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How To Choose Your Software As A Service (SaaS) Provider



The number of companies offering web-delivered Software as a service (SaaS) continues to grow with a stream of new providers and services- from general office IT platforms with calendaring and file sharing to specialized functions like finance and email marketing. The benefits of using SaaS over traditional software that appeal to many small businesses include

- No software to install and upgrade means lower internal IT costs
- Ease of access - employees can log on from anywhere on the web
- Subscription based pricing is predictable without large upfront investment
- Data is centralized and hosted on provider's servers, with high security and low downtime

One company that has been around for quite some time, [InfoStreet](#), offers a full suite of office services including email, calendar, file sharing, portal creation, CRM, and syncing through its StreetSmart platform. With pricing ranging from \$10 per month for one user to \$2,700 for 1,000 users, it can be used as an "IT in a box" infrastructure for a broad range of business sizes.

We asked Siamak Farah, CEO of InfoStreet what a business should consider when selecting an online office solution.

He suggested the following criteria:

- SaaS not being an afterthought, but a design requirement
- Longevity / Track record
- Private labeling

- Integrated Suite of interoperating applications
- Instant and high level of user adoption
- Breadth and depth -- feature rich in each application
- Proven Scalability

Mr. Farah also emphasized that longevity is very important, but even more important is the company's track record. Since SaaS is fairly new to many companies, the fact that the company has been around is not as important as how well their "new" SaaS solution has performed.

We asked what role Google Apps has played in making these services more popular, and how others can compete when so many of their services are free.

"While Google Apps have helped in educating the market, there are some missing elements in the breath and depth of offering. Companies such as InfoStreet have been able to compete there with very affordable solutions that work as a suite and are private labeled to the customer. For many companies that offer free services, once Private Labeling, additional features, or hands-on support are requested, there are costs involved. Customers have become wise to that and often gravitate towards more complete solutions which provide great support, even if there is a cost."

Laura Leites, Assistant Editor, Smallbiztechnology.com



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