

Connecting the Dots at Box

Box taps SnapLogic's self-service integration to process more than 15 million transactions daily.

The Box Backstory

Like another great technology startup, enterprise cloud company Box was born in a dorm room. At the University of Southern California in 2005, founder Aaron Levie quickly realized that the business project he was working on at school – cloud storage options for companies – indicated a unique opportunity to develop an online file storage business. Levie took a leave of absence and launched Box.

The company took off from there, transforming over the years to become what it is today – a publicly traded online file sharing and content management service with more than \$300 million in revenue in fiscal 2016. Box tallies more than 41 million users and 59,000 businesses worldwide, including 59 percent of the Fortune 500, all of them trusting the rapidly growing global company to manage their content in the cloud.

While the Box platform presents tremendous efficiencies for business users who share their content on any device with other users, internally the company was challenged by the need to efficiently integrate the many cloud-based applications – such as Salesforce, Zuora, Netsuite, and Tableau – it relied on in its daily operations. The goal was to aggregate the business data piling up in the various applications in a cloud-based warehouse for the purpose of self-service predictive analytics. The intelligence gleaned from this exercise would inform decisions on generating better sales and marketing campaigns, among other internal uses.

The challenges were manifold, given the company's vast array of business applications and the many ways in which they needed to integrate. "We rely on multiple applications covering sales, marketing, consulting, user services, financials, and people, each serving a distinct purpose," said Alan Leung, Box Senior Enterprise Systems Program Manager. "Within each domain like Finance, there could be a dozen different applications just in that one area,



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Alan Leung

Box Senior Enterprise Systems Program Manager

all of them purpose-built. Although some apps offered a measure of integration out of the box, it was nowhere near what we needed.”

He’s referring in part to the Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) that technology companies use to integrate their products. Each cloud-based application’s endpoints for integration purposes behave differently, limiting the ability to build useful links quickly. Visually, the different applications across the Box enterprise loomed like a series of disjointed silos. Users had to manually upload and download data from one application into another, a process that absorbed substantial time and effort, stealing focus away from more strategic pursuits. The solution was to find a cloud-based platform that vastly reduced or eliminated the time-consuming manual uploading and downloading processes that users had habitually endured.

Early Misstep

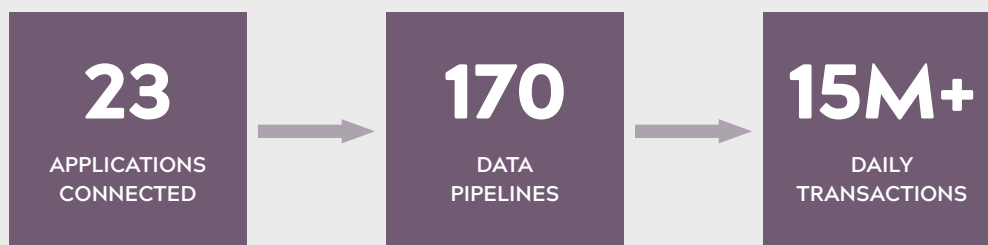
The hunt was on for an Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) vendor with a toolset that supported the fluid flow of business data across the company’s disparate cloud-based and on-premise applications into what Leung called a “data lake.” The platform also needed to provide the

sought-after data aggregation, warehousing, and analytics capabilities and be user-friendly. It was a tall order.

In 2014, Box subscribed to a platform provider that appeared to fulfill the company’s many needs, but ultimately failed its high expectations. “The skill sets required to use the platform were way too high; you had to be a software programmer to efficiently use it,” said Leung, who joined Box in 2015. “We had about six integration links built after one year, a fraction of the integration capabilities we wanted.”

Another problem with the platform was time-consuming bottlenecks. A case in point is when users pushed 150,000 records to an external endpoint that could only handle 500 records per patch. The process consumed five to six hours from start to finish. “Within two weeks after I came here, I decided that we needed to find another platform,” Leung said.

The hunt continued, this time for an iPaaS vendor with a platform that did not require such sophisticated user technical skills. Fortunately, Leung’s background is in data and application integration. He had previously worked at nearly all the major integration vendors, making him the most knowledgeable person to lead the journey. Leung



“We’ve connected 23 applications and are processing more than 15M transactions daily. That’s astronomical given that we’ve only needed 1.5 FTE developers to support it.”

Alan Leung, Box Senior Enterprise Systems Program Manager

kept an open mind regarding the various platforms with which he was familiar, methodically exploring the marketplace to see what other products might be available.

He had a very clear picture in mind of what he was looking for. “It all comes down to agility – how quickly and efficiently you can develop an integration from Point A to Point B,” he said. “That’s when I discovered SnapLogic.”

Singular Value Proposition

SnapLogic was unique in the market. The iPaaS vendor offered a fully unified platform for application and data integration at much faster speeds and greater efficiency. A user simply chooses among SnapLogic’s more than 400 pre-packaged codes (or “Snaps”) to link different cloud-based and on-premise applications, building data flows between these siloes. Both structured and unstructured data can be aggregated and analyzed to inform business decisions. The complexity of the integration occurs behind the scenes, meaning that one does not need to be a software programmer to use the platform effectively.

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Alan Leung

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SnapLogic offered the self-service integration functionality that Leung had sought. “It’s all point and click,” he said. “There’s no programming involved. We’ve lowered the bar of entry for virtually anybody to leverage the platform.”

Consequently, users can rapidly extract useful information from the “data lake,” no time-consuming fishing involved. “Instead of taking five to six hours to push 150,000 records to an external endpoint, we were able to push three times that volume of information to the external endpoint in about two minutes,” Leung said.

Since implementing SnapLogic in mid-2015, not a single interface has been built internally. “We just haven’t had the need; the tools do it for us,” said Leung. “We’ve got well over 170 automated ‘Snaps’ on the platform to date, connecting endpoints in a unified integrated environment, whether the data is event-driven, in batch, in the cloud, or on premise. We’re scaling to enormous data volumes, analyzing more than 100 million records in a recent integration.”

The efficiencies are extraordinary. But even more significant is the impact on operations. “Due to the enhanced ability to quickly analyze and make sense of our data, we can rapidly pivot our operations to seize opportunities across every aspect of the business, from finance, sales and marketing to even legal and engineering,” he said. “To be able to harvest and maintain all this business data in one place – and perform much better analytics – has become vital in our competitive, high-growth environment.”

Down the line, Leung said that more “Snaps” gradually will be implemented. “Data needs to be delivered to a user in the right place at the right time in the right volume,” he added. “I have a vision where all the friction involving data is removed, a day where no one has to jump through a hoop in the effort to move the business forward.”



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BOX

Other customers using SnapLogic for enterprise integration



SnapLogic is the global leader in self-service integration. The company's Enterprise Integration Cloud makes it fast and easy to connect applications, data and things. Hundreds of customers across the Global 2000 - including Adobe, AstraZeneca, Box, Capital One, GameStop, Verizon and Wendy's - rely on SnapLogic to automate business processes, accelerate analytics and drive digital transformation. SnapLogic was founded by data industry veteran Gaurav Dhillon and is backed by blue-chip investors including Andreessen Horowitz, Capital One, Ignition Partners, Microsoft, Triangle Peak Partners and Vitruvian Partners.



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