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VERIZON
BUSINESS

TASK ANALYSIS – FOCUS ON SD EDIT PROPERTIES & COMPETITORS

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Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide companion information for the redesign elements/notes in the document, StoryboardSession10262010v2.doc, which is available on the EaaS UI Development vTeam Web site and the EaaS Sales Channel site.

The focus of this companion document is the Edit Properties window and function (pricing, service, and functionality), but a similar assessment can be made of any element of SD by implementing the User & Task Analysis method. Currently, the focus of the Solution Designer environment, as seen in the mockup (EaaS Private Network Prototype) is Marketing-oriented and has very high-level pricing information. This is fine to fulfill business requirements and preliminary placeholders for information, but the next stage should be User & Task Analysis. Currently, no information is provided for what the user is actually getting with their Computing as a Service (CaaS) solution when they are in the Solution Designer environment. Furthermore, the user cannot customize the solution, other than the pricing plan, which is also a bit hard to understand, so really – there are no editable properties from a goal standpoint.

Additionally, the link to [View the Detailed Rate Plan in a new window](#) on the Price Estimator tab of the CaaS Edit Properties window still provides very little indication about what you're actually getting. It's a fact that modern day users don't want to read. If they must read, they want succinct information that is contextual and creates confidence that they are going to achieve their goal at some point in the near future. The learning aspect of what Verizon is conceptually selling should definitely be addressed and is a crucial necessity, but it should be done before the user reaches the Solution Designer environment, and they're should be multiple access points to bypass the learning and get right into SD (for the savvy user). Once the user is in the Solution Designer environment, there must be a focus on the developed User & Task Analysis, which means that the user has accessed the solution designer to accomplish a goal. What is that goal? That can only be defined by profile development. The goal of the user does not necessarily align with business requirements, although those are an important part of developing the user profiles as well.

Practice goal-driven design

- Determine the user's terminal objective, a goal that is often external to the technology
- Connect to value proposition
- Design to achieve that goal with the lightest possible workload and the appropriate level of performance

Goals are addressed after we understand our user community through requirements and research. The research can be gathered using one or more data gathering methods, and then a task inventory can be developed

Data gathering methods

- Observation
- Individual interviews
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Remote and automated methods

All of the previous data gathering methods have their pros and cons. Ensure that you are matching the type of data needed to the method; do not simply utilize a method for the sake of doing something

Task inventory

The task inventory focuses on high-value data for rapid analysis. The following list outlines creating a task inventory (defining and understanding the users' needs and potential pain points):

- The users' terminology and mental models
- The most important tasks to users (high value)
- The most important tasks to the business goals
- The most frequently performed tasks
- The sequence of task operations
- The most commonly linked tasks (cohesive flow; not just a vertical)
- The most time consuming tasks
- The value of task flexibility
- The source of user frustration
- The requirements for precision
- The source of user errors
- Information, feedback, and performance support

The rest of this document focuses on competitors for a couple of reasons. There is already a course of development set at Verizon for SD, and so there is an existing mindset that must be addressed. The best way to do this is to show the possibilities of how and why competitors are succeeding and what they are doing wrong from a User Experience perspective. Additionally, Verizon is on track, with some initial concepts, to have greater success than most competitors. But, a redirection must be made to focus on the user needs through User & Task Analysis.

Top competitors analyzed

Amazon

The first company we'll look at for its offering in the realm of cloud computing is Amazon's Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2). You can view their page at:

<http://aws.amazon.com/ec2/>

Since I have not signed up and accessed the Web service interface they talk about in their interview, the information contained at the previous link may indeed be the learning portion of their offering, but it could still be improved by offering less verbose information, bringing tabular data and visual image queues to the top, and providing the user with the ability to view the topology or interface or whatever they are delivering. By integrating that last item, the user has a sandbox to play in, and from there they can formulate a point of reference.

What they do well:

- Rich information offering
- Succinctly categorized information (when located). See next image for the actual Operating Systems and Software offered under EC2. Notice how the exact offering is laid out and linked to further detail for each

Operating Systems and Software

Operating Systems

Amazon Machine Images (AMIs) are preconfigured with an ever-growing list of operating systems. We work with our partners and community to provide you with the most choice possible. You are also empowered to use our bundling tools to upload your own operating systems. The operating systems currently available to use with your Amazon EC2 instances include:

Operating Systems		
Red Hat Enterprise Linux	Windows Server 2003/2008	Oracle Enterprise Linux
OpenSolaris	Amazon Linux AMI	Ubuntu Linux
Fedora	Gentoo Linux	Debian
	SUSE Linux Enterprise	

Software

Amazon EC2 enables our partners and customers to build and customize Amazon Machine Images (AMIs) with software based on your needs. We have hundreds of free and paid AMIs available for you to use. A small sampling of the software available for use today within Amazon EC2 includes:

Databases	Batch Processing	Web Hosting
IBM DB2	Hadoop	Apache HTTP
IBM Informix Dynamic Server	Condor	IIS/Asp.Net
Microsoft SQL Server Standard 2005/2008	Open MPI	IBM Lotus Web Content Management
MySQL Enterprise		IBM WebSphere Portal Server
Oracle Database 11g		

