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IBM MAS vs. Classic Maximo

Is the Upgrade Worth It?

An honest breakdown of cost, disruption, and the learning curve for organizations still running Maximo 7.6.1 and a clear-eyed view of what moving to the Maximo Application Suite actually involves.

TECHNICAL GUIDANCE PAPER

00 — WHY WE WROTE THIS

Straight talk, not a sales pitch

If you run Maximo 7.6.1, you have almost certainly heard that you *need* to move to the IBM Maximo Application Suite (MAS). Most of what you have read frames that move as either a trivial “upgrade” or an existential crisis. Neither is honest.

This document does something different. It lays out what the move genuinely costs, what genuinely disrupts your operation, and where the learning curve is real versus overblown — including the places where staying put a little longer is a legitimate choice. SMS has completed over 1,000 EAM implementations. We have seen these projects go smoothly and we have seen them go sideways. The difference is almost always honesty at the planning stage.

The one fact you cannot plan around

IBM ended standard support for Maximo 7.6.1.x on **September 30, 2025**. After that date IBM no longer ships fixes, patches, or security updates for 7.6.1, and telephone support stops. This is the immovable object in every decision below.

Sources for the claims in this document are IBM’s own support and documentation pages, plus independent EAM consultancies and licensing specialists. On some topics, especially the learning curve, credible experts genuinely disagree. In those cases we present both views rather than only the convenient one.

01 — THE DEADLINE & YOUR REAL OPTIONS

What end of support actually means

Maximo 7.6.1 will keep running past September 30, 2025 and well beyond — nothing switches off. What changes is the risk profile. With no more security patches, an unpatched vulnerability in WebSphere, the JVM, or the OS underneath Maximo becomes *your* problem to mitigate, and a documented compliance gap for auditors in regulated industries.

You have four honest paths, not one

Path	What it is	Buys you time?	Long-term?
Upgrade to MAS 9	Move to the supported, cloud-native suite now	—	Yes
IBM Extended Support	Paid extension while you build a documented MAS roadmap	To ~Sep 30, 2026	No
IBM Sustained Support	Best-effort support, no new fixes	Up to ~2030	No
Do nothing	Stay on 7.6.1 unsupported	—	No — rising risk

Extended and Sustained Support are not a way to avoid MAS — IBM requires you to show a Maximo upgrade roadmap to qualify, and you must be on the latest 7.6.1.3 release with active Subscription & Support. They are a way to buy a planning runway. Use them deliberately, not as procrastination.

A licensing bridge worth knowing about

You can trade your existing user-based Maximo entitlements for MAS **AppPoint** entitlements and gain “Dual Entitlement” — the right to keep running legacy 7.6.1.x while you stand up and prove out MAS alongside it. This is the lowest-stress migration pattern we deploy: build and rehearse the new environment against a copy of production, then cut over in a single short, well-rehearsed outage and retire the old environment.

02 — COST — THE HONEST MATH

Where the money actually goes

The headline that MAS “might not be cheaper” is true, and any partner who tells you otherwise without seeing your user profile is guessing. MAS cost has three layers, and only one of them resembles your old Maximo bill.

Layer 1 — Licensing moves from seats to AppPoints

Maximo 7.6.1 licensed you by named or concurrent users, usually per module. MAS replaces that with **AppPoints**: a shared pool of credits your organization draws down as users log in and as you deploy applications and add-ons. Log out, and the points return to the pool.

The model rewards some organizations and penalizes others:

- **Small teams of power users** — AppPoints are often advantageous; you pay for genuine concurrent activity, not idle named seats.
- **Large populations of occasional users** — run the math carefully. IBM counts indirect users (supervisors, executives, reporting tools) at higher tiers, and deploying modules such as Monitor reserves AppPoints up front. Costs can rise versus your old per-seat deal.
- **Self-service requesters** — still unlimited and free of AppPoints, as in 7.6.1.

Don't let a TCO model omit AppPoint scope

Licensing specialists repeatedly warn that the most common costing mistake is modeling MAS on old user counts. Tier escalation and module bundling can push real cost well above a naive estimate. Insist on a consumption model built from your actual login patterns by role — not your seat count.

Layer 2 — Infrastructure you didn't have before

MAS runs on Red Hat OpenShift (OCP), a Kubernetes container platform. Your 7.6.1 stack — WebSphere on a Windows or Linux server — does not carry forward. Depending on deployment model, this is either largely absorbed into your Suite entitlement or a more significant capital and skills investment.

