PUBLIC

Podcast: Inside SAP S/4HANA Cloud

Episode 126: Parallel Line in SAP S/4HANA Cloud – A New Era of Implementation Flexibility feat. Infosys

Fig. 1 – Cover art of Inside SAP S/4HANA Cloud podcast
Figure description – An image with a silhouette of a hand holding up a loupe over a blue circuit board. A solid blue block featuring the title “Inside SAP S/4HANA Cloud From Product Experts to Product Experts” and SAP logo is under the image.

Transcript

Jerry: Welcome to the podcast Inside SAP S/4HANA Cloud. There is no customer success without product success and project success. I'm Jerry Lowery, P&E Solution Architect supporting SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, and I'll be the host for today's episode. Today, we'll discuss the parallel line or PL, implementation experience at one of our SAP customers in the area of professional services with the support of the SAP partner, Infosys. As our guests today, we have Ajay, Senior Industry Principal from Infosys, and from SAP, we have Nicola Pace, SAP Product Manager for S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, and lead of the early adopter program for the parallel line, and Jai Srinivasan, P&E Solution Architect, supporting SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition and regional point of contact for the parallel line. Welcome to you all. Let's start with a short introduction and some fun facts about you. You first, Ajay.

Ajay: Thank you, Jerry. I lead the services portfolio for Infosys, for all SAP engagements for customers across the globe. Over the last few years, I had the opportunity to deliver S/4HANA Public Cloud led finance transformation for our customers in this industry segment and still continuing the journey with support from my clients and SAP. Funny thing? Well, there is nothing much funny about me. I try to be as focused on my work and therefore, my colleagues and my friends always make fun of me about that fact. Good to be here. Thank you.

Jerry: Thanks, Ajay. So great to have you. Nicola.

Nicola: Thanks a lot, Jerry. This is Nicola Pace. I am from Product Management SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. And well, during the last five years, I supported the go-to-market first of the three-system landscape architecture for the S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. Then I moved to the landscape extension called Parallel Line by leading together with our colleague Darwin Tagliarita two early adopter programs that ended successfully with the general availability of the three-system landscape in September 2022 and of the Parallel Line in April 2025. Ah, indeed, I can say they have been quite five interesting and challenging years.

Jerry: Thank you, Nicola. Jai, could you give us an intro?

Jai: Yeah, thanks so much for having us, Jerry. I'm really excited to be here. For the past eight years, I've been working as a solution architect for SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition, helping customers succeed with the implementation and deployment of SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. Currently, I'm serving as a region point of contact for Parallel Line in North America. Outside of the tech world, I tap into my creative side, like through writing and directing short films. It's a passion that keeps me inspired and also fuels my fresh thinking, in everything I do. That's a little fun fact about it.

Jerry: That's great. Thank you, Jai. Okay, let's dive in. Jai, could you provide us a quick introduction for our listeners about the Parallel Line in SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition?

Jai: Sure. Before elaborating, I think one should need to understand what's a background and also the problem which Parallel Line would solve. Traditionally, with ECC applications,

right, implementations, I have encountered many customers who needed to perform various tasks, like project-specific configurations, testing upgrades, data migration, and also training. These tasks often require a separate client within their environment. With the move to SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition and its three-system landscape, we now have a more flexible solution called the Parallel Line, which allows the customer to perform the task like project-specific configuration testing upgrades and data migration. That's the advantage of having a Parallel Line.

Jerry: That sounds very interesting. Could you put a little more color on what is the Parallel Line?

Jai: Yeah, absolutely. The Parallel Line is a state-of-the-art offering that provides enhanced flexibility within SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition. Actually, it became available to SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition customers using a three-system landscape as of April 1st, 2025. Essentially, it offers a separate workspace in SAP central business configuration, including two additional tenants for configuration like D120 and the testing environment at D120.

Jerry: This has been a long-running ask from a lot of our customers, so what can customers do with these additional tenants?

Jai: Well, as I stated earlier, the Parallel Line allows customers to test, to validate scope extensions, roll out new countries, they can extend organizational structures, perform data migration, build and test integrations, and conduct training and testing. The beauty of it is that all these activities can be done without any disruptions to the main project line.

