

Software as a Service

Podcast Transcript



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Host

Welcome to the Accenture Systems Integration Consulting podcast series on Accelerating SI. Through a variety of hot topics in systems integration, we will explore how to achieve high performance through reliable, high-quality solutions for accelerated business results.

Today we will hear from Saideep Raj, the global lead for Accenture's Software as a Service capability. Software as a service—a way to subscribe to software over the Internet on-demand—provides a fundamentally faster way to deliver business value—in addition to the flexibility to scale technical capacity, lower IT costs and expand opportunities for innovation.

Saideep, thank you for joining us today.

Saideep Raj

You're very welcome.

Host

Software as a service (or SaaS) is a hot topic. What are you seeing in the market today?

Saideep Raj

Well that's a great question. You know we're seeing a lot of take up especially in this economic climate. And software as a service means a lot of things to different people. We trend towards the mature software as a service applications built on multi-tenant solutions. And the reasons why our clients are interested in taking up SaaS; because there are four main reasons:

One is fundamentally they see this as a faster way to achieve business value, the speed being a primary issue.

Secondly, it allows them rich access to the functional and business capabilities that are now needed for the enterprise, along with the reduced IT infrastructure and lower upfront costs than typically they get with the on-premise software.

Next, is the greater flexibility that they call out to be able to adapt to changes in the business and sales cycle they're experiencing. And finally, you know of course in this kind of economic climate the overall point of lower total cost of ownership by hosting the non-core infrastructure off premises and then absorbing these maintenance budgets in a regular service contract that they get with these software as a service players.

Host

What challenges do companies face when implementing SaaS?

Saideep Raj

You know, we see three types of challenges when companies are going about this.

The first touches on the integration topic. Integration is absolutely something that many clients you see software as a service is enabling really stitching together these different applications. And the key, of course is to drive up as much integration visibility across data, across the organization. But at the same time, not to inhibit the agility that these types of customers want to get with the SaaS applications. And that's something that's a real trade-off as more integration drives up, its harder to actually apply those changes. And the key is of course architecting the releases to balance that trade off, to get the right level of agility and with the critical mass of the integration that's required.

The second challenge is what we typically call the software as a service "trap". And that is when many companies are looking at the application, the SaaS application and design those. What they often forget when they see the application "live", is what the behavioral changes are that they're trying to drive. And when you fall into that trap, you end up with an application configured to capture data, but really the underlying business process that drives the behavioral change.

And the last challenge is in how you balance the drive for standardization that many of these organizations are looking towards so fast. And at the same time manage the level of customization that's needed for unique kinds of local or market needs. And that's been a challenge for systems integration for many years, but it kind of comes to a head for software as a service where people are typically driven around a more standardized model but there are now opportunities for customization and it's controlling it, managing it for the right path to enable a road map to kind of best leverage the SaaS model.

Host

We hear a lot about SaaS in CRM, but is it really ready for the enterprise?

Saideep Raj

The answer is yes. Certainly in CRM, software as a service is now very mature and we're seeing enormous adoption and take up in an enterprise level. Similarly in the HR space, we're seeing growth for software as a service and many clients looking at multi-thousand seat implementations for their organizations globally. What we're seeing as well is an entrance into the platform, where clients are looking at the platform capabilities around software as a service to enhance applications beyond the course of CRM and HR and of course leveraging the wider Cloud to be able to do that.

Now the kind of key take away is that many of these clients see very much a heterogeneous environment being established, where both on-premise and software as a service technologies need to work very closely together—and defining the optimal mix is the key question. How do you set that architecture and how do you get a road map to get to that optimal mix?

Host

Thank you Saideep.

Saideep Raj

You're very welcome.

Host

With that, I would like to close this podcast and thank you all for listening. To find out more about our Systems Integration Consulting services, please visit www.accenture.com/si.

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