

eBook

Set your business up for growth and success

Using the power of a software ecosystem



About Visma

Small business owners, enterprises, and the public sector all have one thing in common: the need for software that streamlines and enhances business operations. And as organisations rapidly move from on-prem solutions to the cloud, integration with other essential software is not just a wish, it's a must.

At Visma, we build business software and a connected ecosystem for this exact purpose. Our cloud-based software, which is tailored to local needs and standardised for efficiency, automates administrative tasks, connects data, and gives companies the financial confidence they are after. By simplifying and improving the work of businesses and organisations of all sizes, we enable a more efficient and prosperous society.

Discover how our software transforms businesses. Visit us at visma.com.

Champions of business software

Executive summary

An ecosystem strategy can be a powerful tool for your business to expand its reach, create value, and improve the customer experience. By connecting with partners, integrating technologies, and sharing data, your company can reap a range of benefits – from increased revenue to enhanced security.

In this eBook, we'll explore how you and your business can leverage the power of APIs to build an ecosystem strategy and gain a competitive advantage. We'll explain what a connected ecosystem is, as well as the current trends we're seeing with APIs. We'll also dive into the specific ways APIs can expand products services way behind their current capabilities.

In the end, you'll walk away with 7 steps to build your ecosystem strategy that you can start implementing today. And set your business up for growth and success.



