



LOOKING BEYOND BITS AND BYTES

CONSIDER APPLICATION DESIGN WHEN CHOOSING AN
ONLINE BACKUP PARTNER

Form follows function—that has been misunderstood. Form and function should be one.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Summary

In a managed services environment, the availability and performance of information not only is paramount, it is the very basis of the business. The ability to monitor and assess accounts—especially as a managed service provider (MSP) adds to its portfolio—can determine the success or failure of the whole business.

User interface is the key to accessible information. All the information in the world is meaningless unless a user can easily obtain the right information at the right time—all while expending the minimum amount of resources.

The best UI experience is simple, consistent, and relies on a natural, back-and-forth interactivity. This ease is what users often describe as an “intuitive” interface. Successful web-based software—a vendor’s partner portal, for example— functions by supporting content within the context of the pertinent business application model.

Introduction

Most clients expect their managed service provider to offer a completely integrated IT solution—including safe and reliable backup and recovery. However, building a secure, comprehensive backup service is expensive in terms of both dollars and time—not to mention the burden of implementation and ongoing maintenance.

MSPs save costs, increase service flexibility, and spur on a faster profit growth rate by partnering with an online backup and recovery vendor.

But how is one vendor different from the next? Most MSPs know that they need to evaluate a vendor’s potential for recurring revenue, ease of implementation, and the level of training and support.

Yet many MSPs may be surprised to discover that the quality of the interface they use to manage their accounts can make the difference between an ineffective solution and one that helps retain and grow business.





Current Landscape

Many web-based tools make the mistake of basing their user experience specifications solely from the perspective of a browser. This model relies on content and organization to lead the user to the next appropriate task. This type of application is easy to use, but limits the interaction of the user with the data. Conversely, web-based applications that mimic desktop applications allow users to directly manipulate data, but do not utilize established browser conventions that increases ease of use.

In other words, users need to be trained to use a specific desktop application, but most people can navigate practically any website.

If either of these methods overwhelms the other, the resulting application lacks efficiency, lacks essential functions, and ultimately is frustrating.

Beyond frustration, however, poorly-designed web applications are impediments to business. An application that doesn't align with relevant business functions makes pertinent data difficult to find. In turn, obscured data can mask both problems and opportunities.

In addition, if a user has to spend time learning (and re-learning) how to use an application, that user is not spending that time doing his or her job. Even though it may take an engineering degree to build an application, a person shouldn't need one to operate it.

Many companies with poorly designed application interfaces try to assuage this failure by hyping the application's features or supplementary functions. However, an application loaded with features is useless if users cannot figure how the data is organized, how to find specific data, or how to operate the application itself.

An MSP chooses to partner with a vendor expressly for the ease and cost-effectiveness of the services they provide. If the vendor's software is difficult and time-consuming, it negates the purpose of that relationship.

The Solution

The most effective web-based software embraces the convenience and familiarity of a browser, but combines it with the adaptability and flexibility of a desktop application.

There are several key functions and features that are essential to the effectiveness and usability of a web-based business application. For example, a user should be able to not



only sort and filter data, but automatically generate graphs using that data. In addition, tabs organized by business function and action-oriented callouts help users efficiently identify the correct location and the correct action for their tasks.

A successful example of this hybrid model is a partner portal developed by Intronis Online Backup and Recovery. This portal combines an intelligently designed architecture and clear calls to action with practical tools and insightful reports. Key design features and functionalities of this portal allow MSPs to:

Identify Critical Information

With Intronis' partner portal, any user is able to quickly identify and access the most critical information 24x7 from any web browser. Because business processes are integrated into the design, a user can simply and smoothly manage customer accounts, administer billing procedures, and analyze storage usage.

Get Alerted Automatically

Cohesive information architecture permits MSPs to view the status of accounts, activity, storage usage, and other performance metrics at a glance. Additionally, automatic alerts and notifications keep users informed and prepared to proactively resolve issues. MSPs can prioritize their business needs by knowing where to focus their efforts.

Control Access Privileges

MSPs can customize access rights and privileges for each employee. Assigning unique user names and roles allows businesses to delegate various tasks and responsibilities while retaining the highest level of security and protection of client data.

Customize Content

Intronis' web-based portal delivers to the user the most relevant information in a quick snapshot. Adjustable settings and filtering functions are critical features that allow MSPs to distill a large volume of data into its most actionable form. Uncomplicated access to this specific, individualized data enhances the overall user experience and allows users to make informed business decisions with confidence.

Utilize a Knowledge Base

If an application is only as good as the information it provides, a powerful knowledge base is key to problem-solving. The more flexible and thorough knowledge base, the more quickly



and comprehensively users will be able solve technical issues. For example, Intronis' powerful search and retrieval tools empower MSPs to cut down on support time and costs as well as boost service and customer loyalty.

The Bottom Line

MSPs have many systems and tools to evaluate and monitor for their clients—they simply cannot afford an online backup and recovery solution that is difficult to use or unresponsive to their business needs. Managing clients' data is both secure and simple with Intronis' practical tools and intelligent interface. In addition, if a user does need support, Intronis integrated help and support into the application itself, so help is always just a phone call or message away.

The online backup and recovery solution that MSPs choose to integrate into their businesses relies on more than just a stockpile of bytes. The quality of the business tools MSPs use directly affects their bottom line. MSPs that utilize a well-suited application to effectively serve clients will not only retain their current client base, but will have the capacity to add more without adding overhead costs.

