SaaS (Software as a Service). Some Enterprise Challenges.

written by Manoj Khanna | September 9, 2006

I think some of the challenges which any enterprise company faces today are typical release cycles (program compliance), integration and regression testing (audit compliance), trace logs for transactions (SOX compliance), authentication integration (SOX/Federal/Compliance), data security (compliance), etc. A SaaS based application sounds nice and all from a ease-of-mind-perspective (and especially for small and medium size businesses) but has its own nightmares and bottlenecks. Its rightly pointed out in the write-up from Prof. James Morris about the development cycle for a communuty based/involved software development. But to an enterprise, especially large ones, its almost an impossible sell on SaaS.

Some more items to think about, at an enterprise level:
– Regression Cycles for various levels of testing with an enterprises typical legacy systems and already established internal applications
– Data Integration and cross-communication with an enterprises typical legacy systems and already established internal applications
– SSO/LDAP based integration with existing systems
– Data backups, storage and retrievals (including transfer of physical data from one data center to another)
– Fallback/Application Turnaround cycle (a typical SLA)
– Application customizations (not all fingers are of the same size!)
– Source Code ownership (what if SaaS comany is down under tomorrow!)
– Physical Data Security policies and practices
– BackUp and Restore policies and standards (a standard SLA)
– Legal Implications and rights for the users
– Risk mitigating factors (the unusual pretty picture or not)

The discussion is far beyond nascent at this stage now as more and more small and medium size businesses are making use of SaaS model. But, with risk factors aside, it doesn’t seem to fit the enterprise model at all, unless someone comes up with all the answers, which never is the case.

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