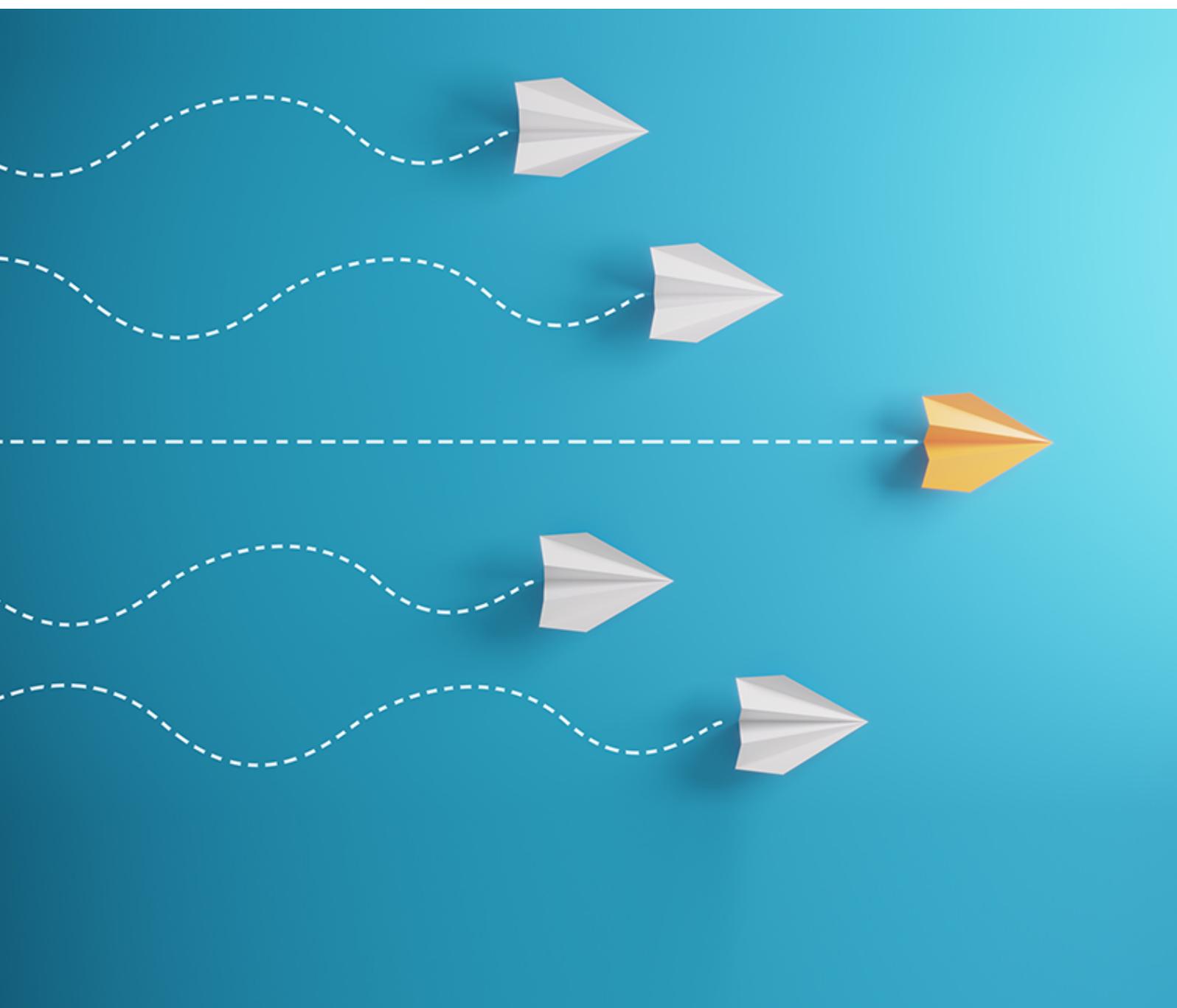


HOW TO MIGRATE FROM ONE NLG VENDOR TO ANOTHER

WHITEPAPER

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Abstract/Summary:

The NLG market is maturing. New software companies are bringing faster, more secure and more scalable solutions to the market. These changes in the market are encouraging companies who have projects with the older conventional NLG providers, to migrate to a newer vendor. However, the older conventional NLG companies don't want to lose their customers, so they make migration sound impossible and imply the costs are prohibitive. This is not true. We have undertaken so many migrations and see so much demand in the market that we've taken the time to put our thoughts and processes into this white paper. Here, we will look at the questions you should ask and the steps you need to take to migrate from one NLG provider to another.

