SAP'S API POLICY AND THE SUCCESSFACTORS RATE LIMITS

What the policy says, what it changes for customers, the SuccessFactors soft and hard limits, the dates that matter, and how to respond

> *A research note for CIOs, HRIS leaders, integration architects, and procurement teams running SAP SuccessFactors, S/4HANA, or Ariba who have seen the April 2026 API Policy, the SuccessFactors rate limit announcement, or a 429 response in a production interface. Written from the buyer's side of the table. Redress Compliance, 2026.*

Key takeaways

- SAP's API Policy, version 4/2026, published in April 2026, does three things: it restricts customers to published APIs used for their documented purpose, it introduces fair use limits with throttling, and it confines agentic and generative AI access to SAP endorsed pathways such as Joule, Business Data Cloud, and Agent Gateway.
- SuccessFactors is the first application to put numbers on the policy. Soft limits are live for all existing customers since the 2608 release on August 17, 2026: requests still run, but every response now carries rate limit headers. Hard limits, where excess requests are rejected with a 429, apply to all new public APIs from November 13, 2026 and to every new tenant from January 1, 2027.
- The headline number is 600 requests per minute across the whole tenant, with endpoint limits between 25 and 75 requests per minute on the calls most integrations depend on: `$metadata`, `$batch`, `upsert`, and the SOAP SFAPI.
- The policy does not change your license grant or your ownership of your data. It changes what SAP will support, what SAP can throttle or suspend, and where the next commercial lever sits: Integration Suite, Business Data Cloud, and SAP's own AI stack.
- Treat the soft limit period as your own audit window. Read the headers, inventory every integration, fix the design, and take any limit exception or roadmap commitment into your renewal in writing, on your calendar rather than SAP's.

1. WHAT THE SAP API POLICY IS

SAP published version 4/2026 of its API Policy in April 2026, followed by a frequently asked questions document in May. It is a governance document, not a contract amendment, and it applies to every party that calls an SAP API: customers, partners, partner applications, and any customer using a third party integration tool or SAP's own Integration Suite. The anatomy is consistent:

- **Published APIs only.** Interfaces listed on the SAP Business Accelerator Hub or in product documentation are usable. Internal, private, and reserved namespace APIs are not, and SAP has said existing use of undocumented interfaces is out of policy immediately.
- **Documented purpose only.** A published API must be used for the purpose SAP documented. Section 2.2.2 prohibits scraping, harvesting, and systematic or large scale extraction or replication of data outside endorsed pathways.
- **Agentic AI through SAP's door.** The same section prohibits API use for interaction or integration with semi autonomous or generative AI systems that plan, select, or execute sequences of API calls, except through SAP endorsed architectures. Today that means Joule, Business Data Cloud, and the Agent Gateway.
- **Fair use and enforcement.** APIs may be subject to documented rate limits, throttling, and other technical controls. SAP reserves the right to throttle, suspend, or terminate access, and explicitly prohibits circumvention through proxies, gateways, intermediary services, custom code, or impersonation.

- **Legacy extraction closed.** ODP via RFC is no longer an endorsed pattern for non SAP tooling. A security patch that technically blocks non compliant ODP RFC calls has been rolling since June 9, 2026, and customers using it with third party data platforms are told to contact their account executive about a migration path.

What it does not do matters as much. The FAQ states the policy does not change contractual license grants, functional entitlements, or licenses, does not limit SAP's data export obligations, and does not change data ownership. On the Q1 2026 investor call the CEO said customers would not pay to access their own data. The gap between that assurance and the policy text, which is unchanged, is where the commercial risk lives.

2. HOW IT IMPACTS CUSTOMERS

- **Every integration becomes a compliance question.** Interfaces built over the last decade on undocumented OData entities, BAPIs wrapped in custom RFCs, or screen level automation are now out of policy regardless of how long they have worked. SAP's support position, restated by the user groups, is that reliable support exists only where SAP has explicitly published the interface.
- **Fair use is a percentile, not a promise.** SAP's CTO described the method at Sapphire 2026: take the workload distribution across all customers of an application and set the fair use limit at the 99th percentile. That protects the median customer and exposes the largest and most integrated estates, which are exactly the ones with the most to lose from a throttled payroll or identity feed.
- **Third party AI and data platforms are routed.** Analytics and AI tooling from Databricks, Snowflake, Microsoft, Google, and AWS are directed through BDC Connect and endorsed interfaces. Agentic frameworks and copilots that orchestrate SAP calls directly are formally restricted unless SAP certifies the pathway.
- **The pricing model is unstated.** The FAQ says that as new pathways for large scale data and agentic access evolve, so will SAP's commercial models, and directs pricing questions to the account team. DSAG has asked for a transparent fair use model and has pointed to Business Data Cloud terms that carry hard limits of roughly 2,000 OData calls per gigabyte of compute memory per month, with overage fees. The pattern is familiar from Digital Access: a technical policy first, a metric second, a price third.
- **Procurement is not in the room.** The policy reaches customers through developer portals, release notes, and integration teams. The commercial consequences, a Business Data Cloud subscription, an Integration Suite tier, or a Joule commitment, arrive later through the account team. The people who see the 429 are rarely the people who hold the contract.

