

Essentials for success

How to develop effective Web-based solutions for your company **Interviewed by Sue Ostrowski**

Web-based solutions have become a critical component for any company to succeed, says Andrew Franklin, implementation manager at Arke Systems.

“Web-based solutions are a necessity in today’s business landscape,” says Franklin. “They are a means for your software, for your business applications, to be available through the Internet without having to lasso your employees to specific internal networks. Whether it’s a Customer Relationship Management solution to streamline your sales process, or developing an internal portal that your employees can access from anywhere in the world, the advantages of using the available software and customizing it to your organization are undeniable.”

Smart Business spoke with Franklin about how to implement Web-based solutions at your company that will truly benefit business.

What advice would you give leaders who say Web-based solutions wouldn’t work at their businesses?

If someone told me this wouldn’t work at their company, I would tell them to take a look at their business processes and answer that question again. Within every organization, there is a need to respond faster, to automate tasks and delegation, to access information remotely, to eliminate redundancies in manual processes and to streamline the business. Web-based solutions offer exactly those capabilities. No matter what your business may be, if you’re growing you’re innovating, and in today’s world, Web-based solutions offer the flexibility to fuel your innovation.

How can a company get started implementing a Web-based solution?

The first step to any well-planned project is to answer some preliminary questions, such as, ‘What is the main objective of the project? What problem is this going to solve? What benefit is it going to bring to the organization?’



Andrew Franklin
Implementation manager
Arke Systems

There are ways to phase in these technologies and there are free trials or download versions that let you get used to the product before making a decision about it.

You don’t have to do it all at once, you can do it in baby-step fashion, but the thing to remember is that those baby steps are building toward a greater goal. You’re aiming for the vision of that long-term goal on the horizon and honing the process. Before you finish one step, you should know exactly where you’re going next.

How important is it to get help from a third party?

All too often, companies will overload their existing internal resources with a project like this, and nine times out of 10, they just don’t get the backing and support that are needed to flesh out an undertaking such as a Web-based solution. If you haven’t done a technology project like this before, talk to at least a half-dozen firms before choosing a partner. You need to find a firm that asks you challenging questions and demonstrates

that it’s thinking 10 steps ahead.

Look for a firm that complements your processes and that you feel comfortable with. With the right deployment, the right objectives, the right technology and the right partner, you can streamline operations, support faster and stronger communication and benefit your company immensely, but the technology out of the box isn’t going to magically solve the woes of a business. If the vision is flawed, and you have the wrong partner, it’s not going to solve anything.

What are the benefits of investing in a Web-based solution?

Implementing a Web-based solution will benefit a company by facilitating communications both internally and externally. Internally, companies can centralize their knowledge bases, automate tasks and work flows, and create and sustain electronic records that no longer rely on filing cabinets and access to fax machines. Externally, companies are able to respond to their customers’ evolving needs with dynamic software that empowers them to engage their customers in new and exciting ways.

The consequences of not using Web-based software are real, as are the consequences of poor implementation. All too often, technology is treated as a panacea that will transform a business right out of the box. But this isn’t always true, as technology without expertise, guidance and support is not a wise investment. The decision to employ a Web-based solution is fundamentally a sound one, as long as business leaders understand that with that choice comes a responsibility to choose a partner that will help them leverage that investment for the greatest return.

The real payoff with an investment in a Web-based solution comes with solid preparation, solid vision and a partnership with a company that will help exploit your investment to its fullest. <<

ANDREW FRANKLIN is an implementation manager at Arke Systems. Reach him at andrew@arke.com or (404) 812-3123 x160.

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