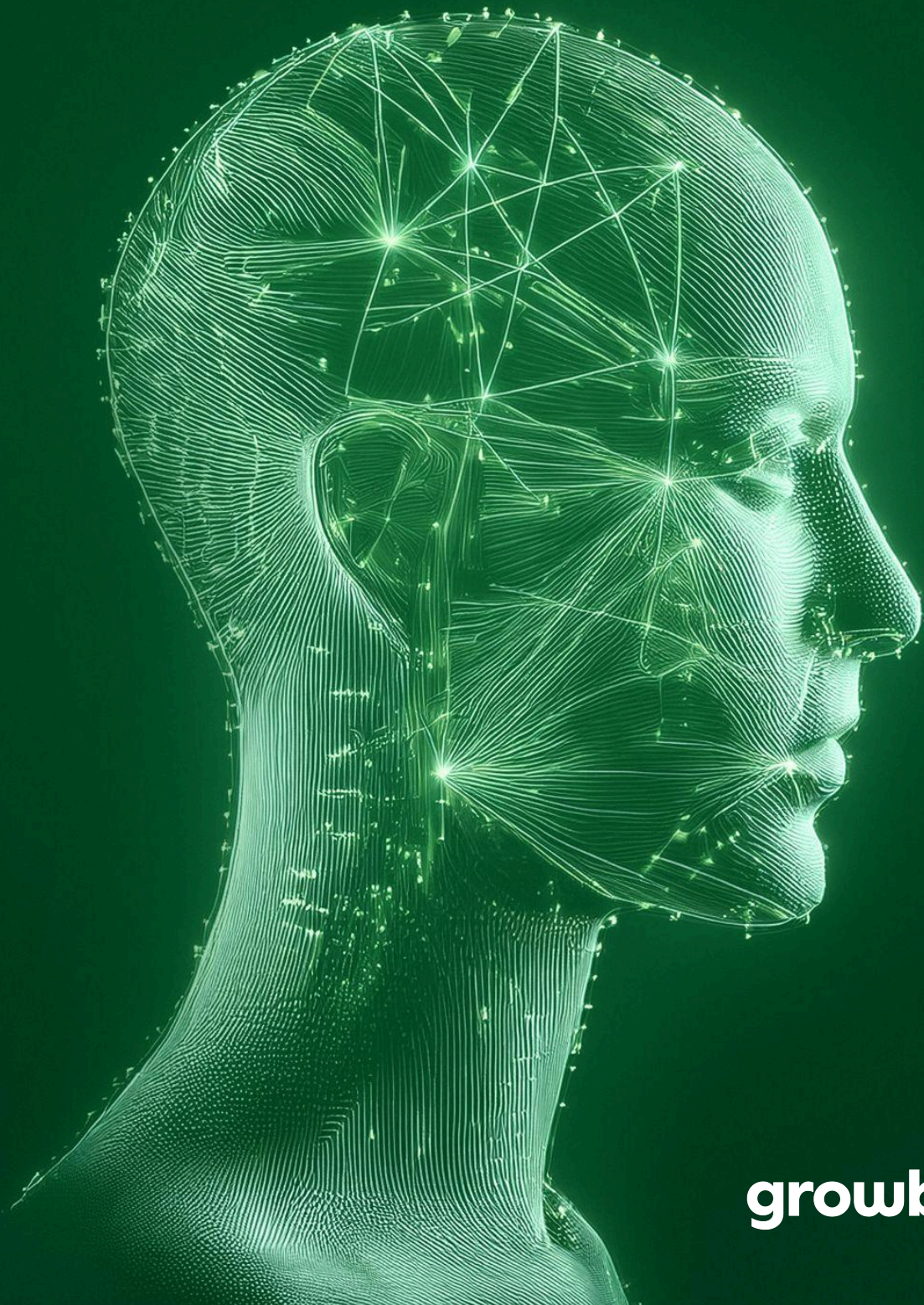


RAKESH SATHARASI, SAMI LAMPINEN

STATE OF ADMIN IN THE ERA OF AI



growberry

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CONTRIBUTORS



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FOREWORD

After being associated with Salesforce platform for over 12 years now, I have also followed Salesforce product from being a good Sales Force Automation (SFA) tool to becoming world's #1 CRM and now much more. The growth of Salesforce over the last decade or so is in itself a testament to the platform's innovation, feature richness and relevance to the needs of modern day businesses & business models. While the growth of the Salesforce platform, thus far, is well documented and the roadmap looks good, there are always murmurs that much of the focus is on the end user, using the platform and creating the business value. Of course, this is a no-brainer and focusing on the end user is at the core of the strategy of any of the contemporary platform(s). However, in the middle of this, there is a prevalent argument that the platform administrators are not given enough importance when it comes to prioritizing the release features. This argument often finds strength in the number of cool 'Admin' features (or lack of them) in the recent platform releases.

The Admins mostly find themselves in influential positions within the organizations. Often, they find themselves as the bridge between business stakeholders and the technical teams setting up the platform. There has been some speculation about the nature of administration work on the Salesforce platform that the general Admin tasks are repetitive, monotonous and less interesting in nature. Of course this depends on the definition of Admin work, which in itself varies a lot across organizations. In most of the projects I worked on, I have seen Admins using tools that are not native to the platform, in getting their job done. This made me curious on why such tools are not native to the platform.

While we at Growberry were wondering what could make a Salesforce Admin truly awesome in this era of AI, Valo.ai, a neighboring startup, requested that we research this topic and understand the current state of Salesforce Admins. Surprisingly (or not so), there hasn't been similar activity regarding Admin interests. Since you are reading this survey, it is clear that we jumped on this opportunity and put together this document. If you are an upcoming Salesforce platform Admin or a seasoned pro already, we believe that you will find value from this document and survey.

- Rakesh Satharasi, Growberry CTO & co-founder