3. SUCCESSFACTORS: SOFT LIMITS AND HARD LIMITS

SuccessFactors has operated informal guidance since the 2H 2022 release, when SAP asked customers to stay under 40 requests per second for OData and 20 per second for SFAPI and worked directly with the small share of tenants above that line. Learning OData APIs have been under enforced limits for some time. The 2608 release replaces guidance with published, per endpoint limits and standard headers across the rest of the suite.

Endpoint or scope	Soft limit from 2608	What typically hits it
Tenant level, all APIs and operations	600 requests per minute	The aggregate of every middleware, IdP, payroll, and reporting connector on the tenant. The number that matters for large estates.
`/odata/v2/$metadata`	25 per minute	Integration tools that refetch metadata on every run instead of caching it. The most common and most avoidable breach.
`/odata/v2/$batch`	25 per minute	Nightly full loads and mass updates written as many small batches rather than a few large ones.
`/odata/v2/upsert`	25 per minute	Record by record writes from HR data feeds, onboarding tools, and time systems.
`/sfapi/v1/soap`	75 per minute	

		Legacy SFAPI integrations, including older payroll and benefits connectors.
`FormContent` / `FormHeader`	25 / 50 per minute	Performance and compensation extracts pulled form by form.
`Goal`, `NominationTarget`	50 per minute	Talent and succession reporting run at high frequency.
`TalentRatings`	25 per minute, quota 1,250 per hour	The first published hourly quota. Calibration and analytics extracts.
`Candidate`, `CandidateLight`	50 per minute	Recruiting integrations, job boards, background check and assessment vendors.

SAP states the list is subject to change and that the definitive list is maintained in the What's New Viewer from the 2608 release. Verify against your own tenant's headers.

	Soft limit	Hard limit
Who it applies to	All existing customers and tenants, from August 17, 2026.	All new public APIs from November 13, 2026. All tenants created on or after January 1, 2027.
What happens over the line	The request is executed. Warning headers are returned. Nothing breaks, and nothing is logged for you unless you log it.	The request is rejected with HTTP 429 Too Many Requests and a Retry-After header. The integration fails until it backs off.
How you see it	`RateLimit-Policy` shows the policy, quota, window, and mode, for example `m=soft`. `RateLimit` shows remaining quota and seconds to reset. Both appear on every response, not only errors.	Same headers with `m=hard`, plus the 429 response body.
Existing tenants	In soft mode today.	No date announced for converting existing tenants to hard mode. Assume it is coming and plan for it in 2027.

4. KEY DATES

Date	Event
1H 2022	SAP announces rate limiting for SuccessFactors APIs.
2H 2022 (2211)	Gradual introduction begins. Guidance of 40 requests per second for OData and 20 for SFAPI. SAP contacts the roughly 0.5 percent of customers expected to be affected.
April 2026	SAP API Policy version 4/2026 published, updated April 27. Section 2.2.2 restrictions on agentic AI and large scale extraction. Immediate reaction from DSAG, consultants, and partners.
Late April 2026	Q1 investor call. CEO states customers will not pay to access their own data and that the intent is throttling of mass requests and protection of SAP domain knowledge.
May 2026	API Policy FAQ version 1.1. Sapphire: CTO describes the 99th percentile fair use method and confirms limits apply within existing contracts.
June 9, 2026	Enforcement begins for ODP via RFC. A security patch technically blocks non compliant calls from third party data platforms.
August 17, 2026	SuccessFactors 2608 release. Soft rate limits live for all existing customers. Final limit list published in the What's New Viewer.
November 13, 2026	SuccessFactors 2H 2026 release. Hard limits enforced on all new public APIs.

January 1, 2027	Hard limits enforced for every new SuccessFactors tenant created from this date.
2027, unannounced	Conversion of existing tenants to hard mode, a fair use metric for other SAP applications, and any commercial model for API capacity or agentic access. None is published. All three are the logical next step.

5. WHERE THE EXPOSURE SITS

Unlike a license review, the API policy does not produce a claim with a list price. It produces outages, remediation work, and a commercial proposal positioned as the fix. The illustration below is a large SuccessFactors estate with a typical integration footprint; the figures are for structure, not quotation.

