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Life sciences case study

sanofi

Sanofi achieves digital resilience with continuous application modernization

Sanofi and Cognizant work as one team to hold application obsolescence at 10%, down from 42% in three years, delivering cost savings, improved cybersecurity and a standardized digital foundation.



At a glance

Industry
Life sciences

Location
France

Challenge
Reduce technology obsolescence from 43% to 15% or lower through continuous, proactive and always-on modernization of a more than 2,800-strong application estate.

Success Highlights

- **Obsolescence reduced from 43% to 10%** and sustained below that level, across an estate of more than 2,800 applications
- **€149 million cost savings released** for redeployment into strategic Sanofi initiatives
- **98% APM data completeness** achieved underpinning proactive business engagement

The challenge

Sanofi is a global pharmaceutical leader with a purpose to chase the miracles of science to improve people's lives. It operates the digital ecosystems in the healthcare industry which are uniquely complex. Thousands of applications support critical interconnections across research and development (R&D), manufacturing and supply, commercial operations and internal core.

Over years of growth, mergers and rapid digital transformation, Sanofi had accumulated significant technical debt. Legacy systems were running on obsolete technology. Redundant applications were creating operational inefficiencies. Unsupported infrastructure risked in posing compliance, security and budget risks. If nothing was done, obsolescence was still growing and threatened to hit 42%.



How to reduce obsolescence to 15% and keep it below that level

Tackling the crisis became a C-level priority. Sanofi's board issued a mandate with two main objectives: cut obsolescence to 15% in two years and drive below that level for good. That required a sustainable model. The organization needed to treat the crisis response to lasting resilience. The benefits would be far-reaching. It would reduce cybersecurity risk, accelerate cloud migrations, simplify the digital landscape, release funds for research and innovation and help employees work more productively – ultimately, delivering the treatments faster to patients.

The critical question was how. How do you systematically remediate and decommission hundreds of legacy applications while keeping the business running? How do you do it quickly and shift to modern, standardized platforms? Few believed it could be done, since obsolescence had been tackled before but had never stayed down. Sanofi needed dedicated strategy and partners who could modernize applications, infrastructure and data at scale and speed. It found that in its long-standing collective relationships with Sanofi stakeholders. Its long-term transformation partner, Cognizant, was the clear choice.

Our approach

The success of the program, named REVAMP, depended on two foundations: a scalable operating model and a true one-team partnership between Sanofi and Cognizant.

Together, Sanofi and Cognizant combined governance-led decision-making with industrialized delivery to modernize applications at scale. Sanofi set the strategy and kept control to maintain their day-to-day commitments. This created a repeatable model for reducing obsolescence, accelerating remediation and building a stronger foundation for future transformation.

At the center of the approach were two complementary delivery engines: the pod model and the factory model. The pod model provided governance, design authority, prioritization and architectural decision-making across a portfolio of applications. The factory model delivered high-volume execution through independent delivery teams, ongoing remediation, decommissioning and modernization activities to progress with speed, consistency and reduced dependency constraints.



Pod model: Govern, design and prioritize

By REVAMP, specific application-focused pods were tasked to act as the program's governance and technical design authority. Each pod assessed applications, defined the appropriate remediation path and applied Gartner's 7 Rs framework: retool, relocate, repatriate, retain, repurchase, retire and replace.

By bringing together business, architecture and delivery stakeholders, the pod model of REVAMP created a clear decision-making rhythm, prioritized the remediation backlog and packaged work into execution-ready waves. This ensured the program moved quickly—but also moved in the right direction.

Factory model: Execute at scale

Once prioritized, applications moved into a factory-based delivery model designed for repeatable execution. Independent delivery lanes focused on application decommissioning, technology upgrades, standards alignment and cloud migration.

This structure enabled multiple remediation activities to progress in parallel, reducing bottlenecks and improving delivery predictability. Standardized patterns, reusable playbooks and automation practices helped each lane deliver consistently across a diverse application landscape.

The factory model accelerated the reduction of Sanofi's on-premises footprint, supported data center consolidation objectives and enabled application decommissioning at more than double the rate originally forecast for the program.

