NETSCOUT

CHECKLISTS FOR BUSINESS LEADERS EVALUATING SOFTWARE-AS-A-SERVICE APPLICATIONS

Evaluating a SaaS application is more complicated than you may think...

SaaS has undeniable benefits: it can be cost-effective, meets immediate business needs, and delivers anywhere, anytime access for employees and customers alike.

But there may be hidden costs and complexities with many SaaS apps… cost and complexities you encounter only after you've deployed. Even free trials won't uncover all the potential "gotchas" of an enterprise roll-out of a SaaS application (although they certainly help). Here are a few things to consider—beyond the features and functions of any SaaS application:

- **Will your SaaS data be safe?** In one well-publicized case, a hacker broke into a shared-space SaaS cloud and destroyed the data and backups of all the SaaS customers.
- **Will your SaaS app perform as it should?** Only end-to-end performance gives you the true picture of how well the potential SaaS app will behave in your environment.
- **Will your SaaS app be protected from disaster?** According to Iron Mountain, a trusted disaster recovery firm, 79% of SaaS vendors do not guarantee business continuity.
- **Will your SaaS app be compliant?** Over 20% of SaaS-based data contain regulatory and compliance-related information. Better to find out your SaaS data is compliant before any audit.

Why Business Units & IT must collaborate on SaaS purchases…

While your business units look at features and functionality of a SaaS application, the IT team has to shoulder the burden of support and implementation. Business units may see the tip of the iceberg (SaaS benefits)—while IT has to deal with what the business leaders don't see below the surface. (Performance. Security. Business Continuity. Support.) While these tech issues might not be top-of-mind when choosing a SaaS application, they should be: all of these "invisible" aspects of SaaS applications can dramatically affect the success or failure of any SaaS initiative.

For these reasons, as a business leader, you should collaborate with IT on all SaaS decisions. Both sides can then get the whole picture—and take appropriate actions. This collaboration has a number of benefits:

Business Unit Value	IT Team Value	Benefit(s)
Business identifies key SaaS requirements, features, and business benefits of SaaS app(s)	IT can help assess full costs, performance, security, compliance, SLAs, and disaster recovery/ down-time protection	Team selects the best SaaS app for its business goals while maintaining secure, reliable, compliant business processes
Business analyzes financial and long-term viability of SaaS vendor	**IT provides guidance on data portability in event of SaaS vendor change**	**Business is protected from "vendor lock-in" and has smooth transition plans in place if changes are needed**
Business articulates long-term goals for SaaS, including "next steps" after initial app(s) are deployed	IT evaluates whether any up-coming SaaS initiatives can integrate into the existing network infrastructure, or if changes must be planned	Clear roadmap for long-term business enablement and better plan for future network requirements to support greater business agility

There are other business and technical issues you should consider in the SaaS decision-making process:

Is there adequate support and training? Better to find out before implementation, especially if you work in a highly specialized vertical market.

Will the SaaS app perform as advertised? Poor performance and excessive app downtime will kill productivity—and profits.

Is the SaaS app agile enough to accommodate future strategies and tactics? Markets change. Customer requirements shift. Your SaaS applications, and the corporate IT infrastructure they ride on, must be "change-ready."

SAAS CHECKLISTS

To help start the conversion with IT, use the SaaS app checklists below.

The items in the checklists are designed to foster conversation and collaboration. Each business is unique and some of the items may be relevant and others may not. Reviewing the checklists together may cause you to add or delete requirements from your evaluation criteria. Modify the lists as needed for you organization. Business units and IT can jointly populate, compare, and ultimately use the lists to narrow your choices during the decision-making process (Steps 1-5).

Complete each checklist for each SaaS vendor being evaluated.

Step 1: Features, Functions, and Devices

APPLICATION NAME/VENDOR:

Business units should work through these items before meeting with IT. Prioritize the top features and benefits sections.

Check all devices/operating systems/devices that the application supports, but more importantly, those that you need. (Note that your IT team may be helpful in developing the device and app support section.)

Features	Why is the feature needed?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Benefits	Quantify the benefits in ROI, productivity, and/or strategic business importance.
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

User interface	How does this improve productivity/ business/customer satisfaction?
Intuitive, Easy-to-use	

Step 1: ...Continued

Devices supported: Minimum and recommended requirements for each device						
		OS versions	Storage	RAM	Native app	Browser(s)
	PC					
	Mac					
	Android phone					
	iPhone					
	Windows tablet					
	iPad					
	Android tablet					
	Other _____					

Device connectivity				
	Internet/IP	Wi-Fi	3G	4G
PC				
Mac				
Android phone				
iPhone				
Windows tablet				
iPad				
Android tablet				
Other_____				

Step 2: Security, Continuity, and Support

APPLICATION NAME/VENDOR:

IT and the business unit should jointly review these requirements, and check all that apply. In the process, each should inform the other why these requirements are important to the business as a whole.

Data Security measures at the SaaS provider	
	Multiple secure login options (SSL, VPN, etc.)
	Integration with corporate security (Active Directory, LDAP, etc.)
	Firewall (pre-configured)
	Firewall (configurable)
	Antivirus/antimalware
	VLAN segmentation
	Data encryption/decryption
	Adheres to regulatory and compliance requirements of your business (HIPPA, Dodd-Frank, Sarbanes-Oxley, etc.)

