

STREAMLINE YOUR BUSINESS USING APPS, WEB APPS, AND ONLINE TOOLS



From your website and inbound marketing efforts through to your day to day operations and business processes, “systemising” is the act of putting in place tools, assets and back end systems/portals that do the leg work for you.

This paper visits the ways in which you can systemise your business and explores whether doing so is worth the investment.

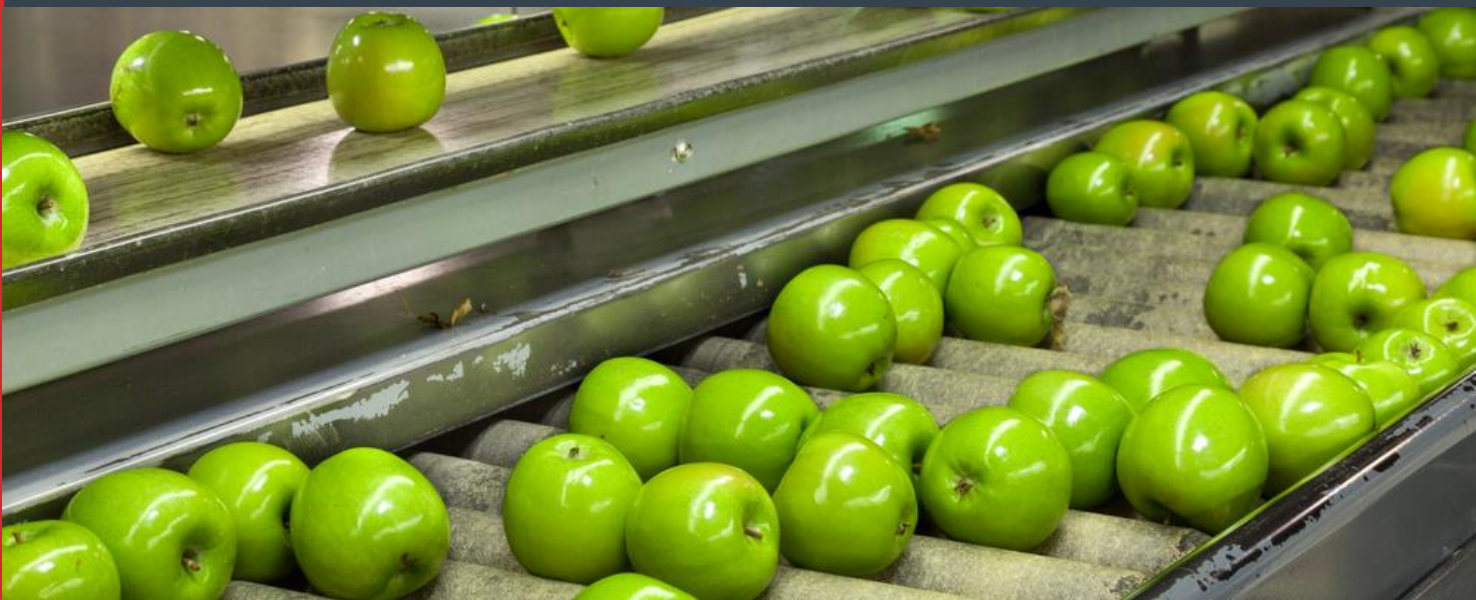
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SCORCHSOFT
Making complex web projects simple

Understanding the need

If you have been involved in growing or running a successful business, whether it be yours or someone else's, then a big part of achieving this is to put in place effective and efficient processes. These may range from day to day activities, such as responding to phone calls/emails/web enquiries in a certain way, through to the actual act of building / delivering your products and services. The larger a business becomes the more it can rely on these processes as they become increasingly unique to the business, the way it operates and even the way it creates unique differentiation against its competitors.