Jerry: Yes, that sounds like a significant advantage. How does this help, especially during critical events like upgrades?

Jai: Indeed, it's particularly useful during the upgrades. When, as we have seen, that when new innovations are introduced, customers can test and validate these changes to the Parallel Line without affecting their main line of business. This ensures a smoother transition and minimizes risks.

Jerry: I could see. Yes. So help me understand, is this feature only beneficial for live customers or could new implementations also take advantage? I could imagine this would be particularly useful for cutovers and migration testing.

Jai: You're right again, it's not just for the live customers. Even those in the middle of their implementation can leverage Parallel Line for data migration test, Hadoop training, or any other testing needs. As long the prerequisites are satisfied, it is designed to offer flexibility at any stage of the project lifecycle and making the entire process more efficient.

Jerry: And turning to Nikola, I imagine you have significant insight consider your experience. Do you want to add anything?

Nicola: Yes, Jerry. Well, as I also have recently described in an article on LinkedIn, with the introduction, to the market of the three system landscape SAP made already three years ago, a big step ahead in the cloud, ERP space. This three system landscape, new architecture,

fulfilled, most of the requirements raised by customers after the previous launch of the two system landscape. And the three system granted, among all other improvements, also, new fundamental capabilities like more extensibility, more configurability of the solution, control on content deployment, to the productive environment. It also offer more separation of concern between development and test, which in 2SL were combined. it also grants full continuity for project activities during the software upgrade, cycles. After the general availability of this three system landscape, however, SAP started collecting additional requirements also for this three system landscape architecture. That brought us to the concept of the parallel line. This architectural announcement is intended on one side to offer more runs of the same activities like data migration and testing in a environment.
On the other side, even more importantly, grants the separation of subsequent configuration projects from the lifecycle events that are continuously innovating the productive environment. So we can say that the parallel line offers the implementation team the capability to run parallel configuration projects in separate environment, with different timing for deployment, the configuration to main line and to production.

Jerry: Nicola, thank you. So this is very insightful. Let's turn to Ajay. So Ajay, could you explain a bit about Infosys' experience with customers and implementing the Parallel Line? What kind of businesses are they in and what was the scope of the implementation?

Ajay: Thank you, Jerry. I would echo the statements made by Nicola and Jai. The S/4HANA Cloud product has evolved over a period of time, starting with the basic 2SL with manager solution and a set of SSUIs. Then it was further enhanced with the central business configuration within the 2SL, where you could have those control deployments and then enable that. Subsequently, 3SL was enabled and now we have the Parallel Line. And this whole journey indicates that the aim is to bring parity between the cloud capability and what most of the customers who are in this cloud journey expect. Our experience with Parallel Line is for a leading services firm with operations in 40+ countries, where their leverage is S/4HANA Public Cloud as the centerpiece for their finance transformation. And the use case is pretty much everything which Jai and Nicola elaborated, be it for multiple rounds of data migration to validate data in a clean environment, or with a multiple-phase rollout, how do they efficiently and effectively manage the operations and the continuing rollouts. How do you enable that? And the centerpiece of that is going to be the Parallel Line environment.

Jerry: I see, I see. Okay, thank you, Ajay. Jai, are there any prerequisites for implementing the Parallel Line?

Jai: Yes, Jerry. Again, if a customer would like to implement Parallel Line, there are certain prerequisite checks which have to be met, and it includes the following. Again, these are the prerequisite checks which are being defined as of now. So the first one would be that the production tenant must be provisioned. The second, all CBC and BC transports in the customizing tenant should be released from the customizing tenant. I'm talking about the transports in the mainline, right? The third, all the transports in the import buffer of the test tenant should be imported. Finally, the mainline workspace in CBC, all the activities and milestones of the scope and organization structure phase should be in a completed status. And mainline workspace should be in the product-specific configuration phase, and it should be unlocked. And again, this prerequisite check must be requested by the customer using SAP For Me.

Once the prerequisite checks are met, the customer will receive a notification email in their inbox, and the service request will be updated in SAP For Me. Then the customer can create a service request to initiate the branch and then follow the process.

Jerry: Great. okay. Thanks, Jai. I think that's very clear. Ajay, could you please share why did the customer choose to implement the parallel line for this project?