Physical Security at SaaS provider facilities	
	Locked, secure data center locations
	Secured, locked server and router cages
	Data center and server time-stamped access logs
	Key card access to data centers/servers by vendor employees
	Bio-metric access to data centers/servers by vendor employees
	On-going background checks of data center employees
	Surveillance cameras throughout site
	Guards on duty

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery services at vendor	
	Daily backup
	Hourly backup
	Backup on change to RAID
	SaaS data and app(s) at multiple failover sites
	Allows independent customer backup/export of data
	Offsite data archiving
	Redundant power, cooling, and connectivity
	Redundant fire and flood prevention systems

Service Desk Support

	24X7X365	Free	Paid[1]	Global	Multilingual[2]	Response time SLA
Phone						
Email						
Online chat						

1. Enter price of support. 2. If required, take note of languages supported at the vendor support center(s).

Step 3: Integration, Infrastructure, Service Level Agreements

APPLICATION NAME/VENDOR:

Check all that apply. This is an opportunity to take a "big picture" view of the business processes already in place and those that may be on the drawing boards.

Enterprise Integration	
	Integrates with existing essential applications
	Integrates with planned expansion(s)
	Ability to export data to multiple formats
	Import external data
	Standard, easy to use APIs
	Reporting and usage statistics
	Notifications as necessary to end-users
	Scalable
	Customization options
	Regulate user access with existing user-directory i.e. Active Directory

Network and IT infrastructure	
	Will affect internal network bandwidth
	Requires additional external bandwidth
	Requires better remote access security
	Requires more DNS/DHCP/IP management (DDI)
	End-to-end visibility of performance
	Integrates with corporate net security
	Requires additional on-site storage
	Requires device/server upgrades and management

Service Level Agreements	
	Uptime of 99.9% or better
	Reimbursement on unmet SLAs*
	Detailed SLA/performance statistics
	Self-service SLA reports
	SLA escalation/notification process
	End-to-end performance guarantees

**When SaaS vendors have unmet SLA reimbursements, enterprises should have a means of recouping those dollars spent as well as put the vendor on notice to improve their service(s).*

Step 4: Real Costs

This is a sample cost chart. Depending on the SaaS application, its licensing terms, and your network infrastructure and users, you may need to factor in other costs as well. For example, most SaaS applications are priced on a per-seat basis: calculate how many seats will be required, and potentially how many you'll need in the future.

Cost Estimates per month	
Enterprise price	$
Vendor support	$
Est. internal support	$
Device upgrades	$
Net upgrades	$
Storage upgrades	$
Training	$
TOTAL	**$**

START-UP COSTS

You might also consider start-up costs, effects on existing processes, and any lost productivity as employees or customers transition to the SaaS application. Data migration from existing applications should also be a part of the initial start-up calculation.

STEP 5: MAKING YOUR DECISION

Tally up your features and devices. Make certain your core business benefits are met, and throw out candidates that don't fit your needs. Consult with IT on a timeline and budget for the true cost and transition complexities required for each remaining SaaS candidate. Did each app meet or exceed security, disaster recovery, and compliance requirements? Most importantly, make sure you have room to grow—in both business and IT agility.

NETSCOUT TRUVIEW LIVE AT EVERY STEP IN THE SaaS PROCESS

NETSCOUT TruView™ Live can help. If your potential SaaS partner allows test runs (as it should), TruView Live can give you real-time, end-to-end performance of the app on your network. This allows IT to report on the SaaS candidate's actual performance—not just its stated SLA or specs.

After the sale, TruView Live can continually monitor SaaS performance and reliability. Here's why that's important:

- Downtime is money. If the SaaS app is down, you need to know immediately—TruView Live detects and alerts you to downtime of SaaS apps.
- Degraded performance kills productivity. Slow SaaS apps have a direct effect on the bottom line. TruView Live gives you real-time performance statistics.
- Troubleshooting must be proactive and fast. When something goes wrong, IT needs the tools to isolate the cause, and get things up and running fast.
- SLAs are not always met. And if not, you're leaving money on the table. IT, with TruView Live, can monitor performance and document any SLA violations—and make a solid case for reimbursement.

For more information on how TruView Live better informs your SaaS decision-making and post-sales experience, see http://www.flukenetworks.com/truviewlive

i. Threat Post. https://threatpost.com/hacker-puts-hosting-service-code-spaces-out-of-business/106761

ii. ComputerworldUK. http://www.computerworlduk.com/blogs/cloud-vision/your-saas-provider-and-a-dirty-little-secret-3570954/

iii. Iron Mountain Web site. http://www.ironmountain.com/Knowledge-Center/Reference-Library/View-by-Document-Type/Solution-Briefs/S/Strengthen-Your-Cloud-Software-Investment-With-SaaSProtect.aspx

iv. Elastica Press Release. https://www.elastica.net/2014/10/elastica-analysis-reveals-20-broadly-shared-files-cloud-file-sharing-apps-contain-compliance-related-data/