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Why Migrate?

The first question is, why would you want to migrate? Many early adopters signed contracts with NLG providers 3 to 5 years ago when there were very few NLG companies. These early adopters helped create the NLG market, testing use cases and finding the best uses of emerging NLG tech. They also shaped the early market leaders. But by their very nature, they want to stay ahead of the curve and employ the most advanced solutions to business problems. So what are some common reasons customers want to migrate?

Saleability

The entrepreneurial spirit that led these early innovators to adopt NLG, is now leading them to look at how to scale NLG in their business. They need technology that multiple users can use at the same time. Technology that writes in many different languages and that can be securely deployed in the cloud or on premise. Many older NLG software vendors fall behind here. Whereas the newer vendors were built from the ground up to scale.

Security

Scalability leads us neatly to security. If you want an NLG software to run globally so your teams in London, Paris and Singapore can all work on the application, you need a cloud solution (or at the very least private cloud). The earlier pioneers of NLG technology can't compete with the new players when it comes to security certifications, so customers are leaving and moving to newer more secure solutions.

Complexity and Lack of Real Self-Service

Companies that have used NLG for a while don't want to have to call an NLG vendor or a consultant to update their applications but that is what they are having to do right now. They want to be able to build (or at the very least) maintain their applications in house. The early NLG players either sold technology that was not self-service or was so complicated to use that it rendered it self-service in name only. The market has changed a lot in the last three to five years and the newer NLG vendors offer easy to use self-service interfaces.

Cost & Pricing

The early NLG providers had a problem with application development times and deployment times. Their projects consistently ran over, costing their customers more than originally forecast and delaying their implementation. You can't blame them too much since they were creating use cases for the first time. The problem is that now these vendors, are raising licensing prices on applications that are already deployed, penalizing their early adopters. Moreover, they are rolling out complex pricing models that seem impossible for their sales teams to explain. The older NLG providers are being undercut by newer solutions with faster deployment times and clear lower prices.

How to Migrate from One NLG Vendor to Another

These insights are based on migration projects that we've overseen or been involved in. Admittedly, they are based on migration from older NLG providers to AX Semantics, but the general principles would be the same if you choose to migrate to a different NLG vendor than AX Semantics. It is impossible to provide exact migration times because each NLG project is different, and the times will depend on which vendor you are migrating from.

Identify Existing Application Architecture

Data Formats and Sources

The first question here is to find out in what format your current NLG providers process data. Generally, this is JSON or XML. Then you need to understand where your data is coming from (a CRM, transaction data, a database) and if it is coming from one source or multiple sources. Lastly, you want to understand if your database is multidimensional and if an application or the NLG software itself is processing that data, or combining multiple datasets (for example creating an OLAP Cube) before the data is run through the NLG software.

Where NLG Fits in?

How does the NLG software integrate with your technology stack? Is it running as a web service that is called? What data is sent to the NLG? In many cases there is an ETL or a data aggregation tool that pools and organises the relevant data before it is sent to the NLG software (or the NLG is called). This "pre-NLG software" data work occurs outside of your existing NLG solution and (in some cases) can be used with your new NLG provider. The more detail you can capture here the better.

Where is your Text Rendered?

Where is your text rendered? How is it sent from the NLG software to where the text is displayed? In many cases the NLG software actually outputs XML so there is an application of some sort to turn the XML into whatever the final

format is. Generally, this application is your property (not the NLG vendor) and could likely be reused.