Finding	Typical cause	Consequence under hard limits
Tenant limit breached at shift change	Identity provider, time system, and payroll connector all polling Employee Central in the same window, exceeding 600 per minute in aggregate.	Random 429s across unrelated interfaces. Failed provisioning, missed time entries, and a payroll run that has to be rerun manually.
`$metadata` fetched on every call	iPaaS or custom connector configured without metadata caching.	The 25 per minute limit is hit within seconds of a job starting. Every downstream call fails until the run is redesigned.
Nightly full load as thousands of small batches	Legacy integration written before `$batch` sizing mattered.	The load that finished in an hour now takes most of the night or does not finish. Reporting and downstream systems run on stale data.
Recruiting vendor integration	Assessment or background check partner polling Candidate at high frequency.	The partner's integration, not yours, breaks the limit. The 429 lands on your tenant and your candidates.
Copilot or agent orchestrating OData calls	A third party AI assistant given service credentials to answer HR questions.	Out of policy under Section 2.2.2 regardless of volume. Access can be throttled or suspended, and the remedy offered is Joule.
The commercial proposal that follows	**Integration Suite at a higher tier, Business Data Cloud for analytics and AI access, Joule for agentic scenarios, and a services engagement to rebuild the interfaces. Each is a legitimate product. None should be bought as a remedy at SAP's quarter end.**	

6. HOW CUSTOMERS SHOULD RESPOND

The response is a sequence. Its purpose is to keep every interface running, keep the policy from becoming a commercial event on SAP's timetable, and put every commitment SAP wants in writing where it belongs: the renewal.

- **1. Inventory every integration.** List every system that calls a SuccessFactors, S/4HANA, or Ariba API, the endpoints it uses, the frequency, and the owner. Classify each as published and documented, published but used off purpose, undocumented, or agentic. The last two categories are policy exposure today; the first is rate limit exposure.
- **2. Read the headers now.** Soft mode is a free audit. Log `RateLimit-Policy` and `RateLimit` on every response for thirty days, aggregate by endpoint and by hour, and identify which interfaces would fail under hard mode. Do this before SAP's account team does it for you.
- **3. Fix the design before the deadline.** Cache metadata. Size batches properly. Replace polling with event driven patterns where Intelligent Services or Event Mesh support them. Spread scheduled jobs across the hour. Most breaches are design defects that cost nothing to fix once they are visible.
- **4. Push the limit onto partners.** Every third party HR, recruiting, and benefits vendor connected to your tenant consumes your quota. Require each to confirm their call pattern against the published limits and to remediate on their cost.

- **5. Separate policy from contract.** The policy is not an amendment. Your license grant, your data export rights, and your obligations under existing agreements are unchanged. Do not sign an acknowledgment, order form, or partner agreement that incorporates the policy by reference without reading what that reference pulls in.
- **6. Take any exception in writing.** If your workload legitimately exceeds fair use, ask SAP for a tenant level adjustment and get it into the order form or a signed amendment with a term. An email from support is not an entitlement.
- **7. Evaluate the fix on its merits.** Business Data Cloud, Integration Suite, and Joule may be the right architecture for your estate. Price them as products against alternatives, on your evaluation timeline, not as the way to make a throttling problem go away in the last week of a quarter.
- **8. Move it into the renewal.** Put API terms on the renewal agenda: published limits for your tenant, notice periods before limits change, hard mode conversion timing for existing tenants, an express statement that API access to your own data carries no additional charge, and a commitment on endorsed pathways for third party AI. Ask for each in writing and price the renewal accordingly.

7. MISTAKES THAT COST THE MOST

- Learning about the tenant limit from a failed payroll run in January 2027 rather than from your own header logs in September 2026.
- Letting the integration team answer SAP's questions about API usage without procurement or licensing in the loop.
- Rebuilding interfaces onto undocumented endpoints or a proxy to get around a limit. The policy names that as circumvention and reserves suspension as the remedy.
- Accepting a Business Data Cloud or Integration Suite proposal as the cure for a 429, at SAP's quarter end, without a competitive evaluation.
- Assuming the CEO's assurance that customers will not pay for their own data is a contract term. It is a statement on an earnings call. The policy text is what SAP's account team will quote.
- Treating the January 2027 date as a new tenant problem. Existing tenants are next; the date simply has not been published.

8. HOW REDRESS HELPS

Redress Compliance runs the exercise from the buyer's side: the integration inventory and policy classification, the soft mode header analysis, the remediation plan, the contract read that separates policy from entitlement, and the negotiation of API terms, limit exceptions, and any Business Data Cloud, Integration Suite, or Joule proposal inside the client's renewal strategy. Our fees are fixed, and every dollar kept off the renewal belongs to the client.

REDRESS COMPLIANCE LLC

1314 E Las Olas Blvd, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 | redresscompliance.com | +1 (239) 402-7397

100 percent buyer side. Zero vendor affiliations. No reseller agreements. No referral fees.

This research note is general commercial and licensing guidance, not legal advice. SAP's policies, release schedules, limits, and product names change; verify against your own agreements, your tenant's rate limit headers, and current SAP documentation.