



Strategic Thinking

New Business Models for Tech Success

DataWeb Offers Hosted Rapid Application Development Platform For Non-Technical, Business Users

Versatile On-Demand Toolkit Permits Organizations to Quickly and Easily Leverage Software-as-a-Service Capabilities to Achieve Business Objectives

Opening Thoughts

As the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) movement gains momentum, the range of organizations, commercial and non-profit, seeking to create web-based services and solutions is also expanding rapidly.

Just as Web 2.0 has been heralded as a mechanism which is encouraging the 'democratization' of the Internet because anyone can contribute to its content, a new generation of web development tools are now making it possible for non-technical users to easily and quickly create robust SaaS solutions to achieve their business objectives with no prior training and limited upfront investment.

In particular, component-oriented software development platforms are making it easy for a broader cross-section of end-users and businesses to build their own SaaS solutions. These platforms are also permitting these users to redefine how they structure their businesses and interact with their customers, partners, employees and others. This means that mainstream organizations can more easily leverage the power of the web to achieve their business goals.

This profile will examine how DataWeb's (www.dataweb.com) unique Hosted Rapid Application Development (HostRAD™) Platform is helping a wide range of non-technical workers in businesses, spanning from start-ups to Fortune 100 companies, as well as non-profit organizations, quickly and easily build dynamic web-based applications.

DataWeb's Hosted RAD™ Platform for Non-Technical Users

The DataWeb HostRAD Platform was conceived in 1998 by a team of Microsoft developers who were also involved in the development of SQL Server, Visual Basic, and Access, among other Microsoft products. In developing the HostRAD Platform, the team sought to make it easier for organizations to quickly deploy sophisticated web applications without needing sophisticated software development skills.

Today, the company's mission is to provide users with a complete web development and design environment for building robust online applications. The DataWeb's HostRAD Platform gives individual users or workgroups everything they need to build web-based applications which allow them to work more easily and effectively together via the Internet using shared applications.

HostRAD is a hosted, browser-based, software development toolkit which allows non-technical users to build flexible, yet robust, interactive websites and online applications quickly and easily to satisfy their business requirements. This includes the servers, software, tutorials, security, and data backup via a standard web browser. HostRAD allows users to define and edit data tables, write and edit HTML, create scripts, and manage the security of their websites and applications.

Although the beauty of DataWeb's solution is its easy-to-use interface, the HostRAD Platform consists of two powerful technical components—*HostRAD Builder* and *HostRAD Data Engine*.

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DataWeb's flexible development platform gives users a robust, end-to-end solution to create SaaS solutions which enable them to leverage the power of the web to achieve their business objectives.

The HostRAD Builder is an integrated development environment (IDE) that allows users to leverage a set of webpage design templates; drag and drop design capabilities; pull-down menus; universal import mechanisms; and other web design elements to create scalable web applications. It also permits users to build and modify data tables and events importing existing content from Access databases, Excel spreadsheets, CSV files, FTP and HTML files. HostRAD includes standard JavaScript and data access objects. Its HotBlock Modules are reusable elements that enable users to add functionality to an application quickly. Users can also download elements from the HostRAD Application Gallery.

The HostRAD Data Engine provides integrated web, database, and application servers in a single, secure and scalable hosting environment. It calculates and aggregates a variety of data types into related categories. The HostRAD Data Engine enables users to automatically create database functionality behind their webpages without writing any SQL programs. It also caches common query results and invalidates past results to improve performance and scalability. The HostRAD HTTP client objects permit programmatic access to data from any web server.

Two examples case studies illustrate the power and versatility of DataWeb's HostRAD platform. The Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Commission is a non-profit organization which promotes amateur sporting events and athletic programs in the Washington state region. By leveraging DataWeb's HostRAD platform, the organization transformed its static website to a fully-automated, dynamic site boasting an assortment of interactive features and sophisticated backend applications that better serve its constituents. The changes were implemented in less than a month by the group's Sports Development Director, Jon Graef, who had no prior web design and development experience. Graef told THINKstrategies, *"DataWeb's tools were easy to use, require no ongoing administration and have made our website a powerful mechanism for achieving our goals."*

AdvantagelQ is a leading provider of comprehensive cost management services for utility, telecom and waste expenses. The company provides bill processing services which help companies identify erroneous expenses which can generate significant cost-savings. AdvantagelQ employed DataWeb's HostRAD data extraction/exception scripts and workflow capabilities to automate a thirty-step backend process which reconciles local and long distance charges. The new web-based application integrates approximately 50 interrelated data tables and 100 webpage views, and has generated 1.5% cost-savings for companies such as BlockBuster and Home Depot who rely on AdvantagelQ's services. The developer of the application, Kevin Nichols, told THINKstrategies, *"DataWeb's toolkit fundamentally changes the web development process by making it a real-time, iterative programming exercise which permits continuous improvements, rather than an expensive and extended ordeal."*

Strategic Thoughts

SaaS is making it easier for organizations of all sizes with varying levels of skills to create enterprise-class software capabilities that they could not afford in the past. These new online applications deliver an added dimension of functionality to meet their business needs.

DataWeb's HostRAD has created a flexible, low-cost, easy-to-use web development toolkit that enables organizations to quickly and easily build online solutions to achieve their goals. While its technical capabilities are sophisticated, the beauty of DataWeb's HostRAD Platform is that it has been designed with the non-technical user in mind. The platform allows users to leverage the development tools without extensive technical skills, or costly deployment and management hassles. DataWeb will also provide training and support to help users achieve their objectives.

DataWeb's flexible development platform gives users a robust, end-to-end solution to create SaaS solutions which enable them to leverage the power of the web to achieve their business objectives. In so doing, it is enabling its users to gain the benefits of the Web 2.0 movement.

About THINKstrategies, Inc.

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