SaaS: The Second S is for Service – Part 1

Description: Software developers – especially Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) with existing customers that are planning to develop and deliver Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) offerings – should carefully focus on the second “S” in the acronym. As articulated in Saugatuck Research Report “Transition to SaaS: An ISV Cookbook”, SSR-545, 29Dec08, the evolution to a SaaS business model requires a fundamental rethinking of the business value chain. At its core, ISVs that are successful transitioning to SaaS recognize that they are moving from being a product-based software business to a services-based business. Such an evolution demands significant changes in marketing and sales, distribution, financial processes, operations, IT infrastructure, organization and culture.

Many of these evolutionary changes are directly linked to the delivery of service(s) to customers. Such services can be grouped into the following categories:

- Integration and tailoring of the application
- Application delivery (i.e., IT infrastructure, and operations)
- Customer support (e.g., customer on-boarding, problem resolution, billing, etc.)

While all of these service categories clearly affect customer satisfaction and retention, one of the most important aspects that most impacts long-term market success for any vendor is the following: Maintaining meaningful communications for identification of requirements.

This Strategic Perspective is the first of two which articulate a five-step framework for developing this overarching process for establishing service as a core competency, as well as the identification of key customer requirements. In this Strategic Perspective we offer guidance into:

- Classifying customers according to value; and
- Defining services that need to be provided.
- In a companion Strategic Perspective, “SaaS: The Second S is for Service – Part 2” (MKT-564, 17Feb09), we offer guidance into:
  - Structuring the organization and identifying required resources
  - Growing services based on the organization’s goals and
  - Responding based on feedback from the customer base.


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