THE EIGHT ADVANTAGES OF “BEST-OF-BREED” APPLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, field service organizations seeking to take advantage of today’s mobile environment often found they had to choose between an integrated enterprise software solution and a “best-of-breed”, specialized field service solution. The choice was often difficult due to the balance in advantages between the integration capabilities of all encompassing application suites, and the unique features, flexibility and cost advantages of a “best-of-breed” solution.

Since the advantages - and disadvantages - of each were fairly even, the choice wasn’t always clear. Many companies therefore, opted to limit their application investments rather than install monolithic software suites that were sure to take longer to implement and cost more than planned, or choose best-of-breed applications that might be difficult and expensive to integrate.

Two innovations however, have shifted this balance - and the benefits - to the side of the best-of-breed application:

- The “cloud” which allows companies to implement applications in weeks - not years
- The “API Economy” that enables best-of-breed, cloud-based applications to integrate with legacy applications - and other cloud-based applications - quickly and easily. (APIs can be delivered by the application provider or through third-party cloud integration services.)

The flexibility and speed of the cloud, along with the “API Economy” have in fact, virtually eliminated the main advantage of the enterprise solution suite - integration of all components into a central “data mart”.

The “cloud” and the new “API Economy” make best-of-breed solutions easier to integrate and more cost-effective than ever.
Best of Breed solutions can usually be implemented in weeks - not months

Today’s API’s enable companies to implement a modular approach for their field service solutions. They can choose best field service application, then integrate the data across the enterprise with API’s. (We recommend that API’s comply with current web-based protocols (HTTP, SSL, JSON [JavaScript Object Notation]) and use the latest in open source development tools (LAMP stack [Linux, Apache, MySQL, Python] and the RESTful architecture [Representational State Transfer]).

As a result, field service organizations can leverage all the benefits of a “best of breed” approach while seamlessly integrating data across the enterprise.

Following are nine ways that field service organizations can benefit by choosing cloud-based, made for mobile, “best of breed” applications.

1. IMPLEMENT FASTER

Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” solutions can be implemented in just weeks - not the months, or even years that are required for an integrated application solution. Cloud-based applications can be implemented much faster because they:

- Eliminate the need to purchase, or make changes to, existing data center server, storage, security, and network infrastructure.
- Impact the operations and processes of the field service organization only.
- Reduce data back-up and recovery requirements (delivered as part of the service by the cloud-based field service automation provider).
- Require a smaller, more finite set of data for import into the new system.
- Use subscription-based pricing (pay-as-you-go) that enables a phased approach (installation by group or geography).

2. GET THE LATEST FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” field service automation solutions are focused on one thing - delivering the features and functions that field service organizations need to be more productive and profitable. Integrated solutions providers must meet the needs of a variety of groups with significantly different needs, processes and goals. As a result, most integrated applications are strong in one area - like accounting - and much weaker in the others.

Additionally, cloud-based, “best-of-breed” solutions are flexible and can be adapted to incorporate a company’s existing processes and procedures. In contrast, most in-
Integrated applications require that organizations change their processes and procedures to the constructs of the software. This can result in additional cost - and lost revenue.

A cloud-based, “best-of-breed” solution:

- Is designed specifically for field service organizations
- Includes features and functions that are unique to field service organizations - like mobile work order management, field-based quote and estimate creation, customer asset management and field-based inventory management.
- Continues to add new features and functions - without requiring customers to purchase software upgrades or invest in expensive software maintenance contracts.
- Offers flexible features like custom fields and a standards-based API that allows the application to adapt to almost any existing process or procedure - and re-adapt itself as processes and procedures are altered in the future.

3. LEVERAGE INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

The companies, and people, that deliver cloud-based, “best-of-breed” applications have extensive experience in and with the field service industry. They’ve implemented solutions for hundreds of organizations and helped thousands of end users to become more productive - and the company more profitable. As a result, companies that provide “best-of-breed” applications are often able to help their customers uncover additional ways to leverage mobility within their organization or manage customer information more effectively.

Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” solutions enable customers to:

- Leverage the knowledge and experience of the provider to improve their organization's productivity and profitability.
- Discover new ways to manage work orders, satisfy customers, improve processes, increase efficiency - and mobilize their workforce.

4. PROMOTE BUSINESS FLEXIBILITY

Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” applications enable companies to implement the capabilities they need - when they need them. Unlike integrated solutions that must be “swallowed whole”, best-of-breed applications can be “plugged-in” as they are needed. This enables companies to meet the needs of their customers more rapidly and expand into new geographies more aggressively.
“Best-of-breed” applications:

- Can be implemented quickly, enabling companies to adapt to shifts in markets or customer preferences.
- Are, using today’s API technologies, “plug-and-play”, allowing companies to address the needs of specific groups, organizations or even specific individuals, quickly and cost-effectively.

