

Introduction

The "Application Service Provider" model provides a number of major benefits. Several of which are highlighted here, along with a reference list of the activities Ebbon-Dacs undertake to provide the EDVantage Dealer Management System.

So what motivates an ASP to be a superior solution provider when compared with a traditional software house?

For an Application Service Provider, its primary business revenue is through its monthly ongoing total subscription fees. It is not overbalanced towards the traditional "one off fee", which often meant a vendor would over focus on obtaining these license revenues and not always pay full attention to service levels. With the ASP model, this large license fee does not exist; all services, hardware and software are rolled into one scalable monthly provision. For the ASP to succeed it is therefore its primary interest to continually provide a superior customer experience and to enable it to build its serviced customer base.



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Major Benefits for the ASP Customer

- Choosing the ASP model eliminates the large upfront investment in hardware, software and technical implementation, as well as the long term costs of maintenance and upgrades.
- Predictability of costs is an important advantage when running a tight margin business with complex solutions. With a good ASP model there are no sudden upgrade costs, requests for additional hardware or operational software to keep the solution running. It is all simply within the standard monthly fee.
- With the ASP model, a company can stay up to date with its software as it is not based on a "one off license". With ASP, continuous software improvements are the norm and even over long timeframes major releases are included, so a business does not need to concern itself with putting back a major revision in the future. The ASP will always provide the most up to date version of the software which works specifically well when a company uses its customers to continuously steer its development path.
- The ASP model helps a business to protect its investment, where the intensive processing required by today's sophisticated applications is handled by the ASP's servers, rather than the customers. This benefit does not only go for the main application itself. For the servers of business critical systems the underlying software such as operating systems, database, virus solutions and operational monitoring software should all be provided by the ASP, along with the expertise to keep them working. As many of these are large market packages with regular updates (for instance virus software) it is very important for companies to stay up to date to ensure excellent ongoing operation of its systems.
- With an ASP solution, accessibility is "where you want it, when you want it". The solutions are provided from high quality data centres and utilise standard internet technology networks to reach customers. When a customer wishes to add a new outlet, department or enable home work access to permitted employees it is a straight forward task for the ASP. It does not involve the customer in the costs of additional local hardware, special network re-designs and all the associated labour. This really enables the business to focus on its own structural plans and to not be encumbered by technical issues.
- ASPs utilise industry best practice data backups and security protocols. When providing these on a large scale to multiple customers, top quality solutions become cost effective, whereas they can be cost prohibitive to provide within smaller company internal IT teams.
- An ASP provides standards for data and application security, downtime and responsiveness. It is very difficult for internal IT teams to provide such Service Level Agreements, particularly when they cannot call upon the advantage of cost of scale available to an ASP. With mission critical systems looked after in this way, internal resources can be better deployed on tactical projects and the achievement of the current objectives of the customers business.

Appendix - Activities of the Ebbon-Dacs ASP Service

ASP Hardware

- Provide servers
- Provide communication hardware and bandwidth
- Update hardware to latest versions and match data and access volumes
- Maintain and as necessary repair/replace hardware
- Hardware Configuration – sizing required system (Disks, Memory, processor Power etc.)
- Network Bandwidth – checking sufficient to support application
- Checking Appropriate backup facilities available.
- Resilience – Choosing and configuring RAID disks

ASP Software

- Installation and provision of base Operating System software
- Installation and provision of databases
- Installation and provision of frameworks etc
- Ongoing maintenance of the base software
- Installation of updates and hot patches to the base software
- Provide and Installation of third party control software
- Regular updates and hotfixes of third party control software
- Confirm via appropriate test bench activity that new release level/s function correctly
- Have appropriate firewalls in place and monitor and upgrade as required
- Have appropriate virus protection in place and monitor and upgrade as required
- Have appropriate intrusion monitoring in place and monitor and upgrade as required
- Ensure data integrity and security measures are in place with appropriate monitoring and upgrading as required

Technical Support

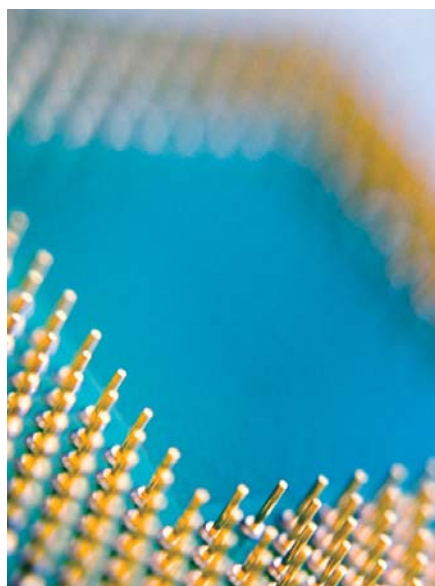
- Performance monitoring of database and application software
- Continuous monitoring for server failures
- Load balancing
- Capacity monitoring
- Monitoring of disk, network and processor usage
- Determining when additional server/s required
- Attend to performance issues
- Monitoring of error data from application software in order to anticipate problems, feedback to development on an ongoing basis
- Monitoring of security issues
- Disaster planning and updating
- Reorganise database/s
- Technical diagnosis of customer problems
- Advice to client in relation to customer set up and terminals, local software including browsers
- Advice to clients in relation to customer terminals and local software
- QA of 3rd party technical patches – including regression testing
- Installation of technical patches on server/s
- Issue technical release notes to resolve major urgent issues
- Issue technical release notes to cover non urgent issues
- Maintenance of bug database
- Analysis of problem trends
- Configuration of Server Access Rules and firewall

Security and restore

- Ensure daily, or more regular, back up of all customer data
- Backups of base software, operating system, SQL Server etc.
- Backups of Application Software and controls.
- Backup of database
- Back up on site/off site
- Restore as required
- Check customer access is correct following restore
- Implementation of server backup strategy.
- Design of customer recovery strategy

Configure & set up new customers

- Set up all new customers
- Provide advice to client



Application Support 1st and 2nd line provided within ASP price

- Installation of application software
- Creation of database and initial configuration
- Investigate all reported support requests in accordance with S.L.A.
- Train staff and ensure resources in place to cover customer help desk application load demands
- Maintenance of customer issues database
- Analysis of problem trends
- Add issues to Product Review process
- Production of application patches as required
- QA of application patches – including regression testing
- Installation of application patches on server/s
- Confirm via appropriate test bench activity that new release level/s function correctly
- Issue software fixes and release notes to resolve major urgent application issues
- Issue software releases and release notes to cover non urgent application issues
- Maintain client support documentation
- Maintenance of bug database Analysis of problem trends
- Update Help following application changes and install on server/s as part of continuous update
- Update Training manuals following application changes
- Run regular customer facing Product Reviews

DMS

*A White Paper from
Ebbon-Dacs DMS*

*Why choose an application service
provider (ASP) delivered DMS?*



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