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WHITEPAPER

Integrating Salesforce and Yardi for Real Estate Firms

Legacy ERP systems like Yardi were primarily designed for accounting and financial reporting, not customer relationship management. This article discusses why real estate firms should integrate their ERP system with Salesforce and how—setting the foundation for a successful technology solution.

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INTRODUCTION

Real estate firms are seeking a digital, user-centric experience that enables them to create deeper tenant relationships and seamlessly transfer information between sales, operations, and accounting. That's why it's imperative to establish a foolproof and scalable integration between ERPs and Salesforce, rather than treating it as a luxury.

While ERPs, like Yardi, are good at accounting and financial reporting, they aren't user-friendly and lack a robust CRM. Despite the temptation to invest further in this system, customizations involving heavy coding can be expensive and lead to significant technical debt when upgrades are released.

Instead, Fortimize's most successful clients have deliberately chosen to maintain financial data in their ERP while using Salesforce for sales or customer data and operations workflows. This approach only works with a robust yet manageable integration. But before we discuss the most common integration approaches, let's review the benefits of integrating Yardi and Salesforce.

BENEFITS

Improved Tenant Relationship Management

- When property, lease, and tenant data flow from Yardi to Salesforce, it eliminates redundant data entry and improves data accuracy and consistency. Yardi is the system of record for property and financial data and Salesforce for deal pipeline and customer interactions. This integration improves service, sales, and marketing efforts—paving the way for a holistic tenant 360 view.

Accurate Reporting and Analytics

- Departments see higher data integrity when they automate the flow of data between Yardi and Salesforce. Data can be accurately tracked, audited, and reported on—in a single place—by business users. This integration helps firms make more informed decisions, identify trends, and optimize their processes.

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THIRD-PARTY ETL AND YARDI'S NATIVE ETL

Bi-directional integration utilizing existing backend databases, third party ETL tools, and Yardi's native ETL tool.

UP NEXT:
#2 Point-to-Point with Yardi APIs

Challenges

- For bi-directional integrations, the organization needs to consider the implications of sending data directly from Salesforce into their accounting system and ensure accuracy of this data.
- ETL-based integrations are typically scheduled on a daily or hourly basis and are not performed in real-time.
- Yardi's processing is a black box, and is highly dependent on its architecture and integration.
- Sometimes data needs to be sent to hidden fields in Yardi's schema in order to ensure business logic works correctly. Your team should have a good understanding of the Yardi schema to support an integration using Yardi ETL.

Solution

- Yardi to Salesforce utilizes a read-only SQL database, which replicates Yardi data regularly.
- Salesforce to Yardi converts data into a CSV file. Your organization will use a SFTP server for Yardi's ETL tool to ingest the data.
- You will need access to Yardi's ETL tool and a read-only backup database—a separate ETL tool capable of transferring data between Salesforce, SFTP, and the SQL database.
- When you use a single ETL tool in both directions, you can reduce cost.

Considerations

- Consider timing and frequency of integrations. With an ETL-based approach, integrations will need to run on a scheduled frequency instead of real-time.
- For on-prem Yardi installations, ensure you can configure a VPN tunnel between the ETL platform and your corporate network.
- You may need to insert data into multiple tables to satisfy relational dependencies, requiring multiple CSV files to be imported in the correct sequence.

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POINT-TO-POINT WITH YARDI APIS

MuleSoft's Anypoint Platform™ provides a centralized, API-oriented integration architecture. MuleSoft is a recommended platform for API-based integrations.

UP NEXT:
#3 Leverage a RPA Tool

Challenges

- Yardi APIs are limited in scope and may not be available for your specific integration needs.
- In some cases, custom build may be required on the Yardi side in order to support API-based integrations. This is an additional cost and needs to be discussed with Yardi.
- Yardi does not support real-time triggers, so integrations from Yardi to Salesforce will likely need to be batch ETL-based solutions.

Solution

- Create System APIs for interfacing with both Yardi and Salesforce.
- Create a Process API layer for mapping data between Yardi and Salesforce bi-directionally.
- Set up real-time triggers from Salesforce to kick off integrations to Yardi.
- Set up triggers to integrate data from Yardi into Salesforce via API.
- Allow for real-time updates in Yardi with cleaner billing data, driven from a single system of record.