Capture Business Rules

The business rules codified in your NLG application are your intellectual property. These are the rules that explain how the software analyses the data before the text is written. However, vendors may make it difficult to access them, ideally they will allow you to export these rules from their system. If that isn't possible, the next best option would be to have an NLG consultant log into your existing tool with you to look at the rules. Lastly, if the first two options aren't possible, then simply write down these rules in as much complexity as possible.

Capture Classes or Ontologies

Various old NLG vendors approach this problem differently, but all use some sort of organization means of classifying your data so that when business rules are written each business rule can work with various different scenarios. For example, a data classification could be "Financial Services Company", so you could have business rules that deal with only financial services companies instead of having to write one business rule for each company on your list.

Some companies use classes to organise their data and others use a more complicated system of ontologies. Basically, you can think of this as "how did they organise your data"? This information should be visible in the NLG application you are running. Again, you might want an NLG consultant to help you extract this information.

Next Steps: Finding the Right Vendor and Getting Professional Help

Now that you've done your homework, you can craft a series of detailed questions for other NLG vendors. For example, if your application works from multiple data sources or multidimensional data sets, you should make sure your new vendor can do this. But in order to dive deeper into migrating your application, you should get some help from NLG professionals.

At AX Semantics, we have so much demand from companies wanting to leave other NLG vendors and migrate to us, that we have built a whole process to support these customers. Generally, the process looks like this:

1. Technical Feasibility Evaluation

This is a quick call that goes through the main points listed above (Architecture, Rules & Classes). If the use case is a good technical fit for us, we move on. If not, we will provide you some advice on other solutions to look at. This is a free call with no obligation to purchase services or technology.

2. NLG Project Audit

This is an in-depth analysis of your existing application, use case and project specifications. Our NLG experts analyse your application in detail and our business team analyses your use case and current cost structure. At the end of the process, we deliver a detailed report with a recommendation and (if we recommend that you migrate) full costings.

However, we do sometimes recommend that you stay with your current provider or even stop using NLG if the audit finds that the business case is weak or the technology ill suited. For this report, however, there is a cost because we are dedicating substantial resources and time. We charge you at cost in an effort to keep this price as low as possible.

3. NLG Proposal & Project Kick Off

If we think we are a good candidate for your project we will submit an official proposal and the relevant contract. This will lay out the project timeline and responsibilities. Depending on the specifics of the use case and project requirements, we do sometimes bring in a partner (like Deloitte) at this point.

Conclusion

If you are unhappy with your existing NLG software provider there is no reason that you need to stay with them. The market is sufficiently mature that new vendors can easily deliver enterprise projects, offering better technology, better security, better customer services and better pricing.

Appendix

About the Authors



AX Semantics is a AI-powered, Natural Language Generation (NLG) software company with its roots grounded in content and storytelling. Our sophisticated, yet easy to use SaaS-based software makes automated content generation accessible to customers of all sizes, is used widely within the e-commerce, business, finance and media publishing sectors. Available in 110 languages, AX Semantics works with more than 500 customers, including globally recognized brands like Deloitte, BASF, Ebner & Stolz, Porsche, and Nivea. AX Semantics was named one of the world's world's top five providers of Natural Language Generation platforms by Gartner, and a top emerging company in the NLG market by Forrester. AX Semantics is changing the way content is created, published and viewed. Our software allows thousands of users to successfully automate text within two days, and gives people the space to develop and nurture their creative originality. Headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany with an additional office in Sunnyvale, California, AX Semantics is a privately-held company backed by Airbridge Equity Partners. Follow us on social at Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook, or learn more at <https://en.ax-semantics.com/>.



Nituno (London) is an B2B Consultancy dedicated to helping B2B software companies understand their markets and sign enterprise deals, while helping clients choosing the right vendors. Nituno was founded by the former Head of Sales and Head of Marketing in a B2B AI company. The marriage between sales and marketing is at the heart of Nituno. Nituno believes that tech companies need to practice what they preach and adopt new technologies to help them scale faster.