

**RESOURCE GUIDE**

# **UPGRADING OPENLINK COMMODITIES**

**A STRATEGIC PLAYBOOK FOR ENERGY  
AND COMMODITIES COMPANIES**

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# INTRODUCTION

Openlink Commodities is a mission-critical platform for many energy, commodities, and logistics companies. When fully deployed, it is an end-to-end solution covering functions from trade capture right through settlements and accounting. It is a complex piece of highly configurable software that is constantly evolving.

Each year, ION releases new versions of Openlink that introduce enhanced functionality, bug fixes, architectural improvements, and critical security updates. As with many enterprise platforms, organizations sometimes delay upgrades due to competing priorities. The more strategic question becomes how organizations can ensure they continue to realize the full value of their Openlink investment.

## WHY UPGRADING IS ALSO A BUSINESS DECISION – NOT JUST A TECHNICAL ONE

Many organizations feel their current Openlink implementation “works fine.” Upgrades are viewed as costly, disruptive, and resource intensive. But remaining on an outdated version with bespoke extensions carries significant operational, financial, and regulatory risk.

### Staying in Support

ION provides assistance to customers operating on supported versions of Openlink. If a platform moves outside the supported lifecycle:

- You may pay significant additional support fees
- Resolution timelines for critical issues may increase
- Organizations may assume greater operational responsibility during production incidents

When your Openlink/ETRM platform is at stake, maintaining supported software is an important long-term consideration.

**Bottom line:** Running an unsupported version increases enterprise risk.

### Access to New Functionality and Markets

New capabilities are typically delivered through current Openlink releases rather than introduced into older versions. That means:

- New regulatory requirements may not be supported
- Entry into new markets may be constrained
- Performance and feature improvements are unavailable

If your growth strategy includes expanding into new commodities (e.g., Environmental Credits) or enabling new modules (e.g., DMS), upgrading may be the most effective path forward.

**Bottom line:** Innovation requires a current platform.



## Accumulated Bug Fixes

ION continuously resolves issues reported across its global customer base. While high-priority issues may be addressed in Maintenance Releases (MRs), many medium- and lower-priority fixes are included only in major releases.

Over time, older versions accumulate:

- Known defects
- Performance inefficiencies
- Workarounds embedded into business processes

Upgrading consolidates years of fixes into a cleaner, more stable foundation.

## System Health Checks: Ensuring Your Platform Delivers Maximum Value

Upgrading Openlink is an ideal opportunity to step back and evaluate how effectively the platform supports your business processes. Over time, system configurations, customizations, and workflows can drift from best practices as organizations evolve.

capSpire helps clients maximize the value of Openlink across the full trading lifecycle through comprehensive System Health Checks.

These assessments focus on:

- Evaluating operational efficiency across the entire trading lifecycle from trade capture and logistics to settlements and accounting
- Identifying configuration or process gaps that may impact performance, scalability, or usability
- Designing and integrating optimized business workflows within Openlink to improve system performance and user productivity

A Health Check ensures that your system is not only upgraded but also optimized to support current and future business needs.

**Bottom Line:** A well-executed upgrade combined with a system health assessment helps organizations unlock the full value of their Openlink investment — improving performance, reducing operational risk, and positioning the platform to support future growth.

## Security and Compliance

Cybersecurity is no longer optional. ION continually reviews and remediates vulnerabilities in both application code and third-party libraries. Each new release strengthens the security posture of the platform.

Older versions may contain:

- Outdated libraries
- Known vulnerabilities
- Compliance gaps

**Bottom line:** Upgrading is part of your cybersecurity strategy.



## Upgrades Have Evolved

Pre-V22.0 upgrades were often large and complex. Modern releases are:

- Smaller and more frequent
- Higher quality with fewer defects
- Supported by improved database upgrade tools
- Faster to execute with fewer manual steps

The process has matured. The risk profile has improved.

## PREPARING FOR A SUCCESSFUL UPGRADE

A successful upgrade begins long before the first script is run. Several critical factors must be taken into consideration to ensure a smooth and successful upgrade.

### Define the Upgrade Strategy

Align stakeholders on objectives:

**Like-for-Like Upgrade:** Upgrade the software with minimal functional change. The objective is stability and continued support.

**Upgrade + New Markets/Modules:** Upgrade while implementing new functionality. The objective is strategic expansion and modernization.

