

Approximately 35 years ago, the software industry took a hard look at the then current methods for selling, developing, maintaining and supporting software solutions and created the Software as a Service (SaaS) revolution. Virtually all software solutions coming to market these days are SaaS based. This approach has resulted in all sorts of changes, for the good, in software ownership, management and operation. This led to some pretty incredible financial valuations/multipliers and some real darlings of the financial markets. But the benefits are not only limited to great multipliers but to a better experience for the customer and the company.

The result is that virtually all companies are looking for some way of delivering their offerings as a subscription and buyers have come to accept this model. Virtually all industries are trying to adopt this model, from consumer goods to home repair to phone systems to servers. The consulting industry has toyed with this area for longer than the 35 years of the SaaS revolution. Some might even say that it was one of the earliest adopters of this approach with Managed Services.

Managed Services has been around for a longtime. But Managed Services has historically been focused on very easy to define and execute activities and skills. It was focused on the tactical activities in IT, network operations, system administration, data base administrations...

Today, however, organizations are taking a closer look at those activities that have historically been more white glove, more bespoke and much more core to some of the higher end consulting practices. Businesses instead of investing in a person at an hourly rate over a long period of time are intrigued with the prospect of buying a service that provides the senior level resources needed to assist them with their systems, solutions or business practices as a subscription with the ability to provide the resource and knowledge needed and retaining the customers context/practices.

Kimberlite Partners is specialized in helping organizations create just these types of services which we like to call Managed Application Consulting or MAC. Now there are many aspects of developing, enabling and managing a MAC that are critical to the success of such offerings. In this series of whitepapers, we hope to explore critical areas that will determine your success.

In this whitepaper, we look at the traits of the personnel needed to run a successful MAC Managed Service.

6 Key Traits of the Named, Lead Resource Fulfilling your Install Base Subscription Service

- 1 Proactive:** In our experience, falling into the “wagon wheel rut” of reactivity is the death knell for your subscription service offering. While you may have more than one named resource to your Customer, the primary (lead) resource should be able to leverage their significant consulting background, domain expertise, and deep and broad application knowledge, to identify what work packets can and should be done to improve the efficiency of, and extract value from, the business application. It’s a “mining mentality – never stop digging – backstopped by insatiable curiosity, and a firm belief that the optimal use of the business application is not a destination but a continuous journey. Overheard from the Customer... “I didn’t know that was possible”... “Wow, the application can really do that?”...“We never thought of that – great idea!”.
- 2 Solution and Domain Expertise:** Broad and deep platform proficiency is a must. In fact, your most tenured Consultants arguably should be servicing your install base, particularly if your organization has adopted a more templated implementation model. And as scale warrants, strongly consider verticalizing your resources such that industry domain expertise is aligned with the needs of the customer.
- 3 Diplomatic:** Notwithstanding the goal of significant proactivity in your subscription service, the Customer will frequently come to your named resource(s) with an ask. Sometimes that ask is perfectly reasonable and exactly the right thing to do. And sometimes, it most assuredly is not. The goal of the subscription service resource is to create resilient solutions that “pull the weed (business pain or value gap) out at the root”. This often requires a diplomatically couched “five why” fact finding mission to understand the business requirement underpinning the request, and this often results in a solution very different than the one the Customer brought to you.
- 4 Service and Relationship Oriented:** The most effective – and happiest – subscription services resources get genuine delight from improving the lives of end-users, driving competitive advantage into their Customers, and in maximizing the ROI of their Customers’ business application investment. They also embrace enthusiastically the sustained and long-term Customer relationships this delivery model affords them and work consistently to make the Customer the hero.
- 5 Fierce Advocate:** Sustaining subscription resources often find themselves in a position where they can advocate fiercely for the needs of their Customer. Examples may include representing the Customer in resolve break-fix issues (internally or externally), or escalating on the Customer’s behalf if they are being under-served with a parallel project delivered by your professional services team, or in coordinating or clarifying requirements for third-party providers (eg other dependent business applications in the eco-system).
- 6 Team Player:** As part of a broader eco-system that will likely involve hand-offs to and from an implementation team, a post implementation project team, support organization, a sales/account management team, and executive leadership, a willingness to extend and receive knowledge about the Customer with other internal stakeholders is critical. In addition, Executive and/or account management “pulse checks” on the Customer should be welcomed as gift, the purpose of which is to drive continuous improvement in pursuit of the subscription renewal.