Deployment model	Who runs the platform	Cost character
MAS SaaS (IBM Cloud / AWS)	IBM	Subscription; lowest infra burden, least control
Managed / hosted (partner or ROSA)	Partner or Red Hat	Subscription + service fee; balanced control
Self-managed OpenShift (on-prem / your cloud)	You	Hardware and staff to run it; OCP entitlements included with Suite — see below

Deployment model	Who runs the platform	Cost character
OpenShift entitlements are included for on-premise Suite workloads This is the part that works out in your favor, and it is widely misunderstood. For on-premise deployments, the OCP licensing needed to run the Suite applications is included based on the MAS entitlements you purchase — you are not buying OpenShift separately on top of MAS. Two conditions matter: Keep Suite workloads in their own cluster. IBM recommends that Suite workloads are not co-located in a shared cluster with unrelated applications. Honor that boundary and your Suite applications run on OCP entitlements that come with MAS — you do not pay separately for OpenShift on that cluster. Mixing unrelated workloads into the same cluster is what puts you outside the included entitlement. Link your IBM and Red Hat accounts. The included OCP entitlement is realized by connecting your IBM and Red Hat accounts together. Skip this step and you leave the included licensing on the table.		

The genuine cost of self-managed MAS is therefore less about OpenShift license fees and more about the footprint and the skills: a cluster of control-plane and worker virtual machines, shared storage, and networking. Cloud Pak for Data (CP4D) sits underneath **only where an application requires it** — it is the joint IBM–Red Hat licensing mechanism, and the software itself is not always deployed. Manage and Monitor, for example, do not require CP4D, while some other suite applications do. Red Hat itself notes that MAS carries increased complexity compared to the simple J2EE application that was Maximo 7.6 — a traditional IT shop may not be equipped to run it without help. If you have no OpenShift skills today, SaaS or a managed deployment is usually the honest, lower-total-cost choice — but if you do run it yourself in a dedicated cluster with accounts linked, the OCP entitlements are not an added line item.

Layer 3 — The project itself

Beyond licenses and infrastructure, budget realistically for the one-time move. The technical lift is smaller than most people expect — your data carries, and so do most of your customizations — so the largest line item is usually people, not code:

- **Data migration and validation** — your 7.6.x database is preserved and carries forward; the work is verification, not re-keying.
- **Configuration and customization** — most custom screens, scripts, and configurations move forward intact through Application Designer. Expect some rework where apps have been deprecated or changed, but this is not a rebuild.
- **Integrations and reports** — revalidate against the new platform; anything bespoke needs testing, though the mechanics are familiar.
- **Workforce training** — the real investment. New, deprecated, and changed apps mean users need role-based training even though the underlying technical move to MAS/Manage is not especially

hard. This is the line item most often underfunded and the one most correlated with failed transformations.

- **Parallel-run period** — where you pay for both environments briefly under Dual Entitlement.

The honest bottom line on cost

MAS is not automatically cheaper, and it is not automatically more expensive. For a focused team of heavy users on SaaS, total cost can land at or below your old bill. For a large, lightly-engaged user base on self-managed infrastructure, it can be meaningfully higher. The number is **knowable** — but only with a real AppPoints model and a chosen deployment path. That modeling is the first thing SMS does, before recommending anything.

03 — DISRUPTION — WHAT ACTUALLY BREAKS

The platform changes. Your data and your skills mostly don't.

The single most useful framing we can offer comes from the EAM community itself: the right question is not “how different is MAS from Maximo 7.6?” It is “how different is OpenShift from WebSphere?” The application layer is largely familiar. The platform layer is genuinely new.

Area	Maximo 7.6.1	MAS 9
Platform	WebSphere on Windows/Linux server	Red Hat OpenShift containers (CP4D only where an app requires it)
Your modules	Base, Work, Asset, etc.	Live inside “Manage” — same functionality, same Application Designer
Your data	—	Preserved; upgrade adds objects/attributes with minimal change to your records
User admin	Inside Maximo	Users created at Suite level; security groups manageable in both Suite and Manage
Upgrade path	—	7.6.0.10 / 7.6.1.2 / 7.6.1.3 can go directly to MAS 9 — no MAS 8 stop

Where disruption is real

- **Infrastructure cutover.** Standing up OpenShift (or onboarding to SaaS), migrating the database, and re-pointing integrations is the heart of the project. This is where timelines slip when planning is thin.
- **Custom integrations and reports.** MIF, OSLC, and the newer REST APIs all behave somewhat differently; anything bespoke needs testing, and email/SSO configurations frequently need rework.
- **Administrative model.** User provisioning now starts in Suite Administration. Your Maximo admins learn a new top layer even though day-to-day Manage administration is familiar.

Where disruption is overstated

- **Your configurations and customizations carry forward.** Application Designer is the same mechanism; years of build work is not thrown away.
- **Your data is not re-entered.** The database upgrades in place with new structure added around your existing records.

How SMS limits the disruption

Our approach keeps the actual outage short and predictable. We stand up the new MAS infrastructure using a copy of your existing 7.6 production environment, track and document every change and configuration, and complete a full test run. Once that run is proven out, the path forward is simple.

The cutover itself: stop the Manage instance, stop the Maximo instance — this is the one point where the outage occurs — then back up and restore the production database and start Manage. Because we have rehearsed it, the upgrade processing time lines up with the practice runs, so you know your outage window before you begin rather than discovering it live.

04 — LEARNING CURVE — TWO HONEST VIEWS

For most end users: smaller than you fear. For admins: real.