Ajay: Sure. This customer has a global business operations which spread in 40 countries, and given the complex nature of their organization, it wasn't feasible for them to do a big bank go live. And therefore, as a part of the go live, we evolved on a phased go live. Now, with a phased go live, it brings certain aspects during the program and go live of the initial phase. For example, during the program with multiple phases, we need to manage multiple rounds of data migration, both for the initial phase as well as for the subsequent phases. Now, in a three system landscape, where you didn't have the provision like an on-prem to refresh the database because customers come from that mentality, how do you satisfy the need for them to do multiple rounds of data migration? And that's where the parallel line comes into play. So that's the first use case for this customer. Second, I mentioned about the rollouts, where multiple rollouts are planned for this customer. We are starting with the initial go live in this November, and then next year, which is 2026, there are about three go lives planned, and then subsequently in 2027, two more go lives are planned. Now, with multiple go lives, how do we manage the operations and the rollouts efficiently? How do we bring that differentiation where we can provide priority for anything which impacts operations while maintaining the project schedule? That's the second use case for parallel line, where we will be able to focus on specific tasks as a part of the go live. We will focus on specific tasks as a part of the parallel line, and then build the main line for other set of tasks. The third aspect why we decided to consider the parallel line is on localization. With the 40 countries and of course some unsupported SAP countries, how do we ensure that the program is not at risk by accidentally activating something which can then put the entire program in jeopardy? That's another use case for parallel line, where we could activate new countries, check their localizations, validate it before we do it in the main line, because parallel line gives us the ability to rebranch as many number of times as we need. For example, if I stand up the parallel line today, and I did a set of tasks, I found that something is wrong, and I will not be able to use that parallel line any further, I am able to bring down that client and stand it up again with the latest copy. And therefore, it helps me validate certain edge use cases or edge localizations without impacting the program. These are some of the examples and needs which we thought through and chose to go with the parallel line project journey.

Jerry: Thanks, Ajay. That makes a lot of sense. And we can see that it seems the customer experience was pretty good, and they certainly received a lot of benefit from the parallel line, and it really helped their project. So maybe a two-part question. Where are they at today? So what's the status update on the project? And could you also, second part, walk us through some of the various steps and share some of the experiences so far?

Ajay: Sure. We started this program last year, the sometime mid of 2024. We finished the design, and then we started the build in 2025. We are nearing the completion of build, and then starting the testing in about a couple of weeks with an aim to go live towards the end of this year, followed by rollouts starting next year. So 2026 and 2027 is going to be full of rollouts. That's essentially the status of the program. So from an activate perspective, we are currently in the realize phase of the activate methodology, and we will soon be in the deploy

and then run, and of course, the rollouts will start. Our experience with Parallel Line, or if I have to talk about the step, the very first step in the process is to understand how does Parallel Line work, what it can do, what it cannot do, what are the prerequisites, and how do we go about with the process. It starts with enabling, as Jai mentioned earlier in this session, it starts with enabling the Parallel Line. We were an early adopter, therefore, Nicola and team helped us through a set of processes, but now it's a solution is in general GA, and therefore, customers have to raise a request, and as a part of the request, there are prechecks done wherein the transports, it is verified if the transports are in sync, if all the changes have been migrated, and then if those prechecks are done, then customer, we raise the request. You get the tenant provisioned within one day, and once the tenant is provisioned, there are a set of post-processing activities. Example, the Parallel Line works through a table copy, which means all the config data is copied from the existing mainline tenants, D and T, to a ParallelDev and S tenant. However, the reference data of the config is not copied. So, as a part of the post-processing, we will have to do that, we have to load the data, which is all the reference data. Apart from the reference data, to make the processes work in the Parallel Line, there may be additional data which may be required. For example, you may have to create some test data, like customers, like projects, like sales orders, etc. Those are the things which we have to create. So, we went through this process, validated it, and then once we do a basic testing, we feel that the Parallel Line is usable, and then we release it for the use, for the purpose. For example, we did one cycle for data migration, and that's when we released it for subsequent rounds of data migration. And once you do this as a step one, the next important step we do is to keep the lines in sync. For the mainline, we have a habit or a practice of moving the transports every fortnight, which means every alternate week, we move the transports and keep all the systems in sync. This is to ensure that the systems are in sync, and all the monthly patches and upgrades which happen by SAP as a part of hotfix or other maintenance, which is delivered to all the systems, it's not delivered in different versions for different systems, thereby resulting in some potential errors at a later point in time. We extended that concept to the Parallel Line. And therefore, what we do, once we sync the mainline, the following week we sync the Parallel Line. And that's when we do the rebase and the merge, which means whatever work is done on the mainline, we copy that to the Parallel Line. And if we did some validations or new solutions in the Parallel Line, and we find it to be acceptable, we do a merge to the mainline. That's the second step of the process which we do. And the third step is we periodically evaluate as to when we should do a rebranch. When we initially set up the environment, we did a rebranch. Subsequently, we used it, we activated few countries, we tested the processes, and then the mainline continued with other set of configurations. Now, for data migration, we wanted a clean environment with all the configs. That's when we decided that we should do a rebranch. So the third step is to decide what would be the appropriate time to do a rebranch. And in all this process, it is important to consider the lead times taken for this, build that into the project plan. That has been our learning and the experience of how we went about approaching the Parallel Line. We did have our share of challenges in understanding and trying to work it through, but that's part and parcel of any project.