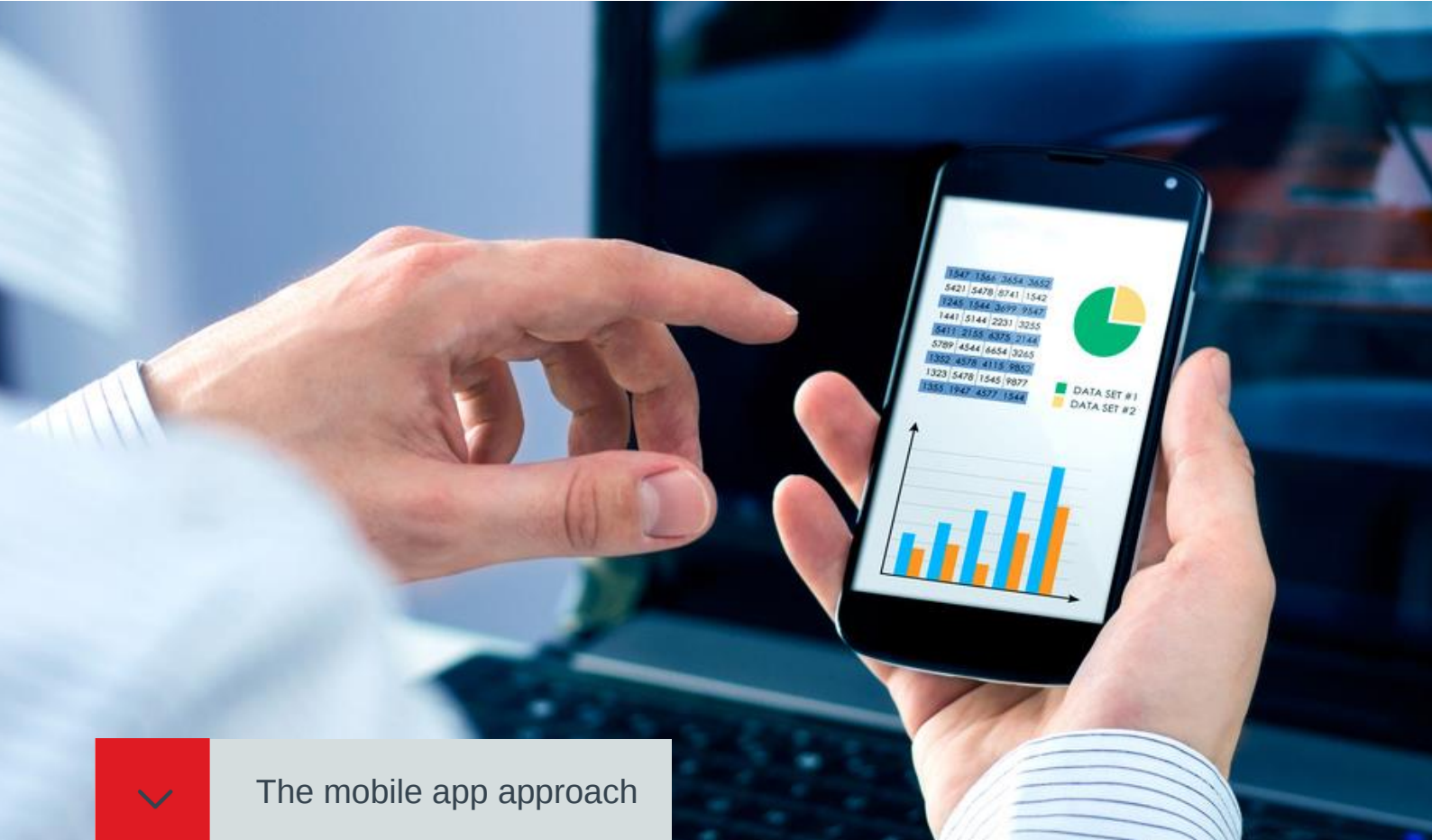
Apps (Applications) typically come in one of three forms: desktop applications; web applications; and mobile applications. You are probably already using a number of these every day; your email client, word processing and project management. These sort of applications meet generic business needs and can be customised to some extent but they don't solve every problem, can be difficult to understand and can become a chore to manage.

Bespoke uniquely created apps (whether desktop, mobile or web/cloud based) can automate and control processes in a way that is above and beyond the capabilities of most out-of-the-box licenced software, though the up-front cost is typically higher.

It isn't a clear cut yes/no decision so the aim of this paper is to give you an overview of the different bespoke application approaches to aid you in evaluating whether the investment of having them developed is the right option for your business.

