

Becoming a Citizen Integrator

What is a Citizen Integrator

Have you ever felt powerless to make an informed business decision because you know the data you need resides in disparate business systems and you must wait for your IT support team to find a way to bring it all together? If you have and wanted to do something about it, you can become a Citizen Integrator. Citizen Integrators are business users or staff personnel who want to integrate applications and data faster without the help of IT personnel¹.

In the modern workforce, there are roles that require a deep technical knowledge. The deep technical knowledge positions involve roles described as integration developers, application administrators, and data analysts². These positions are more technical in nature and probably work in the IT sections of your organization. In contrast to these roles stand those roles that require deep business knowledge- the Citizen Integrator. The business knowledge area roles include positions as business analysts, technical business subject matter experts, and non-technical business users. Based on that spectrum of roles and positions the citizen integrator would be defined as someone working in the business knowledge areas². They are usually non-technical personnel who are tech savvy individuals and take an interest in data integration software. Examples of citizen integrators can be found in all lines of work from human resources, marketing, finance, and staff operations. Citizen Integrators have distinct characteristics. They understand data, the needs of their clients and are usually subject matter experts¹. These individuals also understand data and use various types of analytics reports.



Citizen integrators in the future, image (a).

It benefits the organization to have citizen integrators. Organizations can use citizen integrators to work with data integration tools to move projects quickly. Some other benefits of having citizen integrators in the organization are 1) improves productivity, 2) drives down the burden on IT teams, 3) reduce manual tasks, and 4) deliver impactful integrations¹. Given how small your IT and development teams may be, they may be struggling to keep up with leadership demands

to finish projects. Having more Citizen Integrators will only make handling all the increasing data-driven needs more manageable. The Citizen Integrator is an expert in their field so there can explain the requirements to the IT team increasing shared understanding and boosting productivity. This relationship between IT and Citizen Integrators improves employee's engagements and organizations can leverage the collaboration in its digital transformation efforts.

Microsoft Power Apps for Building Workflows that Integrate Data

Microsoft has developed Power Apps and you can use it to become a Citizen Integrator of data for your organization. Power Apps is a suite of applications, services, and connectors that provide an environment to build custom applications for your organizational needs. Using Power Apps, you can build apps that can run seamlessly in the web browser and on mobile devices such as a phone or tablet. With Power Apps, you can become a Citizen Integrator, for example, by combining multiple data sources in a single app. The data used in Power Apps connects to data stored in underlying platforms either online or at on-premises sources such as SharePoint, Microsoft 365, Dynamics 365, and SQL Server³. Individuals can build apps without the use of coding or programming skills and use data connections without primarily relying on IT support to get them there. Users can develop apps independently to organize data in a way which allows easy decision making for leaders.

Power Apps is a great tool to build different types of workflows. The common types of workflows are project workflows, case workflows, and process workflows. Workflows are a type of business process to arrange a sequence of steps to achieve certain outcomes or tasks. You can add process automation to your Power Apps by using Microsoft Power Automate. Power Automate can automate staff processes, send reminders for past due tasks, move organizational data between systems on a schedule, and connect to more than 500 data sources⁴. Workflows are great if they are used to help organize some of the most common tasks at your organization. Power Automate can be used to onboard new staff members, review documents for publication, and sign necessary forms for an approval process. When you start to create your workflows, Power Automate provides useful templates. These templates are designed for a specific purpose to help customize your projects.

What's good about Microsoft Power Apps is that it is part of the move to A365 suite of apps and services to improve information sharing across government information systems. Government Furnished Equipment (GFE) and web browsers used across the TRADOC workforce will be able to use Power Apps. In the case of being a Citizen Integrator, an end user can combine the use of Power Apps with Power Automate to build and automate workflows that bring together data from separate sources and integrate into an app that provides a more complete picture of the data that is necessary for decision making purposes. This could be as simple as setting up an app that combines data from multiple Excel files and then creating a flow that applies actions to clean and integrate the data.

Advantages of Power Apps

Here are some advantages of using Power Apps⁶:

- 1) **Integrate & Connect to multiple data sources:** Data can be used and brought together from hundreds of sources to include online services, databases, Excel spreadsheets, and third-

party data providers. This data can be exported and used to create reports, dashboards, and predictive modeling charts.

- 2) **Speed Up App Development Process:** Users can create their own app easily just by using tools available in the Power App suite. The web interface has a Graphical User Interface which is easy to operate, allowing users to develop and design apps.
- 3) **Low-code/No-code:** Non-technical users can use Power Apps to create mobile and web-based forms with no code or scripting language experience.
- 4) **Low Cost:** Software is already provided by the organization. Apps can be created in less time without the need for specialized IT personnel or developers. No formal training is needed to operate Power Apps and security is built into the applications.
- 5) **Integrate other Microsoft Tools:** Power Apps integrates Office 365, Microsoft Power BI, and Microsoft Teams. A variety of data sources like SQL, SharePoint, Excel, and MS Access can be connected for data.

Power End Users

In general, power end users are Citizen Integrators. Citizen Integrators are like the power end users of technology due to their software knowledge and use of applications. Both are the individuals getting the most out of the cloud computing software or data analyst programs being used. Power end users are the people who have been using the products for an extended period and have become very familiar with all its features, quirks, and flaws⁵. They understand best how to leverage the software to best achieve the organizational goals.

In today's workplace, now the average end user can now elevate their knowledge and skills enough to become a Citizen Integrator. Becoming a Citizen Integrator using workflows and power apps can be accomplished with knowledge of the right software and business understanding of the data that needs to be integrated. In today's workplace, users are directly enabled to create and design methods to collaborate and share information within their organizations with little support from specialized IT personnel. A365 offers a number of tools, to users in the workforce to make it happen. Organizations are becoming more data-driven so becoming a citizen integrator is becoming more important.

This TRADOC OCKO publication was written by Dion Hopkins. Want to learn more? You can respond to this article or access related articles, blogs, media presentations, and more at:

<https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/tradoc-km>

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Office of the Chief Knowledge Officer, the Department of the Army, or the United States government.

Image (a):

https://www.enzounified.com/blog/The_future_of_data_integration_what_every_cto_should_be_aware_of/

Notes

1. Kissflow. (2022, November 11). What is a Citizen Integrator? <https://kissflow.com/citizen-development/what-is-a-citizen-integrator/>
2. Jon Gitlin, Workato. (2022). What is a citizen Integrator? Plus tips for enabling them. <https://www.workato.com/the-connector/what-is-a-citizen-integrator/>

3. Microsoft. (2022, October 25). *What are Power Apps?* Microsoft.com. <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/power-apps/powerapps-overview>.
4. Microsoft. (2022, May 16). *Get started with Power Automate*. Microsoft.com. <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/power-automate/getting-started>.
5. Kissmetrics, Blog. (2022, June 22). *What is a Power User? Definition and Overview*. <https://www.kissmetrics.io/blog/power-user-definition/>.
6. OptiSol Solution and Services. (2022, March 17). *Top 5 Advantages of Power Apps*. <https://www.optisolbusiness.com/insight/top-5-advantages-of-power-apps>.



When You Need to Innovate, You Need to Collaborate!

Contact the TRADOC OCKO for support, development, and training: dashboards, collaboration sites, SharePoint, metrics, KPIs, process mapping, Microsoft Teams, SMS, multimedia production, and much more.