**Reimplementation:** This is not very common, but some customers choose to completely reimplement the software. Taking what they've learned to start fresh with a better implementation.

Clarity here drives scope, testing effort, budget, and timeline.

## Leverage ION Programs

**BETA Program:** Gain early access to releases, validate impacts, and provide feedback on product direction.

**Technical Upgrade Test (TUT):** Provide ION with a copy of your database for pre-validation. This helps uncover structural or upgrade-specific issues early, reducing surprises.

**ION Release Notes:** Each Openlink release includes detailed notes outlining new functionality, resolved defects, known issues, and technical changes. Reviewing these early helps teams understand potential impacts to their environment, identify relevant enhancements, and prioritize regression testing, reducing surprises during the upgrade process.

### Build a Robust Test Strategy

The physical upgrade is just the tip of the iceberg. Regression testing consumes most of the effort. A strong test plan should include:

- End-to-end trade lifecycle testing
- Accounting validation
- Integration testing
- Performance benchmarking
- Critical report validation
- Testing must confirm both functionality and performance



## Optimize Before You Upgrade

Large databases significantly extend upgrade windows. Before upgrading, consider the following for a leaner database to reduce downtime and risk:

- Archive or purge old data
- Review trade maturity protocols
- Clean up obsolete configurations

## Choose Timing Strategically

Avoid overlapping with:

- Fiscal year-end
- Major regulatory deadlines
- Peak trading seasons (e.g., harvest, winter load)
- Major parallel initiatives

User fatigue is real. Plan to minimize burnout.

## Establish Strong Governance

Governance is more than status meetings.

Successful upgrades define:

- Clear escalation paths
- Formal go/no-go criteria
- Severity classifications (Low, Medium, High, Showstopper, NTH)
- Defined ownership and accountability

Strong governance reduces ambiguity and accelerates decision-making.

## DURING THE UPGRADE: EXECUTION DISCIPLINE

Now that decisions have been made regarding the upgrade, it is important to keep in mind a few items during the upgrade process.

### Conduct Dry Runs

For large environments (terabyte-scale databases), upgrades can take 12-24 hours. Dry runs on production copies help you:

- Validate duration
- Identify bottlenecks
- Fine-tune execution steps
- Plan downtime windows accurately
- Never make production go-live your first full run

### Test Broad Before Testing Deep

Early testing should cover all major business areas at a high level:

- Trade entry
- Risk reporting
- Settlements
- Accounting
- Integrations

This quickly exposes structural issues before detailed UAT begins. Finding a showstopper late in the cycle is costly and avoidable.

### Communicate Proactively

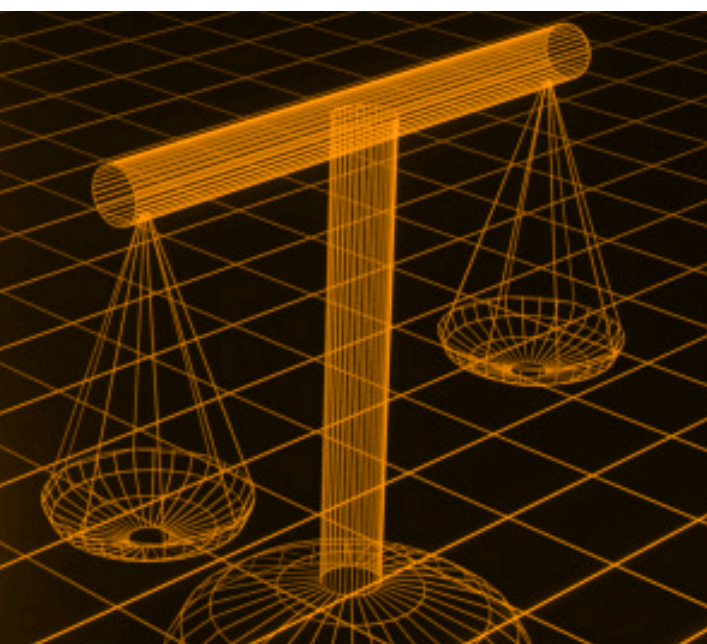
Upgrades impact traders, risk analysts, accountants, and IT teams.

Maintain:

- Regular status updates
- Transparent issue logs
- Clear risk communication
- Updated timelines

Silence creates uncertainty.

Transparency builds trust.



# POST-UPGRADE: PROTECTING THE INVESTMENT

The go-no-go decision has been made, but the Go-live is not the finish line. Here are some things to consider.