If you have any questions about what you read in this document please feel free to contact us via phone (+44 (0) 121 4690009) or email (info@scorchsoft.com)





The mobile app approach

CONSIDERING APPS AS AN INTERNAL BUSINESS TOOL

Some Market Statistics

Global smart phone usage is expected to reach 2.87Bn users by 2020 ([source](#))

The app economy could double to \$101bn by 2020. ([source](#))

19 out of 20 people aged 16-24 own a smart phone, in the UK. ([source](#))

We are privileged to be in a position where devices that are as versatile as a smartphone or tablet are not only available to the masses but are also fairly cheap to purchase and deploy.

When a lot of people think about a mobile application they typically imagine a low-cost tool or game that is marketed to the end consumer. However, mobile applications can also be an extremely powerful means of bringing systemised business processes out into the field.

Some of the ways you could support field based staff and extend your business processes into the field with a mobile application include for example:

- Allowing field staff to access centrally held information; customer, product and other data. (E.g. for troubleshooting on-site issues).
- Updating central data quickly from any location.
- Using push-notifications to communicate changes.
- Replacing inefficient paper-based input processes.
- Tracking and measuring staff activities and locations.
- Enabling sales team to simply generate point-of-sale quotations for complex products or services.

There are a wealth of ways to bring the power to your processes through peoples' pockets.

The decision factor of whether a mobile application is right for your business, versus a traditional desktop or web/cloud based back office application, at its core comes down to how easy you can introduce a smart-device mobile way of working and whether this approach yields greater overall benefits.





The desktop application approach

IS THE DESKTOP APPLICATION A DEAD DUCK?

Some Market Statistics

PC Shipments declined 4.3% in Q4 of 2018 ([source](#))

Balsamiq reported 77% of their revenue came from desktop software in 2009 ([source](#))

the commercial value of unlicensed software dropped 8 percent in constant currency to \$46.3 billion globally in 2018 ([source](#))

Microsoft made most of its revenue (28%) from its Office Suite of applications in 2016 ([source](#))

By desktop application we mean an installable piece of software that sits on each PC/Workstation independently. The growth and use of software within business has been on an upwards trajectory since the IBM PC release in 1981, in this era, up until fairly recently, most of this has been installable desktop-based software.

The benefit of desktop based software is that people feel like they really own it and some businesses (e.g. [Balsamiq](#)) report vastly greater revenues from the desktop versions of their software compared with their web-based alternatives. Though these points hold true, if you are introducing bespoke systems then your success criteria may be something different than purely revenue generated and may include such items as process improvement - cost, efficiency and effectiveness – and the impact on customer effort and satisfaction.

The reality is that desktop software typically requires a vastly more complex update and deployment process compared to web or mobile apps. This generally means high IT support costs and user training and often results in outdated legacy software being used by users, which increases security vulnerabilities.

We are even seeing large (traditionally desktop focused) software companies move towards a more web-based approach to their software strategy. For example, Microsoft has invested heavily in bringing their web-based Office365 suite to market as a viable business-level alternative to their most profitable division (Microsoft Office).

We don't think desktop software is completely dead, though its value compared with other approaches is certainly being challenged in many use cases that can't be ignored.





The web app approach

THE WEB AS YOUR CENTRALISED CLOUD SYSTEMS

Market Statistics

Forbes redesigned their mobile experience as a progressive web app, resulting in a 43% increase in sessions per user, and 100% more engagement ([source](#))

89% of financial decision makers have or plan to have a cloud business strategy ([source](#))

84% of CIO's cut application costs by moving to the cloud ([source](#))

Worldwide public cloud service market to reach \$278bn by 2021 ([source](#))

A web application (also referred to as a cloud app) is a set of tools, resources or software that are accessed via a website through your web browser. The functionality behind the application is delivered by a web server rather than the software being installed on each computer that uses it.

The main negative aspect of this approach is that you must have an active internet connection in order to be able to use them. However, you could argue that this issue is dwindling in relevance with high levels of internet connection reliability, with today's any device any location access, and with internet speeds ever increasing for both fixed and mobile accessing devices.

There are lots of benefits to taking this approach for workflow based projects:

- As the software is only installed on the one server all of your data is in one place, making it easier to back up regularly and securely.
- The software is only installed on the web server so if you want to update it then you do it once in the one place and all users see the updates instantly.
- You can make the web application talk to other web applications and web services this can cut out certain manual tasks or enable completely new ways of working
- It supports remote working practices as anyone can use the application from device with an internet connection.