Industrialization journey: Prove, scale and sustain

The operating model was first validated through a 10-application pilot, which proved the approach and established repeatable governance, delivery patterns and reusable assets for wider adoption.

By the end of year two, more than 800 applications and 6,460 infrastructure assets had been decommissioned, while over 600 applications were modernized for continued business use. By year three, the model had scaled further, with more than 1,400 applications and 12,400 assets decommissioned and 1,100 applications modernized.

More important, the program was underpinned by a dedicated Lifecycle Management stream, to equip the key stakeholders with the tools and cross-unit visibility needed to sustain these results over time and to embed obsolescence into the business decision-making process—enabling Sanofi to maintain application obsolescence below 15% and continue modernizing its technology estate.

Five drivers of success

The success of the REVAMP program resulted from a combination of governance, stakeholder engagement, industrialized delivery and a shared commitment to transformation. Together, these factors enabled Sanofi and Cognizant to move beyond one-time remediation efforts and establish a sustainable capability for managing application obsolescence at scale. Drivers of success included:

1. One team, one mission

From the outset, Sanofi and Cognizant operated as a single, integrated team united by a common objective: reduce application obsolescence while supporting modernization and business priorities. This shared ambition made it possible to align on the long-term vision, to prioritize and change tack as the work progressed. Traditional client-supplier boundaries were replaced by a culture of shared ownership, transparency, collaboration and trust.

Decision-making was collaborative: challenges were addressed collectively and successes were celebrated together. This strong partnership fostered trust across all levels of the organization, enabling faster decisions, greater alignment and a relentless focus on outcomes. The program's success became a shared responsibility rather than a contractual obligation.

2. Business partnership and stakeholder alignment

Like many large-scale transformation programs, the initiative faced typical early resistance from application owners focused on day-to-day business priorities. Rather than treating this as an obstacle to overcome, the program engaged business and technology partners who understood both the technology landscape and the business context to correct the data.

Business partners worked proactively with Cognizant delivery teams to identify modernization opportunities that minimized disruption to business operations. By demonstrating value, reducing perceived risk and aligning remediation activities to business outcomes, they became powerful advocates for the program. Over time, applications evolved from program participants into active advocates, creating a sustained and expanding pipeline of transformation opportunities.

3. Building a transformation culture, not just changing applications

Sustaining momentum across a global enterprise required more than governance and delivery. It required a movement. Sanofi established a dedicated change management function to engage stakeholders, build awareness and create a relentless focus on outcomes. The program's success became a shared responsibility rather than a contractual obligation.

4. From one-time remediation to predictive management

Historically, application obsolescence had been addressed reactively, often after technology risks and technical debt had already accumulated. The program's leadership team actively changed this approach by introducing proactive and predictive operating models.

Advanced dashboards and portfolio insights provided early visibility into applications and assets approaching obsolescence, enabling intervention before risks materialized. Automated alerts prompted application owners to take timely action, while rigorous governance and analytics initiation portfolio management (APM) data quality provided unprecedented transparency into remediation, lifecycle status and decision requirements.

This shift from reactive problem-solving to proactive portfolio management transformed application health from a periodic exercise into an ongoing business discipline.

Crucially, application portfolio management data-quality improvements, predictive insights and automated alerts were designed not only to clear the existing backlog, but to prevent obsolescence from building up again. By embedding lifecycle management into day-to-day operations, Sanofi can address risks early and avoid having to launch another large-scale remediation program in the years ahead.

5. Technology roadmaps and standardized engineering patterns

A critical enabler of scale was the creation of REVAMP technology roadmaps and standardized engineering patterns. The roadmaps established a clear target-state architecture, defining the strategic direction for cloud adoption, technology modernization, platform rationalization and application lifecycle management.

Complementing these roadmaps were reusable engineering patterns covering cloud migration, integration, security, technology upgrades and application modernization. Every application was assessed against the roadmap and aligned to the most appropriate pattern, whether the outcome was migration, modernization, retirement or consolidation.

This standards-driven approach accelerated decision-making, reduced delivery risk and ensured architectural consistency across hundreds of applications. More importantly, it created a transformation individual remediation efforts into strategic building blocks that continuously advanced Sanofi's long-term technology vision.