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Salesforce platform had almost had a 10x growth, in terms of revenue, over the last decade and naturally seen a lot of talent movement into the platform. However in the current economic climate, Salesforce is also entering into an interesting phase that is defined not only by 'growth and transformation' but also by 'efficiency in operations'. At the same stage, the tech advancements made in general and especially in the field of AI are more than just promising. The whole new chapter of exploring the unknown possibilities on the wings of AI is beckoning.

The current recession extending beyond predictions has also undeniably brought back the questions related to the cost benefit analysis of the Salesforce platform in the enterprise landscape of the large and medium organizations. The current need or mantra is to do more with less. In line with the current trend, Salesforce responded with AI offerings on the platform that could boost the productivity of end users. These offerings are also extended to the platform developers, who can use these tools to improve productivity in coding, debugging, devops etc. However, so far, the platform administrator has been left behind on such innovations. The features like Salesforce optimizer and Health check are definite steps in the right direction but clearly not enough.

The responses are of course reflective of the diversity of the participants. More than 90% of the participants felt that the salesforce platform administration needs a fresh look. While the response is not surprising, the percentage is interesting. Despite the industry leading efforts from Salesforce to democratize app building and maintenance, some responses in this research show that some of the regular platform maintenance tasks are both time consuming and tech demanding. Salesforce's current top priority is the end user and not administrator. For companies like Valo.ai, this is an opportunity to invest & innovate in this platform space.

In this report, we present the findings in three categories - general administration, platform integrations and future of platform administration. These categories are reflective of applicability of the results and also to make it an interesting reading.

PARTICIPATING COMPANIES

In this study we have reached out to 30+ organizations,

- that are from different industries
- having users ranging from couple of hundreds to tens of thousands,
- using a single production to those using over 10 production orgs
- that used Salesforce from a couple of years to those using the platform for over 15 years

to understand how they go about managing their own salesforce platform instances.