Though it breaks the mould we have found more recently that a web application approach suits the requirements of most back-end office systems. This approach isn't necessarily a silver bullet but it has certainly become an option that cannot be ignored.



Weighing up the pros and cons of systemising your processes

Whether creating a desktop, mobile or web/cloud based application what are the pros and cons to consider when systemising your business processes?

Pro: reduced admin time

By making systems do the leg work for you, you reduce the need for your staff to be doing repetitive monotonous tasks.

Con: required initial investment

Developing software of any kind takes time and money, though the long-term cost saving may be high it could be a challenge to raise the capital to fund a project especially for smaller businesses.

Pro: enable new business models

Having your data within a web based system can enable you to leverage new technologies to your advantage. For example building in a new lead-capture process that leverages smart phones.

Con: internal process change may take longer

With a completely manual business process you can change and revise it quickly by simply educating your workforce. If a system is core to your processes then implementing a major change could take some time thus slowing down your time-to-launch.

Pro: improved output quality

If you have a system in place to do a job then it will deliver the same output time and time again. Where automation is possible this speed, consistency and quality is introduced by removing human error.

Con: single point of process failure

If your process fails in your software and the only route to complete the task is using the software then your operations have to stall whilst the issue is fixed.

Pro: improved staff output

By putting user friendly interfaces and tools in place that work the way you work, tasks that need human interaction can often take less time than their manual alternatives.

Pro: integration

If your processes are driven within software systems (especially web based ones) then you are able to get these systems to talk with other third-party products/services. E.g. you may want to make an action from your website trigger something to happen in your customer relationship management system.





What should be done, how and is the expenditure worth the return?

WEIGHING UP THE BUSINESS CASE

As with any investment you need to be evaluating it on a number of levels. You may be able to identify many solution areas however naturally have limits on: what budget can be allocated to a solution; what is achievable within target timescales; or even how much internal change your staff are able to embrace within a given period.

The best place to start the decision making process is around either the pain or the opportunity. Try to look for areas of your process that are creating error, consuming lots of time, or aren't adding value to your products/services or to your customers' experience of interacting with your business. If you take the time to run through what you do from operations through to the end product then it is likely you will find opportunities for improvement. Also consider your processes as seen / experienced by your customers.

Once you have a clearer picture of the possible areas for improvement you should write down the impact that fixing the problem or implementing the solution has. If you can represent this as an annual cost saving or as revenue generation (may be through improved customer satisfaction) then even better. Once you have a clear measure you can order the solution opportunities in terms of their real importance to the business.

With a solid understanding of your business ordering the solution areas should not be too difficult. For example saving one member of staff 1 hour per week is probably going to be less important than developing a sales tool that will support 100 sales agents to sell a complex product or service more effectively.

The next thing to consider is the return on investment (ROI). To do this we would recommend [requesting a quote](#) to find out the project-cost of implementing the solution. This will help you to weigh up whether the cost is worth the return. Decisions such as this are much easier to understand and communicate to stakeholders when positioned in terms of their cost and ROI.

Of course this isn't a definitive list and there are other things to consider such as flexibility of existing processes; staff training; staff and stakeholder politics. However taking this train of thinking it is certainly a good place to start.



Case Study: Lorentz Solar vs. Diesel

Solar v Diesel Calculator



Your Situation

Your location 

Depth of water source m

Water needs per day m³

Current fuel cost per day USD

Savings

By moving to a LORENTZ solar pumping solution you would

- break even in **2 months**,
- saving you approx. **USD 26,223** over the next 3 years and
- **USD 547,181** over the lifetime of the solution

[Your Situation](#) [Assumptions](#) [Your Savings](#) [More Info](#)

Tel: +49 (0) 4193 7548-0 www.lorentz.de

Disclaimer: This tool is designed to illustrate the potential cost differences of solar versus diesel powered water pumping. Please use this tool to help you make your own choices. If necessary you should consult financial and water pumping specialists for advice. Systems size calculations are estimates and do not replace calculations made using specialist professional tools.



