



**Information Technology that Empowers Small and
Medium Sized Businesses**

IT Challenges of Small and Medium Sized Businesses

Small and medium sized businesses have unique challenges that do not exist in larger corporate environments. While small business owners and startups have the same requirements to communicate effectively with customers and address technology needs, they do not have the budget to hire dedicated specialists to handle their requirements. An example would be the need for shared calendaring, Customer Relations Management database, or perhaps VPN connections for remote sales people. In the past, a company had to be sufficiently large to be able to justify having a security expert, a DBA or an email messaging specialist to handle their needs.

Having an IT person or staff with the right skills is only part of the issue that small companies face. Hiring consultants or outsourcing the work addresses only part of the problem as there is the cost of the hardware, software licensing, customizations and maintaining the software.

Medium sized companies may face similar dilemmas. They may have been able to successfully grow in terms in staffing, but they are still constantly faced with difficult decisions to outsource or glue applications together in such a way, that they are unable to handle growth and scale well because their environment has become overly complex. The technology changes very quickly and keeping the right skills in house can become a challenge. Regardless of the size, businesses have to remain efficient to grow and those that do grow can outpace the capacity of their IT department

Electronic Communications

Email, cell phones, intranets and collaboration used to be tools that only the large companies would have in place. The bar has been raised so that these types of services are no longer a “nice to have”, but instead a core requirement. High speed broadband services, WiFi and Cellular Data services allow employees to keep in constant contact with each other and customers as well as allow them to effectively work remotely. Companies like Google, Salesforce.com and Yahoo have shown that web based services can work well, scale well and can serve the demands of business users. As a small or medium sized business, it can be critical to utilize web based services and have them customized for their business requirements.

What large and enterprise companies use to be effective

Large companies have a messaging platform that allows email, calendaring and many times instant messaging to effectively communicate and ensure that the important customer requests and opportunities are handled in an efficient manner. Most large companies use a customer relations management (CRM) system to keep track of customers, contacts, marketing campaigns, sales pipelines and other metrics that

management uses to determine the health of the business. Large companies have site to site VPNs, remote access to critical data and mobile devices that keep them in touch with what is critical to their business. They also utilize VOIP phone systems that can carry phone conversations over the Internet, saving them money, and enabling a virtual workforce when needed. Large companies also have corporate repositories of managed documents with versioning and authentication based containers where their business critical templates, proposals, and intellectual property are safely and securely maintained. They have intranets and portals that aide in collaboration and allow for efficient searching and maintenance of business information. Large companies have systems that track bugs, requests for service and the ability to measure response time to customers that are both internal and external. The corporate networks, enterprise database, servers and applications typically require an army of IT experts to ensure that these systems are available and perform well.

Small and medium sized companies were traditionally limited by desktop products that work well for one or two users, but do not scale well and have limited ability for remote access. As a small company grows to become a medium sized company, they will either update to a software package that will support their new growth targets or create customized solutions that manage data conversion and other solutions that may be the beginning of an overly complex infrastructure that becomes difficult to manage and maintain.

How can small and medium sized businesses utilize the same tools?

It is a new frontier out there for the small to medium sized business because the same tools that the large and enterprise companies have been using to gain market share, effectively communicate and continue to make a difference to the bottom line are now available for the small and medium sized business. The tools that are available are not new, but mature and more importantly available in an open source format. The tools utilize scalable database and web technology similar to that which is used for sites such as Yahoo.

Small and medium sized business can utilize the software listed below, with the same functionality as a large corporation at a fraction of the cost. iuvo Technologies believes that these are the best of breed in open source applications that provide incredible value for our customers.

- CRM - Sugar CRM is an enterprise class customer relationship system that is available as open source. It is scalable, easily configurable and can support the utilization and users of a large company. It competes with applications such as Siebel and Salesforce.com
- Alfresco – is a enterprise class document management application that competes with products such as Documentum and Microsoft’s Sharepoint.

- RT – is a problem tracking and resolution system that is configurable and can handle the needs of your problem tracking, customer requests or workflow. It competes with products such as Vantive and Remedy.
- VOIP - Asterisk VOIP server allows the functionality of a VOIP phone system that scales and has the flexibility to allow a company to grow.
- VPN – VPN technology (IPSEC and SSL based) has become mature enough that there are numerous appliances that work well for any sized company. There is also a very good open source product call OpenVPN which can provide the same functionality.
- Portal and Collaboration – The same concept that provides incredible value for all those using the Wikipedia is also available for businesses utilizing a product called Media Wiki, that allows web enabled collaboration without the need for web publishing tools.
- Messaging – Email was originally developed on free open source platforms, and there are currently many good applications that can be used in concert to provide the functionality required by small businesses. Microsoft Exchange is also a very effective messaging solution that can replace or work with elements of open source software.

Each of the applications referenced above can be made available for an organization of any size and be built to scale to meet the demands of a large company. The applications can also be deployed in such a way that they do not require expensive hardware and can easily be migrated or expanded as required by the business.

How iuvo Technologies can help

iuvo Technologies has extensive experience with all of the technologies referenced as well as the underlying databases, programming languages and web technologies needed to make these applications work. iuvo members can build a solid platform on which to deploy these technologies and provide the best practices in IT operations to ensure that these services are secure, available and that adequate backups are in place so that you don't have to worry. Most of the technologies are available to anyone, however, if you leverage the expertise of iuvo Technologies, you can spend less time making the technology meet your needs and more time using these technologies as a competitive advantage.

Contact iuvo Technologies, Inc. for more information.

iuvo Technologies, Inc
P.O. Box 65
Accord, MA 02018-0065
(781) 908-4656
www.iuvotech.com