Jai: Awesome, awesome. Ajay, thanks for sharing your experiences. One thing I would advise the customers to regularly synchronize the Parallel Line with the mainline using the rebase function. I think that's a practice that would help them prevent any conflicts. Moreover, during the project implementation in the Parallel Line, it is recommended to avoid making major conflict changes directly in the mainline. This approach promotes more stable and

manageable processes. I think Nicola would agree to that. Is there any other recommendations for our listeners? Nicola?

Nicola: I would agree, Jai. Moreover, let me please add also that together with development and integration, the good practice of performing a regular rebase is also strictly related to creating the right configuration conditions in the target system. So, in essence, with the rebase, the Parallel Line gets regularly synchronized with any configuration that is being made meanwhile in the mainline. And this helps primarily for two reasons. Number one, that any validation happening during tests in the Parallel Line is more reliable because the condition of existing configuration in the Parallel Line reproduced more loyally the one in mainline. And number two, that all incremental configuration which are done in the Parallel Line has more chance of success and not generating conflicts when they will be merged to the mainline because they will find there very similar conditions in terms of configuration, exactly same condition in terms of configuration. This ensures correctness in the merge as well.

Jerry: Okay, okay. Nicola, let's stick with you. Let's talk about the future of the Parallel Line. What do you think could be improved in future PL implementations and in the product itself?

Nicola: It's a great question because with the general availability, Jerry, of the Parallel Line, I think we believe we reached only the very first stage, only the very first milestone. And much, much more is on the plan. In the next weeks, we have to strengthen clearly and make fully robust the operational steps execution for branch and all the incremental configuration synchronization which happens during rebase and merge. We have to make them robust, we have to make them completely consumable as a self-service by the customer. In the short term, it's true we also target to allow customers to replicate the Parallel Line tenant-specific extensibility artifacts and to build also with very low effort those master data which are required during the consumption of the Parallel Line tenants. One additional target we have is that while today the merge is offered as full or none, meaning whatever is being built in the Parallel Line gets replicated to the mainline once merge is executed, in the midterm, our ambition is to offer so-called selective merge, meaning that we want to allow customers to select from the Parallel Line only a portion of the incremental configuration which they build, for example, only one country out of two, and have it replicated to the mainline, only one, and not the full configuration. This at the moment is still not possible, but we're working to make it possible in the midterm. And the other major pillar of our roadmap for the Parallel Line is to offer customers multiple Parallel Lines at the same time, so that this can serve customer needs for different purposes, different use cases, different implementation projects at the same time.

Jerry: Yeah, I could see that could be very great. Thanks, Nicola. Ajay, speaking from the point of view as a partner, what was your experience with the implementation?

