Enterprise application integration may not be the sexiest topic of discussion at your office's water cooler, but it's got a few tricks up its sleeve that might just surprise you this year.

As 2018 comes into focus, it's increasingly becoming clear that organizations need to get smart about enterprise application integration. Here's what your company needs to know.

Why does it matter? A recent Enterprise Tech article explains: Companies have finally realized that IT isn't simply a tool to prop up business processes — it's a means through which those processes even exist. The result is the need to seamlessly embed IT into business processes. Here's how it can be done.

The Current State of Affairs

If you were to tackle a current events paper — just like you did back in eighth grade civics — on enterprise cloud integration, you'd find a few recurring themes:

- Efficiency
Manageability
Scalability

These three buzzwords unofficially constitute the framework upon which organizations build their cloud integrations. And it makes sense when you think about it. Cloud integrations are, after all, created to turn business processes into lean functions that unify otherwise isolated systems — ideally adding a dash of automation along the way.

A relatively new concept, cloud integration has many organizations still playing catch-up. Because of that, you'll likely find these companies focusing on the integration of legacy business processes once their digital transformation initiatives gain traction. That's a necessary evil — and not because legacy integrations are inherently bad, but because modern enterprise application integration has the potential to do so much more. As these organizations continue to check off legacy transitions, they'll naturally begin tapping into the more innovative side of cloud integration.

Caught between legacy processes and cutting edge innovation, today's integrations are often split between two categories: vendor platforms and custom API development. Companies are turning to in-house development using third-party APIs to accomplish integration for legacy applications that don't have a clear-cut path to the modern cloud. Meanwhile, vendor platforms for communication, data, and workflow applications have matured to the point where they've become the de facto solution for integration in pretty much every other circumstance.

The enterprise has up to this point mostly looked at cloud integrations as a way to bring legacy systems into a modern setting in a more efficient, manageable, and scalable manner. But with 2017 firmly in the rearview mirror, there are bigger fish to fry.

Practical Examples of Enterprise Application Integration

Now that we know enterprise application integrations tie two or more otherwise distinct business processes together, let's cover a few practical examples to show how it could apply the concept to your own office:

- **Workflow**: Typical workflows, like on-boarding, can be easily streamlined and automated. By integrating your cloud-based workflow platform with G Suite, you can arrange new events to automatically trigger calendar invites and send out associated documents.

- **Communication**: A great example of communication integration is a cloud-based communication platform that leverages data from a CRM such as Salesforce. In these cases, users can click to dial straight from a Salesforce entry, automatically log interactions, and even sync contact information straight from the phone system.

- **Industry Specific Tasks**: While the above examples could be found in just about any vertical, plenty of vendors have provided integrations for specific industries. Take recruitment, for example: Solutions exist to tie your phone system together with a platform like JobDiva to make each interaction more effective and efficient. It'll automatically generate insightful reports on candidate interactions and quickly add new candidates straight from a call.
You'll notice that all of these examples involve the integration of enterprise data between systems, and organizations that get the most out of their cloud integrations understand this relationship well. First, identify applications that would benefit from shared information — you've probably got a few ideas brewing right now — then explore the providers that can tie them together for you.

Just keep in mind: Not all vendors are created equal. Though they might offer the same integrations, their functionality can widely vary within. Don't settle for less — do your homework!

**Integrating the Future**

In general, the enterprise has up to this point mostly looked at cloud integrations as a way to bring legacy systems into a modern setting in a more efficient, manageable, and scalable manner. But with 2017 firmly in the rearview mirror, there are bigger fish to fry.

Enterprises are finally starting to realize the fruits of their digital transformation initiatives. Naturally, this creates an environment of both curiosity and excitement for new optimization opportunities.

Don't believe it? The 2018 State of Application Delivery report, compiled by F5 Networks, backs this notion. In it, a clear theme emerged as respondents indicated a push to multi-cloud environments. In fact, almost half of those who took part in the survey reported that their digital transformation projects encouraged them to pursue new cloud application initiatives.

Enter 2018: the year of enterprise application integration. This new year will continue to see businesses leverage cloud integrations as an onboarding process for legacy systems, and the difference will be seen in how cloud integration providers innovate to meet the business needs of organizations looking for more than just digital transformation. As 2018 unfolds, don't be afraid to seek out these innovative integration opportunities to make your environment more effective and efficient.

*Contact Vonage Business to learn more about how cloud-based communication integrations can help your company.*