
United Planet offers practical portal building tips for SMBs

London, 28 September 2009. United Planet (www.unitedplanet.com), one of the leading developers of Enterprise Portal software in Europe, has highlighted eight tips for small to medium sized businesses (SMBs) who want to optimise business processes across the board with an Enterprise Portal.

Axel Wessendorf, managing director of United Planet, points out that: "Modern Enterprise Portals are much more than just platforms for information sharing. A well built portal has the power to integrate data from a variety of software systems (e.g. an ERP system) to create dynamic applications that map all types of business processes and deliver tangible improvements in efficiency and productivity."

SMBs looking to save costs and optimise work processes should consider the following recommendations when creating an Enterprise Portal to ensure the long term success of the project:

1. Select the appropriate portal solution

In addition to various open-source solutions on the portal market, there are several major products to review such as Microsoft Office SharePoint Server, IBM WebSphere and Intrexx, the portal software from United Planet. At first glance, choosing an open-source product might seem to make sense from a cost perspective. On closer examination, however, this would be a short-sighted decision because service costs, rather than license costs, represent by far the largest portion of the total costs of a portal project. Depending on the solution, these can be 6 to 9 times greater (SharePoint) or 1.5 to 3 times greater (Intrexx) than license costs. In order to reduce service costs to a minimum, it is important to be clear from the start about the requirements of a portal.

2. Create and customise applications

To minimise the overall investment in the portal, companies should focus from the beginning on a portal solution that simplifies the process of creating and adapting portal applications, requiring little or no programming. This will not only ensure that companies will be able to react quickly and appropriately to future developments, it will also eliminate the need for external programmers.

3. Integrate existing systems to reduce duplication

Secure existing investments in a system such as SAP or Lotus Notes, by selecting a portal solution that facilitates integration of data from these systems into the portal. This also helps to avoid the need to change media in the course of a business

process and reduces duplication of work. As Enterprise Portals are fundamentally database-oriented, the portal software should be able to access any type of database.

4. Adopt integrated process management

Interactive process portals facilitate the automation of business processes and the electronic mapping of workflows. In addition to simple information and document management, time- and event-controlled processes ensure that the relevant people in the company receive, relay or supply information and perform other tasks to guarantee seamless business processes.

5. Offer multiple languages

Companies with international operations must ensure that the portal solution they select enables employees to choose and switch between languages with ease. Users should be able to select their preferred language on an individual basis. All content and labels on the portal must be generated in multiple languages.

6. Implement role-based user management

Different groups of users require different functions and information, depending on their role in the company. Therefore, it makes sense for the portal to provide role-based user management. This ensures that each employee can only see and/or edit the applications and documents for which he or she has the appropriate read and write permissions.

7. Involve employees in the development of the portal

To ensure a high level of acceptance by users, it is important to involve the employees in the development of the portal from an early stage and to invite their feedback on the project before, during and after implementation. Users should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the technology gradually and be offered incentives to use the portal.

8. Make it user friendly

Every portal project is doomed to failure from the start if employees do not find it easy-to-use and avoid it as a result. When designing the layout, therefore, it is best to remember that good, clear layout is just as important as the correct use of the company's corporate identity, so that users can find what they need quickly.

More information about the features, functions and applications offered by Enterprise Portals can be found at www.unitedplanet.com.

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About United Planet

United Planet is one of the leading developers of Enterprise Portals in Europe. Its Java based, standard software, Intrexx Xtreme, enables companies to create out-of-the-box Enterprise Portals, Intranets and Web Applications cost effectively, without the need for programming by using 'drag and drop' technology and pre-created solutions for quality management, document management and process management to optimise internal workflow. Intrexx Xtreme runs on Windows as well as on Linux and Sun Solaris, and incorporates several Business Adapters to ensure that third-party data from Lotus Notes and other ERP solutions can be easily integrated in the Intrexx Portal. A special Business Adapter for MS Office also makes it possible to integrate and edit Microsoft Office Documents without the need for Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS). United Planet is headquartered in Freiburg and also has offices in Windsor. The company is supported by over 100 Business Partners worldwide.

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