This is the subject where credible experts genuinely disagree, so we give you both sides rather than picking the flattering one.

The optimistic, well-supported view

MAS adopts IBM's Carbon design system and Pattern Asset Library — a common look and feel across IBM software intended to *reduce* the learning curve over time. Practitioners who upgraded from the latest 7.6.1.3 skin describe the differences for end users as slight and mostly intuitive: a refreshed Start Center, relocated masthead icons, consolidated toolbars, brighter accent colors. In that view, end users may need only a short “what moved where” guide rather than formal retraining, and a decade of Maximo knowledge transfers directly.

The cautious, equally-credible view

Other specialists who manage large rollouts report a *steep* curve and warn that nearly 60% of transformation projects fail — most often because people, not technology, were not ready. Toolbars, search, filters, and counters have all moved; Work Centers are replaced by Role-Based Applications; and the interface differences “can appear stark and perhaps overwhelming” to a 7.6.x user until the underlying logic clicks. The risk is not that the new UI is bad; it is that under-funded, generic training produces errors, lost productivity, and frustration in the first weeks.

Reconciling the two

Both are right, for different audiences. **End users** of Manage face mostly cosmetic and navigational change — manageable with light, role-specific orientation. **Administrators and IT** face a genuinely new platform (OpenShift, Suite Administration, the AppPoints model) and need real upskilling or a partner who already has it. Budget training by role; do not average the two into one number.

What we recommend funding

- Scenario-based, role-specific training for technicians, planners, and supervisors — their real daily tasks, in the new UI.
- Deeper enablement (or managed service) for admins on OpenShift operations, Suite Administration, and license/AppPoint management.
- A short, plain-language “what changed” reference for everyone, distributed before go-live.

05 – THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LEDGER

What you actually get for the effort

An honest breakdown owes you the upside too. The move is not only risk avoidance — MAS is a different class of platform, and several capabilities simply do not exist in 7.6.1.

Capability	What it adds beyond 7.6.1
Maximo Manage	Your familiar EAM — work orders, assets, supply chain — now inside an integrated suite
Maximo Health	360° asset health scoring and risk ranking across the whole portfolio
Maximo Monitor	Real-time IoT monitoring with AI anomaly detection
Maximo Predict	AI-driven predictive failure models for proactive maintenance
Maximo Mobile	Modern offline-capable mobile for field technicians
Automation tooling	System changes and configuration are simplified through the suite's new automation tools
Industry solutions	Add-on industry solutions install far more easily than under 7.6.1
License visibility	AppPoint usage is tracked — and can be audited and enforced — a governance capability 7.6.1 never had
Platform	Cloud-native scaling, modern security and SSO, deploy on-prem or any major cloud

Several of these are operational wins you feel every day, not just marquee features. The new **automation tools** make routine system changes and configuration noticeably simpler than the manual work 7.6.1 demanded, and **industry solution add-ons install far more easily** than they ever did on the classic platform. MAS also gives you something 7.6.1 simply lacks: real **license governance**. AppPoint consumption is tracked, and can be audited and enforced, so entitlement is visible and manageable rather than a spreadsheet guess.

These are the engines behind the outcomes SMS delivers in environmental monitoring, energy optimization, and compliance — reduced downtime, lower utility cost, and audit-ready reporting. They are also the reason “just stay on 7.6.1 forever” quietly costs you opportunity, not only support risk.

06 – SO – IS IT WORTH IT?

Our honest recommendation

For the large majority of organizations on 7.6.1, **yes, the move is worth it, and it is no longer optional on any sensible time horizon**. Support has ended, the security and compliance exposure compounds, and the platform you would move to is genuinely better. The real decision is not *whether*, but *how and when*.

Move now if...

- You are in a regulated industry where an unpatched, unsupported system is a live audit finding.
- You want the Health / Monitor / Predict capabilities, or modern mobile, in the near term.
- Your user base is concentrated power users — the AppPoints math likely favors you.

Use Extended Support to plan if...

- You have a large, lightly-engaged user population and need to model AppPoints carefully first.
- You have heavy customization or fragile integrations that need a measured cutover.
- You have no OpenShift skills and need to choose between SaaS, managed, and self-hosted deliberately.

What we will not tell you

We will not tell you the move is free, trivial, or always cheaper — because it isn't. We will tell you it is plannable, that your data and configuration survive, that the end-user disruption is smaller than the headlines suggest, and that the platform and AppPoints decisions are where the money and the risk really live. Get those two right and this is a controlled project, not a leap.

Let's build something proven.

SMS is an IBM Platinum Business Partner with 27+ years of EAM expertise and more than 1,000 projects delivered. We start every MAS engagement the honest way: a real AppPoints cost model from your login patterns, a deployment recommendation that fits your IT maturity, and a parallel-run migration plan that keeps your operation running throughout.

Your no-obligation MAS readiness review includes

- An AppPoints consumption model built from your actual user roles and activity
- A deployment recommendation — SaaS, managed, or self-hosted — matched to your team
- A migration roadmap that also satisfies IBM's Extended Support eligibility requirements

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