5. REDUCE RISK

The modular implementation approach utilized by cloud-based, “best-of-breed” application providers offers companies a valuable way to improve business operations without incurring significant risk. Because implementations effect only a portion of an organization, if a problem should occur, the large majority of business transactions remain unaffected.

This is a significant difference from integrated application solutions where an outage or software bug could impact a majority of users - and customers. Cloud-based, “best-of-breed solutions:

- Are modular. Therefore, should an existing solution fail to meet business requirements, it can be replaced by a similar module, and supplier without significant impact to the business.
- Use API’s to integrate with other applications. Should an problem occur, only users of that application “module” are affected. This reduces the impact of what in the past, were server, storage, network, or software outages.

6. INCREASE SYSTEM RELIABILITY

Application reliability and availability are critical components in any business software solution. Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” applications address these needs using advanced, geographically dispersed hosting solutions (like AWS - Amazon Web Services) and state-of-the art cloud architectures designed to handle hundreds of thousands of transactions quickly and efficiently.

However, for company managers, “best-of-breed” applications offer an additional system reliability benefit - a reduction in application maintenance windows. Because “best-of-breed” solutions impact only specific organizations, maintenance (if required) requirements impact only specific users - not every organization and every process in the company. As a result, maintenance windows are reduced and application reliability and availability increased.
Best-of-Breed solutions:

- Incorporate the latest in web design technologies (like Python, Javascript, HTML5, jQuery, MySQL, SQLAlchemy, Linux and more). This enables them to handle hundreds of thousands of transactions quickly, efficiently and reliably.
- Use the latest in web hosting services (AWS) with geographically dispersed instances to ensure high availability and fast, responsive application performance.
- Enable companies to perform application maintenance (if required) in shorter time periods that affect fewer users. This helps them improve overall application availability and reliability.

7. BOOST COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Taking advantage of a new market or business opportunity often requires companies to move quickly - incorporating new suppliers, adapting processes to meet new business requirements and reshaping how affected organizations address the needs of their customers. Companies that rely on cloud-based, “best-of-breed” applications are best prepared for market change.

“Best-of-breed” applications enable companies to implement new services or capabilities quickly. Leveraging applications designed specifically for the new market or business opportunity, they can capture market share faster. The “best-of-breed” approach also allows them to implement more efficient processes - based on new application features and functions - that provide competitive advantage.

Integrated applications, by contrast, are often not easily adapted to new markets, businesses or processes. And, because application changes often impact the company as a whole, rapid change is often paired with increased risk to the business.

Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” applications:

- Enable companies to be “first movers” in entering new markets. Their modular design and open API’s allow companies to add new capabilities for specific groups or organizations that need them - without impact to the business as a whole.
- Help companies gain competitive advantage through new features in the application(s) or enhanced processes supported by the application.
8. IMPROVE PROCESSES

Every field service organization is striving to increase the productivity of their staff. One of the most common ways to increase productivity is through improved processes. Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” applications allow companies to improve business processes - one organization at a time. As a result, processes can be adapted and adopted more quickly and with less risk to the organization as a whole.

By comparison, process change in an integrated application touches every individual in every organization (even if the process itself does not!). Therefore, changes that might improve productivity or increase business efficiency are delayed, or even never implemented. The risk is just too great.

Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” solutions:

- Allow companies to take advantage of process improvements to increase productivity and profitability - quickly!
- Reduce the risk of changes in processes by limited their impact to specific groups or functions within the organization.

CONCLUSION

Cloud-based, “best-of-breed” solutions enable field service organizations to be nimble and responsive to the needs of their customers. They’re also the fastest and best way to increase the productivity of the staff and the profitability of the organization.

With industry specific features, functions and knowledge coupled with the latest in web-based architectures, “best-of-breed” solutions are made for today’s highly competitive, mobile environment. And using APIs that seamlessly integrate with existing on-site and other cloud-based applications, “best-of-breed” solutions enable field service organizations to meet the ever expanding needs of their customers quickly, reliably and cost-effectively.

ABOUT FIELDAWARE

We are re-shaping the field service industry! Our made-for-mobile, cloud-based software was designed from the ground up to provide ease of use with incredible flexibility – a combination that enables field service organizations to amaze their customers, astonish the staff and surprise the competition. Our software was architected as a
mobile platform, with no incumbent legacy technologies to modify or migrate from.

Based on our founders’ intimate knowledge of the unique needs of engineers and technicians in the field – and the operational personnel and management that support them – FieldAware is focused on providing field service organizations, both large and small, with:

• Intelligence about your Customers: So you can increase revenue, expand into new markets, differentiate your services and create customer advocates.

• Intelligence about your Business: That enables you to increase the productivity of your staff (and keep them happy!), use company resources more efficiently, simplify your business processes and “right size” your parts and repair inventory.

• We combine our software with the industry’s best implementation, on-boarding and support services enabling companies to take full and rapid advantage of today’s mobile environment.

• To learn more about our solutions or to schedule a demo, contact your local FieldAware representative at fieldawaresales@fieldaware.com or by calling 800-935-0736.