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SaaS Defines a New Paradigm in Software Development, Purchase and Usage

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By Siamak Farah

Since the dawn of time, mankind has been searching for stability and reliability. That is what drove us from being hunter-gatherers to farmers. The same drove us out of caves to building our own dwellings. In those days a small change could mean the difference between life and death and only those who adapted to change quickly flourished and survived.

While man's knowledge and technology has improved orders of magnitude since then, we have never given up the quest for harnessing change; making our surroundings last forever, enjoying the stability it brings about and converting "change" from a burden to an elected and welcomed event.

Take water as an example. In the old days each family had to dig their own well. Every so often they would have to painfully maintain the well. If their needs grew or if the well dried up, they would have to dig another well. However, that whole burden is behind us and nowadays, you turn on the tap and get as much water you need with no effort.

Another example is electricity. People had to buy their own generators, and it became a thorn in the side of many, especially manufacturers. Yet, with the advent of better wiring and delivery mechanisms, you need not worry about how electricity gets produced; you just get to enjoy its benefits wherever there is a plug.

Up to recently, computers and software have presented the same challenges. For many it still does. Hardware has to be replaced every few years, software updates cause downtimes and a tremendous amount of resources in any given organization is consumed by the effort of keeping day to day operations uneventful.

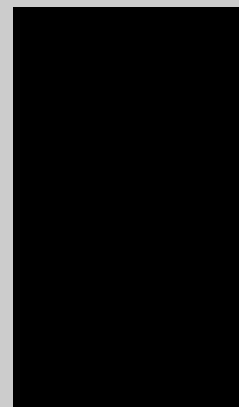
Enter Software as a Service (or SaaS - pronounced as Saz) to turn software into a service that can be used as desired without the burden of maintenance. Just like tap water and electricity, you can use SaaS as much as you need by just pointing your browser to the SaaS site.

In order for Software to be considered true SaaS, look for the following 6 criteria:

- Fully Managed and Hosted
- Paid in Recurring Payments
- Multi-Tenant, yet each tenant is completely secure and independent
- Anytime, Anywhere Access
- Users don't need to install any Specialized Client Side Software
- Software was designed for SaaS, not as an afterthought or retrofit.

SaaS defines a whole new paradigm in how software is developed, purchased and used. Looking a bit deeper:

- The Service "S" in SaaS requires it to be fully managed and hosted. Users must not be concerned with servers and updates and whether the software will be outdated. The service ensures that the software is always there, always up-to-date and at your beck and call.
- SaaS should be charged in recurring payments. This gives a comfort level to clients, knowing that the provider will work hard to deserve ongoing payments, and reduces the barrier to use by eliminating large upfront hardware and software investments.
- Economies of scale really show their value when the same solution is provided to multiple users. In addition, the collective intelligence that the multi-tenant solution provides facilitates frequent and rapid improvements. Most SaaS systems are designed so that clients are partitioned in a way that they will never feel or have fear of being on multi-tenant servers.
- With SaaS you can access your software, anywhere there is a browser and an internet connection. This "Anytime, Anywhere, Access" not only provides you with what you need when you need it, but also has tremendous value of enabling geographically dispersed groups to work as if they were under one roof.
- Since SaaS has to be anytime, anywhere access, even at an airport, or at an internet café, it should work securely with any browser and not require any special download before it can be used.
- Since, as described above, SaaS is a paradigm shift, the most optimal results come from SaaS companies that designed their software from inception as SaaS, not as a rush to market afterthought.



Since a paradigm shift implies "new", you may wonder how big the SaaS market is. The market is already sizable and growing rapidly. According to International Data Corporation (IDC), an independent market research firm, SaaS will make up 30% of the Software Market by 2007 and is projected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 21%, until it reaches \$10.7 billion in 2009.

Why do organizations like SaaS so much? It provides the following immediate benefits:

- **Less Risk, No Upfront Costs:** Reduces the expenses and complexities of implementations to virtually zero. No need to buy, install, and maintain server hardware or software.
- **Controlled, Secure, Ubiquitous Access:** Instantly makes critical data available to all stakeholders, whether physically in the office or not. All that is required is a web browser and an internet connection.
- **Streamlined Operations:** Reduces operating costs, and increases efficiency.
- **Automatic and Cost-Free Scalability:** Acquisitions, or new hires do not create a burden, solutions simply scale. Downsizing will not generate a heap of scrap hardware and software.

To best put SaaS to use for your organization look for the following criteria for selecting Software as a Service, or your SaaS provider:

- **Control** - You must have absolute control
- **Performance:**
 - Always available
 - Always zippy
- **Cost savings / Affordability**
- **Instant deployment**
- **Smooth migration / Operation**
- **Low learning curve / Ease of use**
- **Built-in capacity planning & scalability**
- **Recurring payments: no one-time large licenses**
- **Secure anytime, anywhere access**
- **Native SaaS design, not an afterthought.**

It is best to use the above criteria as a checklist to ensure all are available in one service. While some are subjective and are dependent on the audience, such as "Ease of Use", other criteria can easily be used as the means of comparing services.

Adopt SaaS today and you will start enjoying its benefits right now. Furthermore, you will have the comfort level that your software will grow with you and will never be out of date.

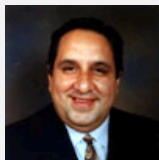
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Siamak Farah is the founder and CEO of InfoStreet, a provider of IT & Productivity Software as a Service (SaaS). Active in its day-to-day management, Siamak has assembled and leads a seasoned team of industry professionals at InfoStreet. By employing a business philosophy that focuses first on solving business problems and second on applying appropriate technologies to those solutions, he has enabled flourishing businesses for both InfoStreet and its clients.

As president of a small publicly listed software development firm and the chief operating officer of another, Siamak has extensive small business management knowledge. This, combined with years of experience starting his career as a software developer, places him in the unique position of having hands-on knowledge of technical, marketing and management issues; the very combination required for the creation of successful online suite of business software.

Prior to founding InfoStreet in 1994, Siamak worked at NeXT Computer side-by-side industry visionaries the likes of Steve Jobs. During his six years at NeXT, his responsibilities grew from technical sales and marketing to district sales management. Before joining NeXT, Siamak was the Chief Operating Officer of Microstat Development Corporation. During his two years at Microstat, he was responsible for the day-to-day operation of this publicly listed R&D firm. Siamak began his career at Vertigo Systems International. During his time at Vertigo, he was instrumental in its growth from a startup with just six people to a full-fledged business employing over 70 individuals.

Having been in the industry for more than 20 years Siamak has striven to include a technology-forward vision in his work. As evidence, Siamak has been and continues to be active in the envisioning and creation of forefront technology. 3D-animation, Internet technology, and object-oriented programming, and Software as a Service are just a few leading edge technologies to which Siamak has actively contributed. A member of the Society of Industry Leaders, Siamak is a frequent speaker at conferences that focus on the Internet and SaaS such as ISPCON, INBOX: The Messaging Industry Event, the Layered Technologies Pact conference, SoftLetter's marketing and SaaS seminar and more.

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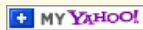
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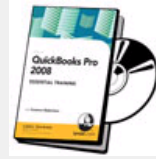
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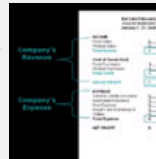
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