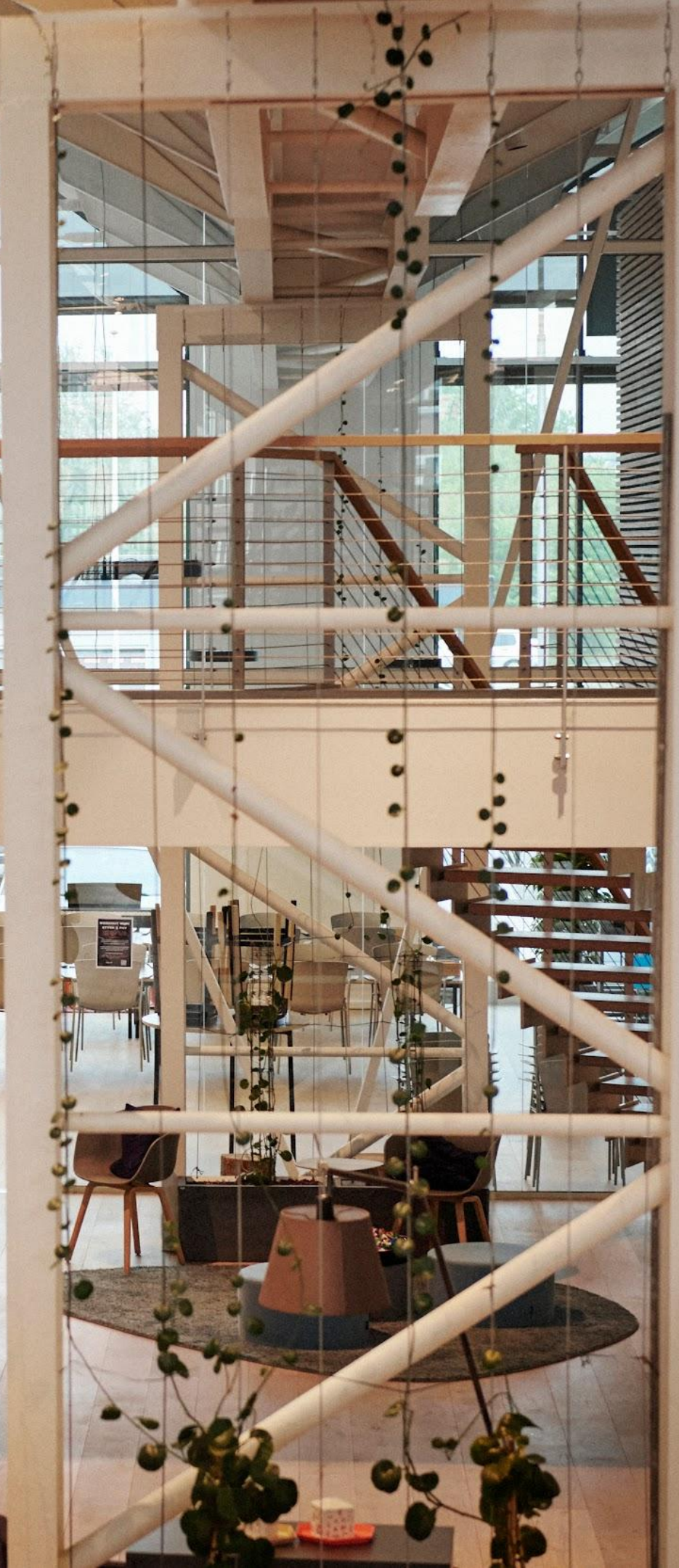


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What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is a group of software applications, tools, and platforms that work together seamlessly to address specific business needs. An ecosystem with the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system at its core is particularly beneficial for organisations that require a centralised method for managing operations across multiple departments and locations. Integrations outside the core can be added to fit your company's unique business processes, which allows you to do more in one platform.

The ERP ecosystem

An ERP ecosystem typically consists of several components that work together to support business processes and functions. These components include accounting and financial management, supply chain management, human resources management (HRM), customer relationship management (CRM), project management, manufacturing, and reporting and analytics. By integrating these best-in-class components to fit your specific business needs, you can streamline operations so they are more efficient and highly scalable.

APIs and ecosystems

APIs are a set of protocols, routines, and tools that applications use to communicate with each other. By leveraging the power of APIs, your business can integrate various software solutions to create an ecosystem that addresses specific needs.

APIs can be used to integrate different components of the ERP ecosystem, as well as to connect with third-party applications and platforms. For example, you could use APIs to connect your ERP system with a CRM platform, allowing customer data to be easily shared between the two systems. APIs can also be used to connect with suppliers and partners, allowing for more efficient collaboration and communication.

In today's cloud-based software, applications come with a built-in Open API that allows other software to easily connect and interact with it. This is beneficial for creating a more interconnected and customisable software ecosystem.

Benefits of building an ecosystem with APIs

There are so many benefits to using APIs. Some of the biggest benefits are increased revenue and improved efficiency, which work hand-in-hand. By streamlining operations and making processes more efficient, your business can significantly reduce its overall costs. It's the ultimate win-win.

- **Enhanced customer experience**
Create a seamless and consistent customer experience across different channels and touchpoints.
- **Better decision-making**
Gain better insights into your operations to help make the best decisions.
- **Enhanced security**
Improve security by controlling access to data and reducing the risk of data breaches.
- **Competitive advantage**
Stay ahead of the competition by adopting new technologies and integrating different applications and platforms.
- **Improved collaboration**
Improve collaboration and communication between suppliers, partners, and other key stakeholders.

"We think of APIs as products and continuously consider the needs of the people using them. The only way to drive innovation forward is to give people the tools to solve their everyday problems. Our Open APIs do that, and more."

