

Tapping Into Software as a Service - IO



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Software as a Service (SaaS) provides numerous opportunities for independent software vendors (ISVs) and other types of software developers. SaaS has come a long way from its early years when product selection was limited to a handful of HR and CRM solutions. Today, a wide range of business and IT applications can be supplied as SaaS solutions, enabling the technology to play an increasingly important enterprise role and to move into larger and more strategic deployments.

SaaS has successfully shed its reputation as stripped-down software for the budget conscious business. Today's leading SaaS applications are the equal of their premise-based counterparts in every respect. In fact, a large number of SaaS offerings, thanks to their integrated networking capabilities, are actually more powerful and capable than many traditional software products. This attribute is the result of soaring SaaS product sales, which have encouraged software vendors, including many of the industry's biggest players, to focus more of their R&D efforts on SaaS applications.

For SaaS adopters, the technology provides multiple benefits, including:

Rapid Deployments: The technology typically arrives as a ready-to-go, preconfigured solution that the adopter can turn on within days or weeks after spending only a minimal amount of time on testing and configuration procedures.

A Shallower Learning Curve: SaaS applications frequently inherit their user interfaces from familiar web programs, giving users a familiar, natural and more intuitive experience.

Extensive Platform Flexibility: Since SaaS applications are generally web-based offerings, they can be accessed from any connected computer or mobile device—any time, anywhere.

Easier and Cheaper Upgrades: SaaS products typically include seamless and automatic upgrades as part of the ongoing subscription plan. Because these

upgrades happen more frequently and more incrementally than on-premise solutions, customers enjoy reduced testing and user acceptance and training costs.

Simplified Compliance: For a government-regulated businesses in fields such as finance and health care, SaaS can save both time and money by cutting red tape. In a regulated industry, much time is spent validating and updating software, a process that doesn't add any business value. SaaS drops much of the time-consuming validation work onto the software provider, meaning that the customer doesn't have to validate the software, only the way it's being used.

Lower implementation costs: No license fees mean lower initial costs. Allowing the SaaS provider to manage the underlying application infrastructure also means lower outlays for hardware, software and the people needed to manage it all. In fact, for most adopters, SaaS implementation costs are significantly lower than for on-premise implementations. According to Forrester, the Cambridge, Mass.-based technology research firm, many businesses report typical implementation costs of .5x to 1x the first year subscription fee, compared with 1x to 5x the license cost of on-premise software.

ISVs and other organizations looking to jump on the SaaS bandwagon need a data center that can help them deliver their applications to users reliably, securely and cost effectively.

To achieve all of their technical and business goals, SaaS providers of all types and sizes should look for a data center partner that has the technologies and physical facilities necessary to run a global infrastructure. Your partner should also possess an extensive set of development and knowledge capabilities to ensure the fast, affordable and reliable deployment of your applications.

Here are the key data center attributes any SaaS provider needs:

Quality Hardware: For SaaS hosting, high quality hardware is essential, including fault tolerant servers, preferably with redundant, hot swappable components. The use of high availability clusters in load balancing configurations is also desirable.

Connectivity: The number, size and quality of backbone data pipes is critical to SaaS delivery success. Access to multiple network providers is another requirement for running a reliable application service. Meanwhile, smart routing technology can reduce costs to the data center while maintaining optimal connectivity. To support peak demand requirements, the network provider must have excess capacity or upstream connections allowing bursting.

High Availability: Your IT infrastructure needs to be ready for a disruptive event, whether a hurricane or a power outage caused by a backhoe. Look for a data center partner with safe, secure facilities featuring reliable and redundant power, cooling and other support resources.

Security: State of the art virtual and physical security is vital to ensure safe and continuous software service. Many SaaS offerings also store customer data, which makes the use of rock-solid security technologies and practices even more important.

Cloud Access: SaaS's future lies in cloud computing, so your data center partner should be able to support all of your initiatives in this key area.

Scalability: As your customer base expands, your data center partner should

be ready and able to quickly meet your needs for extra space and services.

Support: Your data center partner should be responsive to your needs and willing to work with you to find imaginative and cost effective solutions that will enable you to meet your technical and business goals.

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