

Software in an **On Demand** World

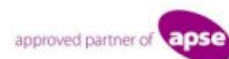
ROCC Computers White Paper

ROCC Computers Ltd

Stanford Gate
South Road
Brighton
BN1 6SB

Tel: 01273 274716
Email: marketing@rocc.co.uk

Author: Peter Luck
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What is On Demand?

On Demand Software describes software delivered to the customer via, in most cases the internet, as a service. The software is hosted either in house with the software vendor or via a third party hosting company and can be deployed to many customers via the internet. This method of software deployment allows the vendor to market their software to businesses of all sizes and with no geographical restrictions.

Benefits of On Demand

Benefits for the Customer

- 1) Less Hand Holding – customers require less time spent on training and skills development.
- 2) No need for large internal IT teams of “experts” to support the application in house.
- 3) Low costs – customers pay a monthly subscription to use the software. There is no initial outlay of tens or even hundreds of thousands of pounds.
- 4) No maintenance or support costs
- 5) Shelfware eliminated – customers remove the risk of being tied to software unfit for the job.
- 6) Access from anywhere – users can access software from anywhere eliminating the need for users to be tied to their desks.

Benefits for the ISV

- 1) Multi-tenant architecture which allows a single application to serve multiple companies.
- 2) Low delivery costs – once the application is developed and online it can be resold to a multitude of customers without the need for extra development and deployment.
- 3) The ISV can target all sizes of customer, with per user based monthly subscription costs.
- 4) Predictable revenue – the ISV can forecast revenue income from monthly subscriptions through contract periods.
- 5) Lower support costs – on demand applications should make use of online help, forums and chat rooms where users can discuss their experiences and share issues. This can lead to less calls in to your manned helpdesk.

Considerations

- 1) Your application should be developed using leading technologies such as AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML) or similar. On Demand users expect rich functionality and a desktop application like experience.
- 2) The need for extra development resource will be needed to drive forward an “On Demand” project. Applications need to be as bug free as possible. Remember with multi tenant systems your application bug will be affecting many users from many companies.
- 3) Web Site – a fully functioning website would be needed to sit alongside the served application to not only be used as a marketing and sales tool but also as an online and interactive support environment for users of the application. If your website is looking tired make sure it gets a makeover before entering the on demand world.

- 4) Hosting – a third party hosting company may need to be involved to ensure you can supply a reliable and constantly available service to your customers.
- 5) Help – in addition to an online support area for customers you need to ensure the application is literally littered with help icons. Users expect such applications to provide them with help and advice every step of the way.
- 6) Security –customers need to know that their data is not only stored but sent in a fashion acceptable to current web security standards.
- 7) Evolution – the product can't stagnate. Users expect to see added functionality being made available within the application over the course of their usage of it. Users will also expect the ability to provide feedback and suggestions to you with regards to improving the application.
- 8) Customisation – customers will expect the application to be customisable. They must have the ability to drive business logic through the user of parameters.

Conclusion

On Demand applications and SaaS (Software as a Service) are becoming increasingly popular and their usage is predicated to continue to grow. This form of deploying an application can certainly open up new markets to your ISV and enable you to generate revenue from organisations who traditionally would not have considered your system due to the cost of licences and services. You must, however, ensure that you do not ignore the fact that some people and organisations will never embrace this model and will always want their applications and data stored within the confines of their own network infrastructure.

About the Author

Peter Luck is the Technical Manager at Brighton based ROCC Computers Ltd working within the Uniclass Division and managing a team of Microsoft and Oracle developers and DBA's.

The Uniclass Division of ROCC Computers provide [social housing software](#), [waste management software](#) and sales order processing software to SME's, local authorities and housing associations. For more details visits the company website at www.rocc.com

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