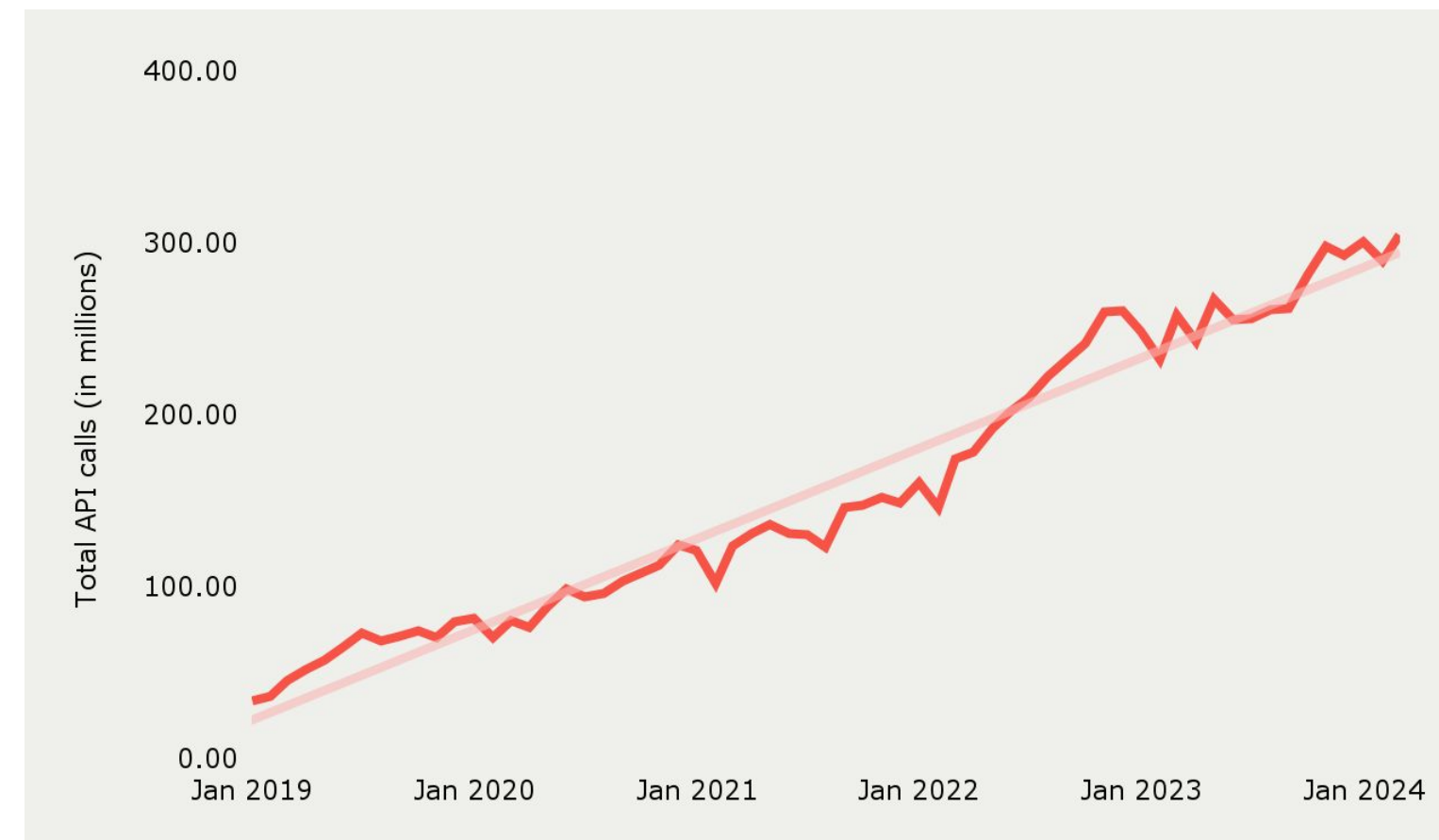
T. Alexander Lystad
Chief Technology Officer at Visma





What trends are we seeing?

The trend towards APIs and connected software systems shows no signs of slowing down. Businesses are increasingly relying on APIs to automate processes, access new data, and integrate systems in real-time. As the world becomes more connected, the demand for APIs only continues to grow.



As one of the largest providers of business-critical software in Europe, we have access to data about the current trends and predictions for the future. Currently, we see an increase in API calls by approximately 60% year over year.

- **Microservices**

One of the most notable trends in the API space is the rise of microservices. Microservices are small, modular applications that can be combined to form a larger system. By breaking down complex applications into smaller components, your business can reduce the complexity of your systems, increase development speed, and improve the scalability of your applications.

