

DMS SaaS: Pay-As-You-Go Approach Why it's Worth Subscribing to this New Way of Thinking

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by Leah Bilotta, Marketing Manager, RainMaker Software, Inc.

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), formerly referred to as the Application Service Provider (ASP) model, is a concept that came into existence in early 2000/2001, but didn't gain much momentum in the market until recently. The original ASP model was implemented in a client-server architecture, usually using canned software, and without a lot of thought given to HTML front ends. Most prospective corporate clients were skeptical about the unproven reputation of ASP vendors to provide secure and scalable solutions. It was also very expensive and tedious for the vendor to provide updates to applications hosted by third-parties, without application development expertise.

The recent introduction and use of a multi-tenant architecture that allows multiple clients to run the same application at the same time with separate data, has caused a sea change in the world of technology by making SaaS inexpensive and by simplifying the administration for both the vendor and the client. With SaaS, small-to-mid-sized firms can maximize the benefits of software on-demand, without paying the upfront costs they would for on-premise licensing.

Document Management Software (DMS), which made its debut in the late 80s to early 90s, has harnessed the SaaS concept. In addition to the entire service being hosted and backed up on dedicated servers, there are a lot of other advantages; especially for the small-to-mid-sized firm.

Here are some of the clear-cut advantages to subscription-based DMS as compared to on-premise licensing.

Advantage #1: Cost-Effective

The most immediate advantage of SaaS DMS compared to on-premise licensing is its cost effectiveness. A firm pays for each user individually and avoids the investment in hardware, tape backups, software and/or personnel. The mid-sized firm, who may find it challenging to support numerous systems, especially with DMS software systems that require multiple servers and applications, will find "pay-as-you-go" DMS services, a huge advantage.

In addition to the upfront cost-savings, the monthly costs of DMS are predictable and manageable. Firms can add users incrementally, instead of purchasing a more extensive subscription, and they can increase as they go, saving the firm money. Moreover with SaaS, the need for IT to setup, backup and implement the software is eliminated.

Advantage #2: Low-Risk

At some point, one may be in the unenviable position of implementing new best practices in a firm or department, which can include finding and deploying new software in a "no change, no change" environment. It can be intimidating, especially when there is a large cost attached. With the DMS "pay-as-you-go" service, an administrator can pilot with a single department and/or separate users to see if the technology will work, without any substantial commitment and avoiding the risk of a public "tar and feathering" by one's peers or supervisor.

Advantage #3: Security

Keeping important documents secure while sharing and collaborating with others can put a lot of unnecessary strain on IT. With the SaaS model, the application is hosted at a separate site, and the DMS vendor must vigilantly perform back ups on a regular basis to satisfy its service level agreement and stay in business. With a DMS, like e-RainMaker, which is secured by a 128-bit encryption, users must be authorized with a user ID and password to access documents. Additionally, the administrator can grant access to particular cabinets, folders and even specific documents.

Advantage #4: Service On-Demand

If it's "broke", you can bet the DMS vendor will fix it right away. The "pay-as-you-go" model is great motivation for the vendor to offer perpetually prompt, top-notch service to ensure they will get paid for the next few months. Additionally, with little to no implementation, the software is available within moments after one asks to try it -- plug and play.

Furthermore, with subscription-based software, the DMS vendor is responsible for all hardware and software upgrades, including all service pack releases produced by the software vendor for the operating system. Ideally, this occurs as soon as it is released.

Advantage #5: On Demand Access

With busy attorneys constantly on the road, access to important documents, on demand, is imperative. Since subscription-based software is web-based, any firm employee can access information anywhere via an automatic check-in/check-out system, eliminating multiple copies of documents. Further, for enhanced security, information such as document views, downloads, uploads, copies, moves, deletes, etc. are stored for administrators to review.

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