Ajay: Thank you, Jerry. Our experience, as I mentioned earlier, initially it was a learning experience. The Parallel Line at that point as a part of Early Adopter was available under two options. So we had to discuss with Nicola and team and then took their guidance in terms of which option to choose. And then we went ahead with the table copy option. And once we set that up, I think we had our set of expectations or wish list, as I may call. And what we realized is that while the solution does offer a bit of capabilities, it is important to plan the post-processing, which I elaborated. For example, we should have sufficient tasks in the

project plan and sufficient time in the project plan to allow for the post-processing, be it copying the reference master data, which is there in the home field, or even set up of basic data to validate that the Parallel Line is set up properly. Let's say we should have ready-made templates for, let's say, LTMCs for customers, projects, sales orders, materials which may be required to test. So those set of preparation has to be done. And then we should request this line so that once the Parallel Line is available, we are able to effectively use it and use it soon instead of trying to spend time in getting it ready. So that's one key experience which we had as a part of our adoption. The second is in terms of the merge and the rebase frequency itself, and both Nicola and Jai articulated about it. We had the experience where we were going through the country activations. I mentioned we had about 40+ countries. So our sprint cycles in every sprint, we take about 8 countries. We had about 5 to 6 sprints. Now, after going by the SAP best practice, we didn't activate more than 5 countries. So we had the Parallel Line, we completed all the post-processing, then we subsequently activated 5 countries in the main line. And that's when we realized that when we try to rebase such a huge change, be it in the form of number of countries, and of course, some countries by themselves are complex, and therefore it needs more time. So, it is important to rebase periodically and not try to rebase in masse so that you don't end up with a lot of accumulated config. If you do that, it's possible that it could result in some error and may need involvement from the support team from the backend. So that's the second learning we had in terms of how we can do it more frequently. And the feature which Nicola mentioned about selective merge, I think that is something which will definitely benefit customers, because that will also help address this requirement of how do we avoid trying to do a merge with a higher dataset, or a higher config, or a higher codebase. And the third is, given we now have the Parallel Line, we have the main line, and then of course, both the main lines and parallel lines undergo the periodic maintenance in the form of hotfix for which a calendar is already published by SAP. It's important to consider that calendar as well in doing these tasks, not just the project timeline, because system availability will depend on that calendar as well, and that may impact the ability to do certain tasks, and therefore that should be considered. So these are some three key learnings which we had, and we are incorporating that in subsequent phases of our project plan. And as we continue to use the solution more, we will have more learnings, and we will continue to evolve and adopt them.

Jerry: Thank you so much, Ajay. Nicola, are there any other use cases where you see the Parallel Line being implemented successfully? How do you envision the customers implementing the PL in the future?

Nicola: Yes, Jerry. So, as I told at the very beginning, the Parallel Line was brought to the market and introduced to our customers via a specific program called Early Adopter Program, in which selected customers were enrolled. Now, what we noticed, what we have observed during this program is that primarily customers enrolled asked to use the Parallel Line in order to perform three specific use cases. Having additional data migration run, having additional testing environment where to execute testing activities, and having a separate environment different from the mainline tenants where also to execute training sessions for the business users. Now, clearly, also, when we come to the data migration run, what they appreciated is also to having repeating possibilities to perform the data migration mocks multiple times after having deleted and recreated the Parallel Line anew. Now, this kind of consumption, so these three use cases, which I described, are totally in line with our expectation. However, at the same time, what we expect now is to, and by the way, what's also our vision, our purpose, why we brought the Parallel Line to the market is that customers

can perform a subsequent project waves having using the Parallel Line for configuration extension. It could be a new country, it could be a new org structure like a company code, it could be a new scope or bundle of scope items like a new business process, like manufacturing, like procurement, that was not implemented in Wave 1, and they would like to implement that in Wave 2, and they do that before doing it in the mainline, they do it in the Parallel Line. And they can have proper testing of these new capabilities, which are then delivered to the mainline, and can be combined with the lifecycle that is regularly innovating the productive environment.

Jerry: Thank you, Nicola. Okay, I know we've covered a lot of information here in our podcast. Gentlemen, thank you. This has been a fascinating discussion about the parallel line implementation methodology. We hope our listeners found it informative and are inspired to consider the PL for their future projects. On a personal note, I want to thank each of you for taking the time. And turning to our audience, we want to thank you for joining this episode and invite you to subscribe to our podcast at sap.com/podcast, at Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or any audio platform you use to get your notifications when new episodes are available.
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