- **Marketplaces and app stores**

Another trend is the growth of marketplaces or app stores, which allow users to discover applications for a specific process or a function that they can integrate with their ERP.

- **Security**

As integrations increase, so does the importance of security in APIs. We have access to more data than ever before, so we must heighten our awareness of who is who and what data are being used. Secure APIs regulate how much and what kinds of data can be extracted. They also use secure authentication and authorization methods, such as OAuth and JWT, as well as API gateways and firewalls to protect against potential security threats.

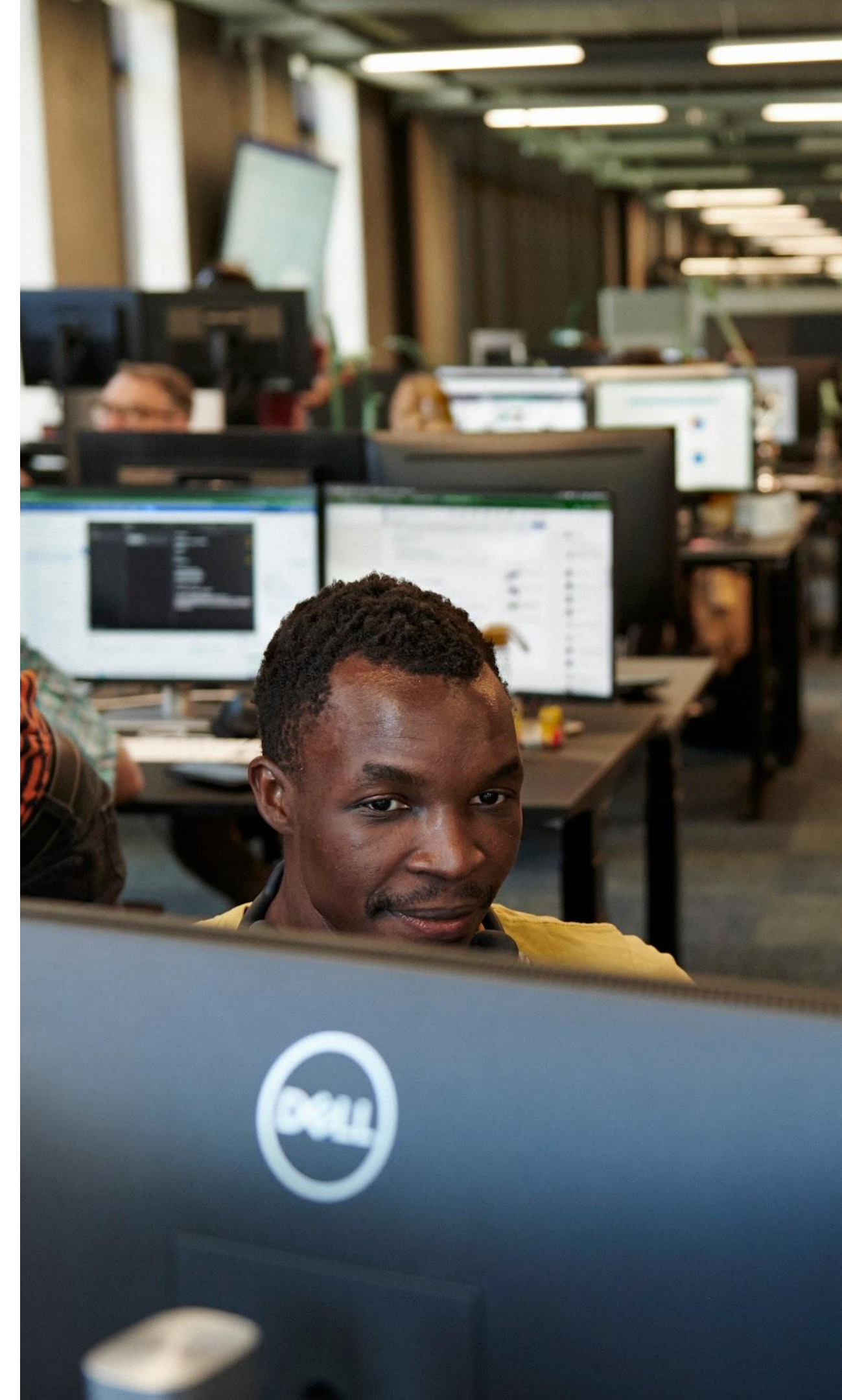
- **Artificial intelligence and machine learning**