Some of the prominent customer names are as below:



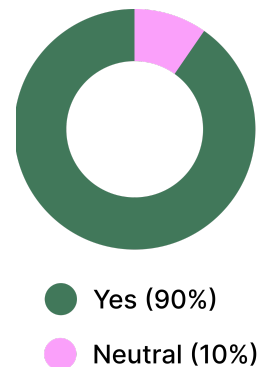
FINDINGS

General Administration

This section of the report presents the findings related to general platform administration that include user management, usage monitoring and optimizing, adoption of platform features, release management etc

Deep Dive - Platform administration capabilities and UI

As mentioned earlier, Salesforce has grown tremendously in terms of capabilities and features in the past few years. This growth has introduced some complexity in terms of administering the platform and most people associated with the platform agree with this sentiment. 90% of our participants think that Salesforce platform administration capabilities should be improved.



Should administration capabilities in Salesforce be improved? A couple of remarks from the participants are as below

I think the administration part of Salesforce is generally lacking the fresh and effective look and feel + truly helpful tools for admins.

Data is scattered everywhere. Admin needs to follow on multiple different pages, know how to SQL to get detailed data etc. There's no one place to go to get a 360 view of what's happening.

Deep Dive - Salesforce user & access management

Inline with Salesforce growth, the platform user base within the organizations also quickly increasing (assuming no adoption issues). The increased users also meant an increase in complexity of access management due to further slicing and dicing of the

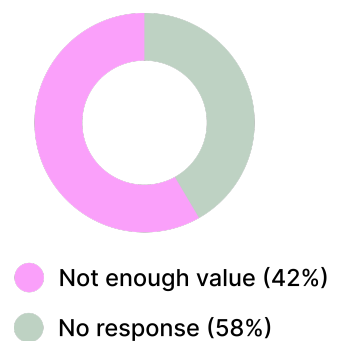
needs to access data (or not). To add to this, it is very common to see heaps of technical debt piled on this particular topic. In most organizations, administrators don't dare to modify the current access definitions, particularly those that pre-date them due to the fear of breaking some functionality.



Half of my time is spent in answering users why they don't have access to something in Salesforce.

Deep Dive - Salesforce event monitoring usage

Salesforce event monitoring is one of those addons that come with significant cost to the organization. Many organizations have adopted this and have put it to active use. There was a wide range of answers from administrators on if this will bring benefit. In the survey, 40% of the participants felt the tool is not providing them enough value to justify the costs.



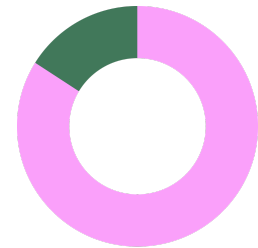
We have been using event monitoring from Salesforce for years and we believe that we don't get alerts that should have been triggered by this software

If your org licenses cost 1 mil a year, you would need to invest 200ke or more for event monitoring on a yearly basis! Biggest no of my life.

Event monitoring is rarely used but when it is needed it takes time to get the answer out of logs.

Deep Dive - Salesforce Optimizer & Health Check tools

Salesforce optimizer and integration health check are a couple of features provided by Salesforce to help administrators ensure the health of the platform is maintained and ensure that recommended practices are followed. However the adoption of these features and integrating them to the deployment flow is low. In our survey, more than 75% of the respondents mentioned that the optimizer and health check results are not top priority.



● Yes (15%)
● No (85%)

We are checking the optimizer results regularly through and checking what actions are needed and then do the evaluation and scheduling to fulfill those.

We will look in to this when i have time

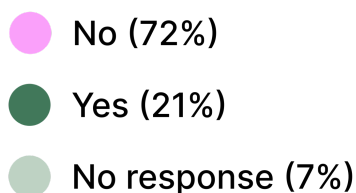
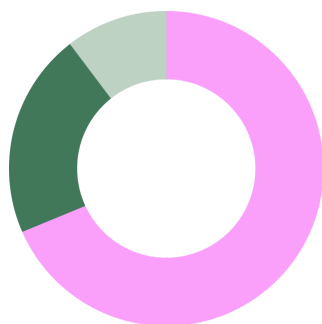
Platform Integrations

This section of the report presents the findings related to general platform administration that includes usage monitoring and optimizing, demanding activities etc