LORENTZ sell solar powered pump systems and they do so through thousands of partnering sales agents. Given the complex nature of their product offering it was inherently challenging to give these sales agents the ammunition to be able to quickly communicate the cost of the solution to the end customer. For example the solar panel configuration could differ based on the sun strength of the area where they will be situated; or a more powerful setup would be needed to pump water from a deeper water source. Until we developed the solar vs. diesel calculator the process was for a quote request to be submitted that would be reviewed by a technical person, a process that could take hours or even days depending on the nature of the solution.

The solar vs. diesel calculator aimed to simplify the process of identifying and costing the right pump system and at the same time communicates the financial benefits of using their solution over the alternatives. Not only did this drastically reduce the time it takes to generate an indicative cost but the tool also generates a lead that is able to be fulfilled by one of LORENTZ's sales partners. When a lead comes through the agent will already know what nature of solution the end customer needs to be able to best position the sales pitch.

The proof is in the pudding with applications such as this and within 3 months of launching the tool supported over £300,000 in sales.

The solar vs. diesel calculator can be found online, [click here](#), if you would like to have a go at using it for yourself. You could also try their sister tool '[Pool Calculator](#)'.



Case Study: Chance 2 Dance



Chance 2 Dance is a business that puts on high production value dance shows at leading venues. Their sales and marketing strategy is very partner-lead; they get on board partner dance schools and allow their students to perform provided a certain number of tickets are sold by each of their students. This business model is great in principal however before we implemented their web systems this was an entirely manual process all the way from ticket booking through to the process on the day. The first show they ever put on took upwards of 300 hours to facilitate the admin tasks alone.

Our system automates every element of their business: There are seating plan drawing tools that allow Chance 2 Dance administrators to operate at new venues easily; There is a full box office process that uses electronic ticketing to save approximately £3000 on printing and postage costs per show; there are in depth tools for allowing administrators to manage dance schools and their students; we have created marketing tools that allow each student to promote that they are performing in a show via social media (which is measured and used to measure the performance of dance schools); there is a quick-find function that makes processing ticket queries on the day as fast as possible; there are email marketing tools that allow administrators to send updates, reminders and marketing messages to segmented groups of their users.

...And this is just a small sample of the feature set that the website boasts.

“The website is absolutely essential to our business operations and we simply could not operate without it.”

- John Lake, Managing Director, Chance 2 Dance Live



Case Study: LSII International

LSII International are a global company that supply solid-state LED lighting, they have a wide range of high quality, though reasonably technical, lighting products. A core part of LSII's sales process is to support the marketing and sale of their products through partnering businesses, sales agents and fitters. To do this effectively it is important that the people who are customer-facing have the best tools and resources available to them in order to best position LSII's products.

Traditionally in this sector it is/was the norm to send out thick brochures that contain the company's full product catalogue. The idea is that this becomes a resource that sales agents can show to prospective customers. The problem is that this isn't targeted (they will list all product types regardless of the customer's needs), print costs are expensive and partnering sales companies need to position unbranded resources to the end customer.

To solve these pain points when developing their new website we also implemented a brochure creation tool (see the image above) that ties in with every product listed throughout the site. The idea is simple, anyone can mark the products that they are interested in and this adds them into their "PDF selection". Once they have done this they can then name the document and upload their own logo (if they are a partner company). This then automatically generates a highly targeted and tailored document that can be downloaded as a PDF. It is cheap, easy to use, tailored and much more targeted around the prospect customer.

[Automatic document creation](#) doesn't stop there, though not a feature of this project you can also use similar methods to automatically create custom-branded, multi-language sales materials from web based product/service databases. As these resources are automatically generated by a web service it means that these sales materials are instantly editable and always up to date should key information need to change.



Turning concept into reality

In short there are a wide range of approaches that can be implemented to save time, streamline processes, improve customer experience and add extra value within most businesses. The key objective is to find the opportunities or pain points where the expected return, of a well-positioned process/application project, covers the development cost to build and maintain it.

Have you been inspired by anything you have read here? Or, would you be interested in having a face-to-face discussion about how the concepts in this paper could be applied to your business?

If so then please don't hesitate to [get in touch with us](#). There is no obligation to buy we may just give you that eureka moment that could transform your business!

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