APIs are being used to integrate artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms into applications and services. This allows you to add advanced features, such as image recognition and natural language processing, to your products and services.

- **Composable ERP**

Many businesses manage their operations with an ERP system, but there are so many products that focus on only one aspect of operations – such as CRM or payroll or time registration. With APIs, you can “compose” your ERP needs and use only one data set across multiple products. This makes your business more scalable and adaptable because it empowers you to add or remove components as needed.

These are just a few of the trends shaping the future of APIs and connected software. As technology continues to evolve, we can expect to see even more exciting developments in this field in the years to come.



Interview

Composable ERP

What trends do you see in the market?

One trend that we see in the market is the adoption of Composable ERP, which is a modular ERP system that offers businesses flexibility in creating a set of solutions that meet their unique needs.

What is the difference between a traditional ERP vs Composable ERP?

The main difference between a traditional ERP system, where most of the functionality is included, and a Composable ERP system is the degree of modularity and flexibility they offer. Traditional ERP systems typically offer a fixed set of modules and features, which are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of businesses. The trend that we see right now is a core system that can be built up by several microservices all with good APIs to add other components. In this way, the customer can “compose” the solution for their needs themselves and use best-of-breed solutions together. Easily combined and integrated. This approach allows businesses to select only the modules and features they need, without being burdened by those they do not need.

This results in a more flexible and agile system that can better adapt to changing business needs while reducing the complexity and cost of traditional ERP implementations.

How can Composable ERP help streamline and automate routine tasks, and improve efficiency and productivity?

Composable ERP streamlines and automates routine tasks through pre-built components and advanced features such as workflow automation, AI, and machine learning. This improves efficiency and productivity by reducing manual data entry and eliminating redundant processes, freeing up time and resources for more strategic initiatives.

How does Composable ERP support an organisation's compliance with industry regulations and standards?

An ERP could be national or international, but the components around it can be local and more suitable for local rules and regulations. By using Composable ERP, organisations can mitigate compliance risks and maintain the trust of their customers and stakeholders.



“Composable ERP offers businesses the flexibility to build an ecosystem that meets their unique needs, bringing your own app approach to the world of ERP.”