## Stabilization Period

Even well-run upgrades surface minor issues post go-live. A defined stabilization window allows:

- Rapid triage
- Targeted fixes
- Close coordination with ION support teams

Plan for it. Resource for it.

## Postmortem and Continuous Improvement

After stabilization:

- Review what worked
- Identify what didn't
- Capture lessons learned
- Improve governance and testing models

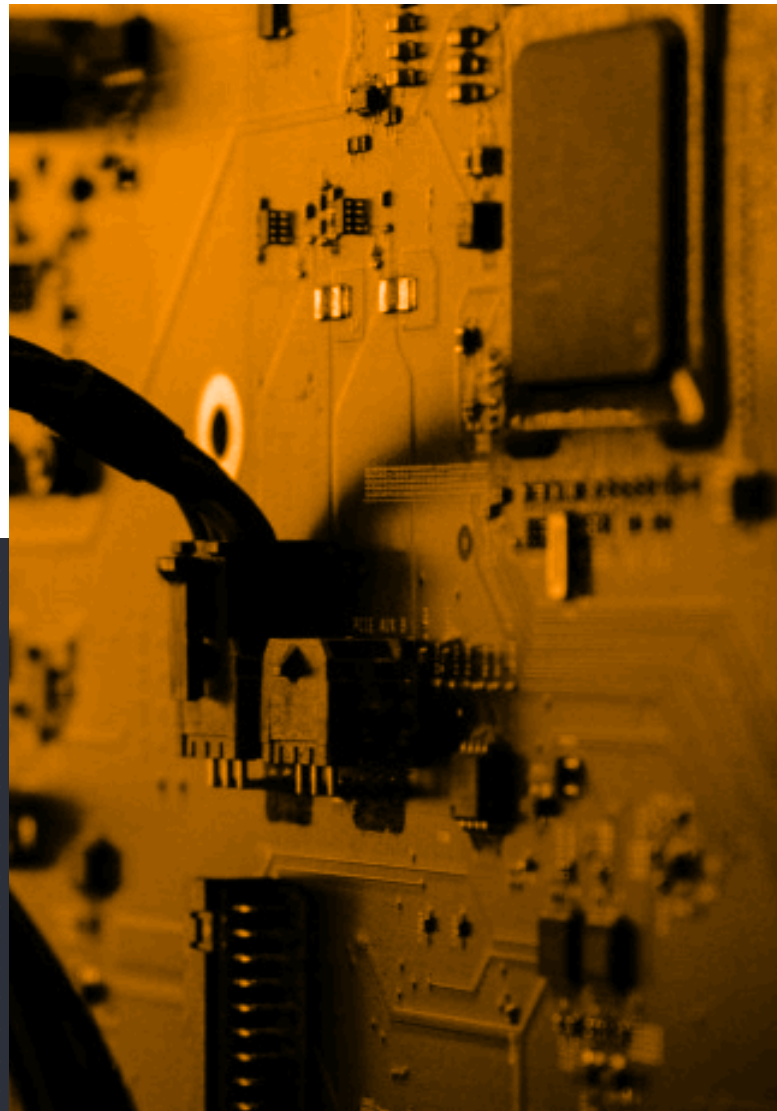
Upgrades are recurring events. We learn from each upgrade, and it makes the next one easier.

# FINAL THOUGHTS: MAKE UPGRADES PREDICTABLE, NOT PAINFUL

The most successful Openlink clients treat upgrades as:

- A recurring operational discipline
- A risk mitigation strategy
- A platform modernization initiative
- Not as emergency projects

When approached strategically with strong governance, disciplined testing, and executive alignment, upgrades become predictable, manageable, and value driven.





# ABOUT CAPSPIRE

capSpire is a global technology consulting firm driving stronger, smarter outcomes for energy and commodities organizations across the trading value chain. We help clients experience a better way - because we do it better by doing it right.

Through our Advisory, Delivery, and Operations & Support services, we help organizations stay ahead with clarity and confidence. Our teams bring deep industry expertise and a product-agnostic perspective across leading and emerging global trading platforms. Leveraging digital-transformation capabilities and AI-enabled practices, capSpire enables clients to make well-informed decisions, respond with greater speed, and remain resilient in volatile market conditions.

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\*Openlink Commodities, owned by the ION Group is referred to as 'Openlink' or 'Endur'.