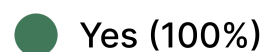
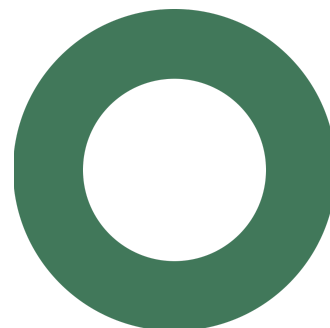
Deep Dive - Tools to monitor integrations from & to Salesforce platform

The massive penetration of the Salesforce platform into enterprise space, with more and more functionalities getting added, also meant that the number of integrations into and from the Salesforce platform has gone up significantly in recent years. This phenomenon can also be attributed to the mushrooming of saas applications and their usage. When asked about the platform tools available to monitor these integrations, the responses in our survey are overwhelmingly indicating that there is need for more intuitive tools and user friendly tools.

Are platform monitoring tools enough?



Need for an user friendly integration canvas



When ever we talk about integrations & setup it feels too technical for me

- Admin with over 5 years of experience

Deep Dive - Securing Platform Integrations

One of the common perceptions we see amongst the SaaS platform users, not only Salesforce, is that the security of the customer's own instance/org is taken care of by the platform itself. While this is not completely false, it is not completely true as well. Some of the application security threats, like a DOS attack, are taken care of by the platform through 'number of invalid login attempts' etc. However the responsibility concerning app - app security, custom integrations to on-premise legacy systems, external portals and communities is shared. When asked about additional tools used by platform admins/owners, many of the responses didn't include any security scanning tools or reviews like burp suite, 'OWASP Zap etc. Are the tools provided by the platform enough to scan, identify and fix the potential vulnerabilities that might arise from activity beyond the platform? The responses indicate that there is a need for more such tools and this also indicates that the traditional web app tests like penetration tests, performance or load tests to SaaS platforms like Salesforce needs to be reimagined.

I have been looking for years for a partner who can do this outside in tests and confirm that our instance is secure from external attacks. It is hard to trust that everything is secure without confirmations

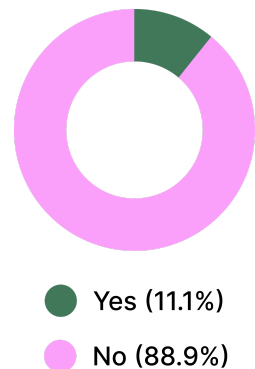
- Director of Cyber Security at a global HiTech company

Future of Platform Administration

This section of the report presents the participant views on how the Salesforce platform administration could evolve in the era of AI.

Deep Dive - Can leveraging AI improve Salesforce platform administration

It is hard to ignore the topic of AI in today's tech space. However it is also true that the hype of AI is slowing down. When asked about how AI can impact and improve the platform administration, more than 80% said that AI technology can help improve the work days of platform administrators. Some of the responses echoed the 'unsure' nature yet with AI adoption.



Yeah, if properly built, then definitely. At least when thresholds are being reached, licenses being used fast, this could bring value. Now all of this is done manually.

I can see that there are plenty of more useful tasks that could help speed up development and changes that admins are required to do. For example, you could ask complicated formula fields or complicated rules that need to be done in Salesforce in order to make some magic happen. Of course you could extend AI capabilities to help create and evaluate flows for example

CONCLUSION

As we are entering into a new technological era, Salesforce is likely to continue to focus on expanding its platform capabilities, driving innovation, and exploring new growth opportunities, particularly in AI, automation of routine tasks, low code or no code enhancements, industry-specific solutions etc. All these new platform features would bring more setup items and stuff to manage for the administrators. Salesforce would undoubtedly bring in some new features for administrators but more practically Salesforce's priority is the end user and not the administrator. Salesforce administration needs to be more strategic and data-driven, with advanced AI, automation, and immersive technologies making daily tasks more intuitive. This will allow Admins to transition into roles that blend system management with data science, AI oversight, and ethical technology stewardship. This need for innovation in terms of platform administration creates space for companies to leverage modern tech and reimagine the platform administration.