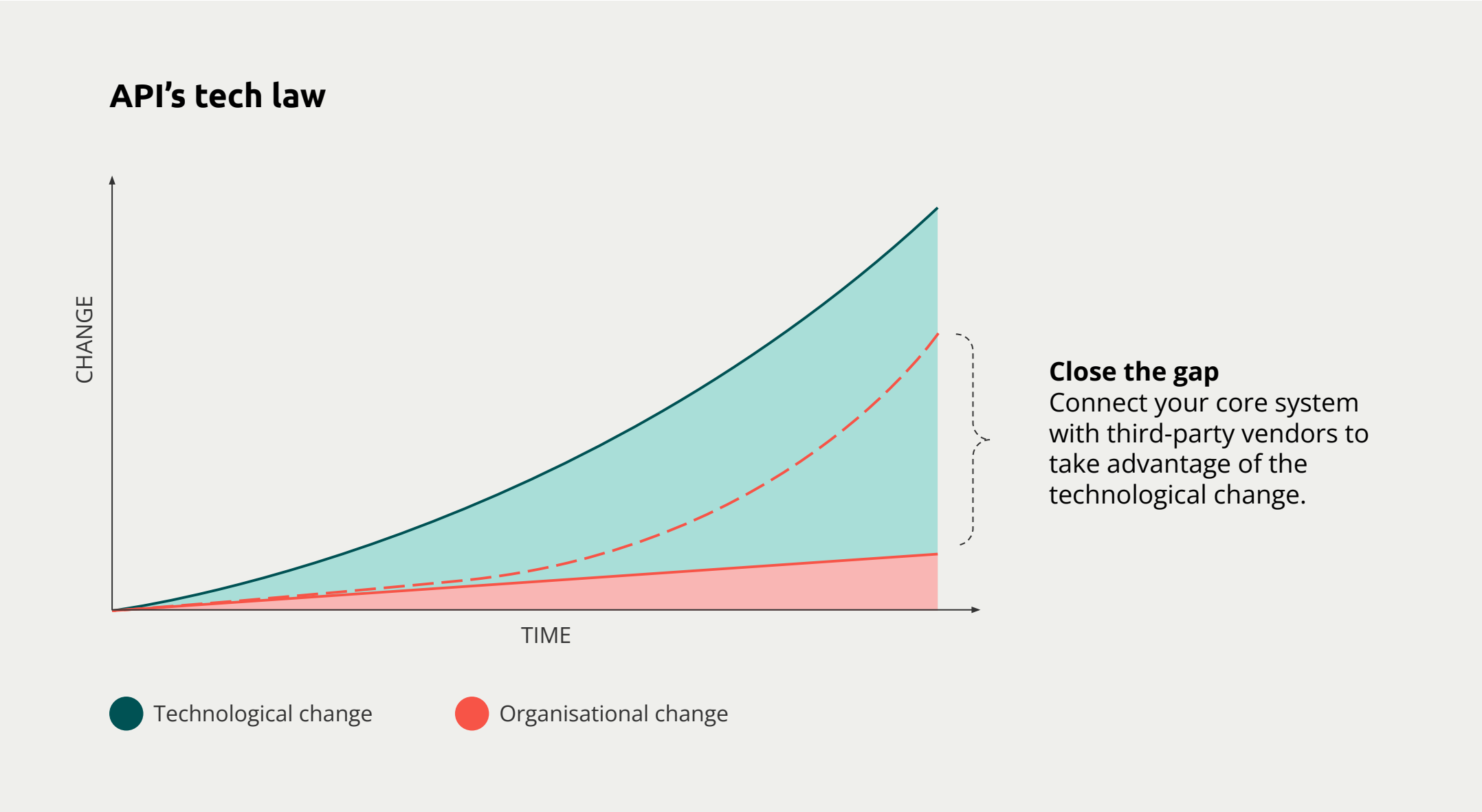
Yvette Hoogewerf
Segment Director at Visma

How APIs can transform your business

In today's rapidly changing landscape, businesses must be agile, adaptable, and efficient to remain competitive. One way to do that is by using solutions that consolidate various business functions into a unified platform. Another is to adopt an ecosystem strategy that leverages APIs in order to maximise the benefits of ERP systems.

The truth is, the more APIs that are used within an ecosystem, the more valuable that ecosystem becomes. But many businesses adopt this approach slowly and cautiously. Organisations that are slow to adopt an ecosystem strategy risk being left behind as their competitors embrace the latest and most powerful tools.

So, it's important to prioritise an ecosystem strategy and make the switch as quickly as possible. The businesses that adopt this mindset and go all-in are the ones that will stay ahead of the curve and be the most competitive in today's fast-paced environment.



How APIs can transform your business

1

ERP

ERP is often the core in business-critical software. Via integrations with the ERP, software vendors can provide your business with real-time access to critical financial data. This can enable faster decision-making and greater visibility into financial performance, allowing you to optimise operations, reduce costs, and improve cash flow management. Additionally, the integration of financial data with other business functions, such as inventory and supply chain management, can enable you to make data-driven decisions.