"Hand-in-hand efforts for amplified value. Cybersecurity cannot be just a beneficiary of modernization. It has to be a partner in it. Working together on digital obsolescence lifted our cyber compliance score by 15% and inventory accuracy to 98%, linking orphan assets to the business capabilities they support. We cannot protect what we do not know. The value was immediate; working side by side is what amplified it."

—Jean Yves Poichotte, Head of Cybersecurity, Sanofi

"You can't implement AI on obsolete technologies, so obsolescence has a direct bearing on our ambitions to take the lead in AI. Key to our success in modernizing Sanofi at pace and at scale was working as one team with a common goal and a clear mandate, and Cognizant was a strategic partner in making that happen — not as client or order-taker, but as true partners, committed to finding solutions together every single day."

—Olivier Mazouin, Head of REVAMP Program, Sanofi

"As REVAMP Factories lead, I'm proud to share how Sanofi and Cognizant, working as one team, reduced application obsolescence from 43% to 10% in three years, and sustained it. Our factory model enabled remediation at scale, releasing about €49 million for strategic initiatives. Automation accelerated delivery further, saving over 35,000 hours annually and lowering decommissioning and remediation costs by 55% and 22%. Thank you to the Sanofi and Cognizant teams for a true one-team partnership."

—Viviane Goulart, Product line owner REVAMP Remediation & Rationalization COE, Sanofi

"REVAMP has been one of Sanofi's most successful transformation programs in terms of impact and visibility, with awareness at 91%. We built it together with our key stakeholders, with transparency and openness at every step. By listening first, focusing on value and removing fear, we turned natural resistance to change into ownership. With Cognizant as partner, REVAMP gave people across the company the digital foundation to support Sanofi's ambition."

—Vivian Mello, Organizational Change Management and Communication Leader, Sanofi

Business outcomes

By combining the one-team partnership with a scalable pod and factory operating model, Sanofi and Cognizant transformed application remediation from a one-time clean-up exercise into a sustainable enterprise capability. The approach reduced technical debt, accelerated data center consolidation, improved cloud readiness and created a more resilient technology foundation to support future transformation. Specific outcomes to date have included:

- **Obsolescence sustained below 15%:** The program reduced application obsolescence from 43% to 10% within three years and will consistently maintain this level through ongoing governance and proactive lifecycle management.
- **Simplified application estate:** More than 1,400 obsolete and redundant applications were decommissioned, reducing technical debt and simplifying the technology landscape.
- **€149 million cost savings:** Rationalization and remediation efforts generated approximately €149 million in savings, enabling reinvestment in strategic initiatives such as cybersecurity, cloud transformation and digital transformation.
- **98% APM data completeness:** Improvements to APM data quality provided greater transparency, clearer ownership and more informed lifecycle decisions.
- **Improved security posture:** Active Directory patch compliance improved from 64% to 100%, reducing cybersecurity risk across the IT estate.
- **Modern, AI-ready foundation:** A leaner, more agile and continuously modernized technology landscape now provides a stronger platform for cloud adoption, advanced analytics, automation and AI-enabled innovation.



From aging technology to strategic resilience

High levels of technological debt were putting Sanofi's future operational capabilities at risk. Working as one team with Cognizant, Sanofi turned the situation around in 24 months. A people-focused change management program inspired stakeholders to become transformation champions, while alpha pods and remediation factories powered through the application modernization at scale and speed. Together, the program transformed application lifecycle management from a reactive remediation activity into a sustainable capability. Today, Sanofi is an industry leader in obsolescence management, with levels consistently below 15%. The result is a leaner, more efficient and more sustainable technology estate that's ready to support business operations now and into the future.

10%
obsolescence achieved and maintained

€49M
released for strategic initiatives

98%
APM data completeness

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Cognizant (NASDAQ: CTSH) is an AI-builder and technology services provider. Building the bridge between AI investment and enterprise value by building full stack AI solutions that drive real outcomes, Cognizant combines deep industry and engineering expertise and its AI-native technology to help clients reimagine how they work, transform their operations, realize tangible returns and keep global enterprises ahead of what's next. Learn more at www.cognizant.com or @cognizant.

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