin: [00:14:20] Now let's come to the second localization option. That localization as a self service offers, the creation of own local versions. We already mentioned that you successfully use the configuration localization tool CLT to create such a customer. Local version for Morocco and your customer is already live with it. So what were your experiences there? Would you say the tool was easy to use? Did it have a positive impact in terms of project time and project efforts? Can you recommend it to your partners?

Amine: [00:14:55] Of course, Katrin, this is actually the most common scenario for us. The guideline here is to start from the German version of SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. We have access then to all localizable features and functions of the German version that are made available to our region, so to Morocco via the configuration localization tool. So the CLT, as you mentioned earlier. Localization activity that takes usually place for us is twofold. So on one hand most of the localizable items is reused as is or adjusted via business configuration when possible of course, which is a huge gain for both partners and clients. On the other hand, features or functions that are either missing or do not respond to clients business requirements require a more advanced problem resolution from our parts. So be it via a side by side extensibility or other workarounds such as business process reengineering with the client directly. So when creating a customer local version using the configuration localization tool is clearly an asset that helps both customers and partners to optimize their efforts, shorten the timelines, and have access to a fully functional solution in a record time. We are actually talking about having something up and running in less than three months, which is really groundbreaking for us in our market here.

Katrin: [00:16:30] Really impressive. Wow. I can imagine that other partners and customers will be delighted to hear that. When you look at your experiences with localization as a self service so far, what benefits and challenges would you like to share with our listeners?

Amine: [00:16:48] Localization experiences, I believe are directly tied to market maturity and trends. So, for instance, a partner ecosystem will have much more experience working in private cloud solutions than in public cloud. For example, just here in Africa. Inetum is actually one of the early partners that have so far used localization as a self service to create customer local versions for SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition in Africa. And this is relatively new as we're talking about 2023 initiatives. So early this year, a great example of localization challenges that we run into in our latest localization efforts for S/4HANA public cloud in Morocco. As mentioned earlier, in the guideline from SAP is to start from the German version of the solution and then localize all the available scope items. For example, what we run onto is that the financial templates for purchasing accounts was not aligned with the Moroccan context, and we couldn't change the settings. It was gray actually great, so we couldn't change it to make it fit to our requirements. The French version, however,

was luckily completely aligned with our requirements, so we had to involve SAP to activate it for us.

Amine: [00:18:08] And thanks for this. Everything turned out well for us or for our clients. And this is actually the type of challenges that localization efforts make us run into. Capitalizing on this type of information help optimize all future localization efforts. This is really important. In general, customers adhere to localization approaches and this is for obvious reasons. It enables adherence to legal mandates. It helps them build resilience with efficient and integrated business processes, as well as bring in automation to optimize productivity and business outcomes. All these benefits allow for a better user adoption and client satisfaction, ultimately. In my opinion, main challenges reside in customers willingness to change. There is a natural instinct which is actually really natural, or resistance to changes, and the tendency to seek what is perceived as a stability. So customers are used to doing business in a way, and we need to help them see there are other ways from which they can benefit and scale their businesses. In our end, these experiences give us enough insights to know where and when to focus our efforts to ensure that customers get actually the best out of SAP.

Katrin: [00:19:32] We can imagine, thanks, Amine. Now, after talking about the benefits and challenges that you came across, let's now focus on the solution side of the house. What lessons have you learned for the benefit of your customers in the past projects?

Amine: [00:19:49] In our market, partners have a strategic role in localization efforts, be it via configuration or localizable scope items or extensibility. So our domain expertise, our knowledge of the evolving local regulations, the deep connections we build with our customers, which allows us to understand perfectly not only their needs, but also and mainly their ways of working is a key lever, I believe, for SAP in these markets to succeed in localization efforts. At Inetum, we have developed a structured localization framework that we put at our customer's disposal in all our engagements. It allows us to efficiently bring together our SAP expertise with the customer requirements, alongside vertical specifics and country regulations. Finally, it is important to note that our intent is to work in a scalable way. We develop whenever possible, of course, reusable components that can be industrialized or leveraged as accelerators in our future localization efforts. And why not even packaged as the potential built in localization in the near future? Who knows? Who knows?

Katrin: [00:21:07] Taking into account the experiences that Inetum gathered with localizing mid-sized customers in Africa, what recommendations do you have for our listeners?

Amine: [00:21:18] Localization of SAP delivered versions is meant to align what the solution offers to the customer context, usually in the majority of projects, not only localization occur, but also customer specific requirements must be taken into account. I would recommend to first clarify what are the needs and objectives, the challenges and pain points we want to address. Clearly identify the forces at play that impacts, either positively or negatively, the performances of our clients before ongoing any efforts. Also, the partner selection is a crucial step. Clients must make sure they are partnering with the right company domain expertise, local knowledge, experience on these types of projects and I believe SAP can be of great assistance on this search. So I think this is really the right combination that sets the right foundation of a successful localization project. I would finally advise to try and stick to the standard as much as possible. We usually tend to try to customize the delivered solution

completely and make it fit our ways of working. There are several things at stake here, like access to world class business processes, being able to profit from updates seamlessly automate as much as possible innovation. So these are all incentives to take into account at the end of the day, which is why I would advise not to confuse localization with custom developments for the customers.

Katrin: [00:22:54] Perfect. Thanks so much for these helpful recommendations, Amine. Dear podcast listeners, if you enjoyed this episode on localization as a self service with Inetum, you will be delighted to hear that there are actually two additional podcasts which also focus on localization as a self service, so please have a look. The introductory one is already available as it was published before this one, and the third episode with PwC and their experiences with the solution will be published soon as well. So make sure you don't miss out. And having said this, we have already reached the end of the podcast. Amine, Thanks a ton for your great insights. I wish you all the best in your next localization projects. It was a pleasure to have you.

Amine: [00:23:43] Thank you, Katrin, for having me. It was a real pleasure.

Katrin: [00:23:46] So goodbye everyone. Thanks for tuning in. Stay safe and don't miss out on the next episode of Inside SAP S/4HANA.

www.sap.com