2

Human Resource Management (HRM)

APIs can connect your HRM system and ERP system, enabling accurate tracking and management of employee data – including payroll, benefits, and performance metrics. This integration can streamline HR processes, improve compliance, and reduce errors. Additionally, the integration of HR data with financial reporting can provide insights into the financial impact of human resource operations on your organisation.

3

Customer relationship management (CRM)

APIs can connect your CRM system and ERP system, enabling seamless communication between the two. This integration can provide a comprehensive view of customer data, including order history, preferences, and behaviour. This can enable you to deliver personalised services and enhance the customer experience, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4

Supply chain management

APIs can enable real-time data sharing between your supply chain management system and ERP system. This can provide accurate information on order fulfilment, shipping, and logistics, allowing you to optimise your supply chain and reduce costs. The integration of supply chain data with financial reporting can also provide greater visibility into the impact of supply chain operations on your financial performance.

5

Reporting and analytics

APIs can integrate an organisation's reporting and analytics system with your ERP system, providing real-time access to critical business data. This enable organisations to analyse data across different business functions, identify trends, and make data-driven decisions. Additionally, the integration of reporting and analytics data with financial reporting can provide greater visibility into the financial impact of business decisions on the organisation.

6

Manufacturing

APIs can connect an organisation's manufacturing system with your ERP system, providing real-time data on production, inventory, and quality control. This can enable manufacturers to optimise production schedules, reduce waste, and improve quality control, leading to increased efficiency and profitability.

7

Project management

APIs can integrate your project management system and ERP system, providing real-time visibility into project status, resource allocation, and budgeting. This can enable project managers to make informed decisions and adjust resources based on real-time data, improving project efficiency and profitability.

8

E-commerce

APIs can connect an organisation's e-commerce system with your ERP system, providing real-time data on sales, inventory, and order fulfilment. This can enable organisations to optimise their e-commerce operations, improve customer satisfaction, and increase revenue.

Expert opinion

Prioritising the customer journey with reliable APIs

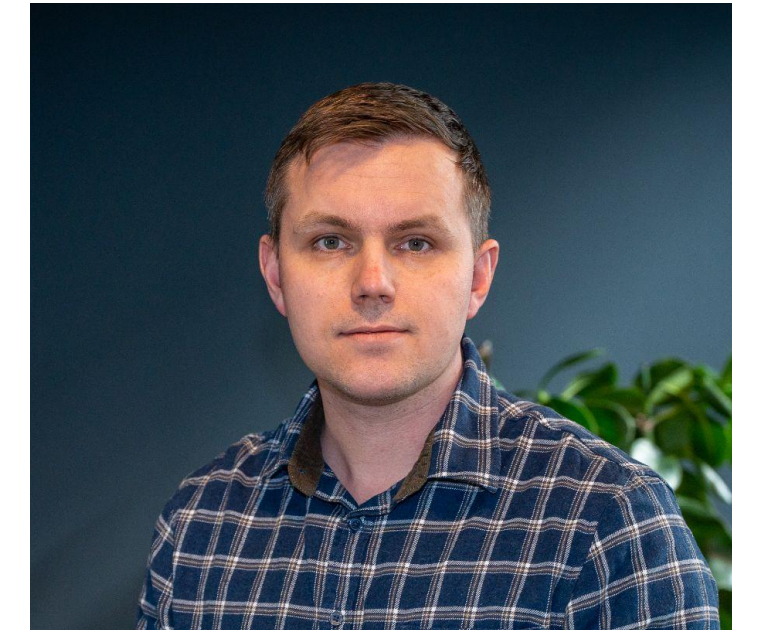
At Visma, we understand the importance of a seamless customer journey when it comes to our APIs. Our customers need reliable, flexible, and user-friendly APIs that can automate and extend their products, both internally and externally. Our APIs provide a range of benefits for businesses, including cross-sales, direct monetization, innovation, and retention.

