ADOPT.
Expert report.

SaaS:
the silent barrier to business growth

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Agencies and consulting companies often find a cash cow in clients who put new executives in place every two to three years. The reason being, with each new executive, there often comes a strong opinion about which technology should be implemented. Regardless of how the team using the tools day-to-day feels, a new leader will rip and replace it.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars later, the customer has paid for new technology and a team who doesn't know how to use it. Only to wait two more years (when they would just be comfortable enough with it) for a new executive to come in and do the whole process over again.

Yes, SaaS makes it easier to swap out one platform for another. But what's often overlooked is the upskilling costs, loss in productivity, employee retention, and user satisfaction.

Our experience has shown that SaaS in these circumstances can be a risk to business growth. In this paper, we'll discuss why businesses need to shift away from the perceived safety blanket of SaaS, and bring in adoption strategies that will futureproof systems and teams to drive sustainable growth.

SOFTWARE SHOULDN'T BE SEASONAL.

One of the biggest mistakes businesses make is implementing software to solve an immediate need... without considering the long-term implications. This knee jerk reaction results in platforms being rolled out at pace, only to be replaced in subsequent years as poor adoption and lack of skills lead to leadership frustration.

These seasonal shifts from system to system are also driven by changes in leadership. Frustrated by the ineffectiveness of legacy systems and absence of inhouse skillsets to develop their use to meet current business need, new leadership typically concludes:

"It would be quicker and easier to start again with platforms that I know and trust."

In the short term, this may sometimes be true. But fast forward a few more years when there's a changing of the leadership guard. The business is back to square one. Systems that no longer align with the business direction. Teams who don't know how to use the technology. New solutions presented that are intended to 'finally' solve the problem.

Businesses who are stuck in this perpetual cycle of rip and replace are hampering their growth potential. Resources and budget continue to be wasted. Employees leave through dissatisfaction in their roles.

Although enterprise companies are slower to rip and replace CRMs, MAPs, DAMs, and DWH's, according to Forbes[1], one in four SMB companies changed CRMs last year.

A valid reason to change CRMs (for example) is for the company's growth. And within the SMB segment, that's often the reason. But at the enterprise segment, it's usually not because of market trends or recent growth, but instead driven by a change in leadership.

If a new senior stakeholder was able to walk-in and say they have confidence in their tools and their team's ability to deliver with those tools, they have immeasurable momentum into tackling their new vision. However, because of poor training, adoption, and enablement — senior stakeholders spend huge portions of their budget and time getting teams close to industry standards. According to Gartner[2], CMOs spend 25.4% of their marketing budget on technology. This was only beaten by paid then followed by labor.

WHY SAAS IS PART OF THE PROBLEM.

Change of leadership. Operational staff churn. These are at the root of the technology problem. Fundamentally, systems are changing because people are. But shouldn't the systems align with business needs instead of personal preference?

Circling back to the trend of businesses implementing new software to solve an immediate need (without considering the long-term implications), what we see is SaaS served up as the silver bullet solution.

SaaS models have long provided a flexible solution for businesses to roll out new systems at scale, and fast. SaaS enables businesses to tap into technical talent they don't have in-house to rapidly mobilize technology strategies.

But what happens when this tap is switched off?

The initial project might have exhausted the implementation budget. In which case, the SaaS support disappears overnight, leaving in-house teams left to fend for themselves. The experts they relied on, no longer accessible without finding additional budget.

By this time, the business is looking for a return on its software investment. When focus has turned to ROI and business impact, having conversations about further spend are not likely to end well. In fact, anyone finding themselves in this position must be ready to face questions about roll-out success.

The same is true for existing systems. If the business relies exclusively on SaaS, there's a complete lack of control. And that's a risk.

OWN THE SYSTEM. TAKE CONTROL.

We've established that technology needs to match business needs instead of personal preference. So how do we make this happen?

It starts with a long-term plan for any new system. And for existing systems, it means evaluating your current situation to determine reliance on SaaS and where the in-house skills gaps might be.

Now, it's not to say that SaaS won't be included in your long-term plan. We work with many companies who use our SaaS support. However, this has been carefully considered as part of an adoption strategy that future-proofs the in-house team, budgets, and autonomy.

To help you determine if you have the ownership and control you need over your new or existing system, ask yourself:

- *Do your team's skills match the required system skills?*
- *Will you have to pay even more to run the technology than you invest to launch it?*
- *Are executives making platform decisions on behalf of daily users?*
- *Could aggressive cutover timelines create more long-term mistakes?*
- *Have you inherited tools and processes which nobody knows how to use?*
- *Is your company unable to achieve scalable growth due to inhibiting technology and untrained staff?*

HOW TO APPROACH ADOPTION, FOR GROWTH.

Driving growth through adoption is not a one-time project. It's a long-term strategy that needs to be embedded into business practice and maintained over time. It's a commitment. It's a mindset. It's a culture. That said, it needs to start somewhere. Here are a few tried and tested methods for approaching adoption that drives sustainable growth.

BRINGING OTHERS ALONG FOR THE JOURNEY.

Organizations with the most hierarchy have the worst adoption due to leadership making decisions in siloes which are mandated down to others who don't agree. Flat organizations where key individuals make the decisions but involve the wider team, have more success in adoption.

Indecision kills progress but so does making decisions in a vacuum.

SHOW A COMPANY PLAN *AND* A PERSONAL PLAN.

Using individuals' names and illustrating how the business has thought about the impact of employees instead of function helps drive adoption. People want to be involved and not just told what to do. Putting names on plans creates accountability.

Talk about certifications, ownership, admin paths, tradeshows, learning paths. These are all personal ways to show employees that although change management is painful, you're thinking of them individually. This will lead to them wanting to adopt your program

FUNCTION-WIDE LESSONS LEARNED AND BLAMELESS POSTMORTEMS.

People brooding about how they would have run the project differently leads to resentment. This is one of the biggest barriers to adoption. It's critical for employees to have an open channel to productively vent about how they want to run things differently. Use a templated postmortem as a framework for vocal individuals to have accountability the next time a project comes around.

ADOPT GROWTH.
By design.

BREAK THE CYCLE

If you want to break the constant rip and replace cycle your company may be facing, talk to our team about how our adoption plans can make your team's self-sufficiency be a competitive advantage.

Learn more about Bluprintx's role-specific adoption plans with Wyatt Bales, our Chief Customer Officer.

Sources

1 https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/ericsson-cut-1400-jobs-sweden-sources-say-2023-02-20/

2 https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/whichoccupationsareathighestriskofbeingautomated/2019-03-25