Considerations

- Your organization will need an integration platform capable of supporting API-based integrations, such as MuleSoft's Anypoint Platform™.
- Investigate if APIs are available for desired objects and tables or if a custom build is required.
- Expected data size and frequency should be considered to determine if an API-based approach is feasible, because there are system limitations for request and response size, as well as the overall number of API calls that may be required to perform the integration.
- Yardi APIs can be costly and the annual cost per API should be factored into your project and ongoing line item budget.

3 LEVERAGE A RPA TOOL

Bi-directional integration utilizing robotic process automation. RPA-based integrations can be kicked off in real-time to satisfy specific business needs.

UP NEXT:
Integration Summary

Challenges

- Yardi's API is cost-prohibitive, so teams need an alternative solution for near real-time data. RPA jobs can be kicked off in real-time from Salesforce.
- This does not solve for real-time integration from Yardi to Salesforce, which will likely need to be a batch ETL-based solution.
- RPA-based automations require access to the Yardi web interface.
- This integration pattern is tied to Yardi's user interface and can be fragile. RPA based automations may break if the Yardi user interface is updated.

Solution

- Leverage a RPA tool (MuleSoft RPA, UIPath) to pull data from Salesforce and execute frontend-based automations within Yardi.
- Configure a nightly export of data from Yardi to Salesforce using a data upload platform.

Considerations

- Requires manual steps by the user to kick-off the flow to send data to Yardi.
- Dependent on Yardi's frontend user interface.
- Requires a suitable RPA tool which can connect to Yardi and be kicked off from Salesforce.
- If you need data to be sent from Yardi to Salesforce, this may not meet your needs on its own.

CONCLUSION

Integrating legacy ERPs, like Yardi, with Salesforce enables real estate firms to leverage the full potential of their tools and technology, while providing their teams with a unified view of data across systems.

When integrated correctly, the ERP remains the system of record for lease, tenant, and rent data, and Salesforce becomes the front-end operations platform. This allows sales, leasing, and service teams to access a complete view of tenants, residents, and properties without having to switch between systems.

With this being said, the biggest challenge for many real estate firms is knowing *how* to take a thoughtful and proven approach to integrations, whether that be an ETL, point-to-point solution, or RPA tool. At Fortimize, we've worked with many real estate clients to successfully integrate between Salesforce and Yardi.

QUESTIONS

If your organization is considering a Yardi integration with Salesforce, consider the following questions:

1. What direction of data do you need? *Unidirectional or bidirectional*
2. How often do you need the data? *Real-time (live), scheduled (ie. 3x per day), daily or weekly*
3. What data do you need? *Lease, tenant, space, etc.*
4. What integration approach do you prefer? *ETL, Point-to-Point, or RPA Tool*
5. Do you have access to Yardi APIs, the Yardi ETL tool, and/or a Yardi database instance?
6. Is your organization currently using any ETL or integration platforms?
7. Are you using a cloud-based Yardi system or on-prem?
8. Do you require corporate VPN access to log into Yardi?

CLIENT STORY

Stonehenge

Challenge

Stonehenge NYC–a multi-family owner-operator–suffered from siloed systems that prohibited them from analyzing their business holistically. Additionally, Yardi had a complex data model making it impossible to pull their data together.

Solution

Fortimize built a Yardi to Salesforce integration with data load processes to export data from Yardi on a scheduled basis. This integration allowed them to build on the platform to create a tenant mobile app, and gave deal-makers and executives access to data to make better decisions, quicker. For example, management could view all metrics about each property, building or unit with front-end and back-end KPIs. With scheduled data processes in place, the IT team spent less time creating ad-hoc reports.

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ABOUT FORTIMIZE

Fortimize is a team-owned business and technology consulting company focused on financial services organizations who need advisory, implementation, and support services. We partner with our clients to align the right people, processes, and technology to support their business objectives for long-term growth.

Our culture is one of accountability and constructive feedback. We believe our entrepreneurial spirit, people-first culture, and customer success obsession paves the way to be wildly successful so that we can be radically generous.