To ensure that our customers, ISVs, and partners can leverage our APIs to the fullest, we offer clear documentation, use cases, and an intuitive developer experience. The majority of our APIs are built according to API First principles. This means that they are strategically important, first-class citizens in our product offering range. They are easy to understand, general, robust, and consistent with our global architecture. We actively seek feedback from our intended consumers to continually refine and improve our APIs.

With a clear focus on the customer journey, we enable automation for our customers and to expand their products, regardless of whether they need to save time, increase revenue or innovate. Our APIs are designed to help them achieve their goals effectively and efficiently.

The API Maturity Model is a framework we use to develop APIs that are high-quality, scalable, and secure. The model covers five categories that are important for any API initiative, such as Security, Developer Support, and Methodology. It provides guidance through clearly defined requirements on different maturity levels, including anti-patterns that should be avoided. This makes it easy for our API teams to understand how to build compliant APIs, where to begin, and where to look next. The primary focus is on the developer journey, with a strong emphasis on providing a simple onboarding, a good integration experience, and high-quality support.

Our ultimate goal is to provide our customers, ISVs, and partners with easy-to-use, well-documented APIs that are scalable and secure. We strive to provide a positive experience throughout the customer journey, from initial exploration to implementation and beyond. By prioritising the customer journey and offering reliable APIs, we aim to help businesses achieve their goals and drive success.



“By prioritising the customer journey and API First principles, we enable our customers to automate and extend their products seamlessly, providing a positive experience throughout their journey.”

Morten Hordnes Bakken
Cloud Architect at Visma

7 steps to building an ecosystem strategy

Here's what your business can do today to start building a successful software ecosystem strategy.

- 1 Identify your business needs and goals**

Before embarking on the journey of building an ecosystem strategy, it's important to identify your business needs and goals. What are the specific pain points and challenges that your company is facing? What are your business objectives and goals for the future? Once you have a clear understanding of your business needs and goals, you can begin to explore how an ecosystem strategy can help you achieve them.
- 2 Evaluate your existing systems and technologies**

The next step is to evaluate your existing systems and technologies to determine their compatibility with an ecosystem strategy. This requires a centralised system for managing operations across multiple departments and locations. If your current systems are not compatible, you may need to consider upgrading or replacing them to enable integration and communication with other systems.
- 3 Determine the components of your ecosystem**

The components of your ecosystem will depend on your business needs and goals. At its core, an ecosystem typically consists of an ERP, which serves as the centralised system for managing operations across multiple departments and locations. Other components may include supply chain management, HRM, CRM, project management, manufacturing, and reporting and analytics.

- 4 Choose the right core solution**

APIs allow different software applications, tools, and platforms to communicate and exchange data, enabling a seamless flow of information. So, you need to choose an ERP solution that enables integrations with APIs. Your core product will set the tone for your entire ecosystem, so make sure to choose the one that enables scalability and growth.
- 5 Develop customisations to fit unique business processes**

One of the benefits of building an ecosystem strategy with APIs is the ability to customise system support to fit your unique business processes. APIs provide a flexible framework for integrating new software tools and platforms and adapting existing ones to meet the specific needs of your business. This can help streamline operations and improve efficiency.
- 6 Involve your business partner**

An effective ecosystem strategy is also about involving your partner, reseller, or software provider. By leveraging their experience, your business can more quickly improve the customer experience and increase revenue.
- 7 Monitor and optimise performance**

Building an ecosystem strategy is not a one-time event; it's an ongoing process. It's important to monitor and optimise performance to ensure that the ecosystem is delivering the expected benefits. This includes tracking key performance indicators (KPIs), such as efficiency, revenue, customer experience, and collaboration.

Want to learn more?

Browse our integrated Visma and partner applications and Explore our dedicated Developer site and API catalogue

Go to the Developer site →

Go to our App Store →

