

SaaS:A Beginner's Tale

The above concept is among the 'Buzz Words' in IT today. Due to various reasons its getting popular and accepted in the IT Industry day by day.

Why ?

How ?

Lets us discuss.

● What is the definition of “Product and Service” from software prospective ?

1. Basically software products are generalized in nature which can be used by a group of customers. These are designed to target a group of consumers or a community. Products are not very personalized in nature. For example consider “Adobe In Design CS 2”. Its a product made by the 'Adobe Inc' to target the publication houses. The layout designers basically use this. To solve the geographical barriers it serves the people in different languages. To certain extent software products are customizable to fit with the needs of its users. The customers need to by the license of the products to use. Basically such licenses are of lifetime basis. The vendors may not provide maintenance and support to the same after certain amount of time or depending on the user agreements.

But on the other hand Software Services are designed for catering to the customized needs of customers. Services are made with the specifications provided by the clients who need the same. A service may differ to another. In a single line we can say software services are quite personalized utilities/applications which target the consumers only on the consumer's request and requirements”. Lets consider the example of a company that deals with Automatives. The company needs a web-based solution to track its sales across the globe. It thus approaches a IT services company quoting its requirements. Then after there starts a business relation between the two as the latter provides the solution to the Automative industry specifically serving its needs. Traditionally software services are meant to give solutions to the specific needs of specific customers and may vary from customer to customer and proportional to the needs raised by them.

● Software as a service (SaaS) ?

The Wikipedia says “ It is a software application delivery model where a software vendor develops a web-native software application, hosts and operates (either independently or through a third-party) the application for use by its customers over the Internet.” Unlike the conventional softwares where the user has to pay to own the same, in SAS, the user pays to use the software which do include the costs for Maintenance, Scalability, Disaster Recovery and other such functions.

● How does SaaS approach work ?

SaaS based applications are never standalone rather they are distributive in nature. The vendors prepare the application, deploy it on centralized servers and then make the same available to its customers. Each customer on payment gets a license of the software to use. Since most SAAS

applications are web based its customers does not need to deploy the parent application on their systems. The interface at the client end connects to the parent application through any of the data transfer mechanisms (Internet/Lan/Bluetooth/Infrared etc). This way the clients do their work at save their work at their own disposal.

● **What are the industries which are beneficial by SaaS ?**

SaaS has tasted success in CRMs (Customers Relations Management), Desktop Sharing and Video Conferencing utilities, Accounting, E-Mails etc. Basically the domains which operate on a centralized basis are the big gainers of the SAS approach. All they need to is to set up a central application system and then just sell/distribute the end user licenses.

● **What are the advantages of SaaS ?**

It is more advantageous in the following ways.

- It is more cost effective, since the application deployment is done centrally nor distributively on individual systems. It reduces cost on machines, software and other hardwares used.
- Reduces geographical barriers to a great extent.
- Lowering the burden on Support, Maintenance, Trouble shooting etc.
- Usage of SaaS is similar to shopping under one roof, thus its better accessible.
- The customer is free to leave the usage it his own disposal. No hard coded bonds(Permanent lifetime licenses) like buying traditional products or services. This saves cost, allows the user to be more choosy.

● **Disadvantages and threats associated with SaaS ?**

Usage SAAS approach is nevertheless associated with threats. Such threats could be in terms of slow bandwidth, low storage capacity, threats to the integrity of data traveling through network, third party intruders etc. To have SAS implemented and running successfully we have to take care of the above threats.

SaaS has few limitations though. The under mentioned points make sense in holding back SaaS.

- SaaS is almost dependent on internet. There are still many barriers in accessing Internet in many parts of the globe. Thus, SaaS finds its difficult to target the customers residing in those locations.
- The data transfer speed is not always upto the mark due to infrastructure limitations.
- High end STN are still not widely used which is a nice lunching pad for SaaS.
- Many business segments where availability of data and information is more vulnerable, SaaS is not the best choice.
- SaaS brings good revenue but over a period of time. But commercially some of the share holders of a firm wants to make quick money. This could be a barrier in empowering SaaS.
- First time acceptance due to many factors too makes the life of SaaS a bit difficult.

● **Who is the predecessor of SaaS ?**

The concept of SaaS is possibly derived from that of the Application Service Providers (ASP). ASP used to be in simple Client-Server html supported approach. Generally a third party vendor hosts the application which has no direct link to the development of the application. Such ones

are not productive in terms of what consumers want. It can give the service that the ASPs are able to provide. Hence the to generate a more user oriented and of course much faster and reliable approach SaaS is gradually evolved from ASPs.

● **Capability maturity model and SaaS !**

Quality is the main focus of each and every software utility, application, services, delivery models etc. SaaS is also incorporated with different types of CMM levels to improve the process. Lets see how CMM describes the effectiveness of SaaS processes.

- The First Level is in line with the traditional ASP delivery process where each consumer is entitled with his customized version of the application and runs on individual instances of the server that host the application.
- The Second Level adds more customization of consumer's instance of application by allowing more feature to configure the application to personalized needs.
- The next level though allows the vendor to run a single instance of the application to serve each customer, too allows detailed feature sets for every individual. The data integrity and security measures are enforced to maintain the confidentiality of every consumer.
- The Forth Level allows the number of instances and servers to be customized depending upon the load on the system. The cream part is that to have such changes, the internal core architecture does not need to be modified. This adds a lot of flexibility. Like the previous level the confidentiality of the user is maintained properly here too.

● **What is the future of SaaS ?**

The future of SAAS looks bright as the software gurus predict. Over the period of time many software big guns are heading towards implementing SaaS models in their business. You can take 'Microsoft Live' approach for the example. The general trend of the software market is heading towards SaaS.

● **Few of the current leaders in SaaS marketplace !**

- Leading online meeting provider , WebEx
- Microsoft's anti virus utility, Windows Live OneCare.

SaaS is relatively a new concept with a promising growth and few hindrances in the way. Better ways of implementing SaaS, removing the loopholes in SaaS approach, higher acceptance criteria, etc etc will certainly make it more widespread.

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Summary

Software As A Service refers to the paradigm shift in software delivery model in which the vendors do not package the product for each customer, instead they deploy it as a web-based service that the

customers can consume over the Internet. . Debasish Das discusses the various pros and cons of SaaS, please click the link below to read the full article.