Application Development Environments	Application Servers	Video Encoding & Streaming
IBM sMash	IBM WebSphere Application Server	Wowza Media Server Pro
JBoss Enterprise Application Platform	Java Application Server	Windows Media Server
Ruby on Rails	Oracle WebLogic Server	

What they don't do well:

- Verbose explanation (too much reading, and thinking, is required of the user)
- No cohesive flow. The user must drill down from each link instead of following a logical path to completion.
- No image queues
- No configuration or sample topology before login

Overall, they could do a better job by bringing some of the rich information, tabular data, and graphics to the forefront. I found this data by digging deeper into the offerings while focusing on what I would exactly be getting and what the functionality offered. At that point, I'm educated enough to start looking through pricing. Hopefully, I can add or remove pieces in a very modular way so that I can truly make economic inroads and realize the value of cloud computing. Otherwise, I'll just stick with my physical infrastructure until they can properly and succinctly explain what I'm getting and what the value is over maintaining my own physical infrastructure.

Note: Security is an important topic that should also be brought to the forefront. Cloud computing should offer greater security than I or my company can provide, and it should be easy to understand and implement; actually, it should be automated so that I don't even have to think about it.

Oracle

Oracle kicks off their Cloud Web presence information with a great high-level information video delivered by Rex Wang, Vice President of Product Marketing for Infrastructure and Management, at:

<http://www.oracle.com/us/technologies/cloud/index.html>

I can't say enough about the succinct, informative video, and Rex's dynamic delivery. The only problem is that at the end of the video Rex tells me to go to a particular linked page for more information. When I access that page by opening a new browser window (?) it is actually the same page I am on (redirect) – whoops!

What they do well

Oracle knows how to deliver information in a Web 2.0 environment. In addition to the Flash video, they have podcasts, Webcasts, and the ability to keep up-to-date with their content by accessing an RSS feed. In this respect they are head and shoulders above Amazon, but that might be due to the more robust offering that Amazon needs to detail. Oracle is only providing technology that can be used to create a private cloud in your own data center.

What they don't do well

Much like I wrote about for Amazon's offering concerning the limitations of my analysis without being able to access the actual Web interface, I am not registered for Oracle's service. So, when I state that they are lacking in the delivery of their actual cloud environment (the deeper dive), I might be misinformed because I have not logged in. But, much like I stated for Amazon, why must I log in? At least provide some sort of preliminary sand box for me to play in, look at the functionality and how it comes together, and get a feel for what I'm getting into. Remember, I'm starting to travel down a path that potentially leaves behind or changes my existing, dedicated infrastructure. That's a very scary prospect, especially when it comes to security.

Oracle does not offer a public cloud solution. I'm noting that in this section, but is it folly or genius? Many studies show that even at a low level, the low security, public nature of Web 2.0 environments like Facebook will be gone by the year 2020. In their place will be highly secure private interaction platforms that users control. Whether Oracle is being short-sighted or trying to spin their limitations remains to be seen, but it's something to consider.

However, it does seem like the only way to start down the road to actual Cloud computing with Oracle is to call them or send them a request to be contacted. All in all, it seems as though they are offering some new technology, but mostly rebranding their existing offerings for the Cloud environment.

Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle Corporation has stated that cloud computing has been defined as "everything that we already do" and that it will have no effect except to "change the wording on some of our ads"; see the following links for reference. Oracle Corporation has since launched a cloud computing center and worldwide tour. Forrester Research Principal Analyst John Rymer dismisses Ellison's remarks by stating that his "comments are complete nonsense and he knows it".

http://searchcloudcomputing.techtarget.com/news/article/0,289142,sid201_gci1384202,00.html

http://www.computerworld.com.au/article/335674/oracle_launches_worldwide_cloud-computing_tour/

<http://www.thestreet.com/story/10649557/1/oracles-ellison-issues-cloud-challenge.html>

GoGrid

They are the great little company with big dreams.

<http://www.gogrid.com/>

But why put them in a Verizon competitor document? Well, they are a direct competitor with Amazon EC2 for starters, and even though they are mostly servicing start-ups, Web 2.0, and SaaS companies, SAP and Novell are running pilots with them.

What they do well

I like their introductory messaging better than Oracle's, and I never got lost in the weeds. Again, it's either call them or they call you to continue, but if their Cloud services' interface is anything like their Web site, it will be easy to use, engaging, and to the point. That's exactly what Verizon needs at a base level.

What they don't do well

They don't offer Everything as a Service, yet; it's a pretty tight model, but that is in comparison to a much larger company like Verizon that must offer more, and is able to offer more. Again though, check out their Web site. They're visually appealing and don't create anxiety or complexity. They even have a competitor comparison chart.

Salesforce

Salesforce.com helped pioneer SaaS, and now they are moving into Oracle's realm with PaaS (Platform as a Service). They are a revolutionary company, and their Cloud offerings could make them a top competitor.

<http://www.salesforce.com>

What they do well

To reiterate, they helped pioneer SaaS. That means they were thinking about this long before it was out of the chute. They are indeed a force to be reckoned with; they offer lots of visuals concerning what they're environment looks like. They're text and graphic alignment is engaging, much like GoGrid, but on a larger scale. They offer a free trial, demos, a wizard to walk you through what you need, and very detailed, easy to understand pricing and editions.

What they don't do well

They do what they do well. They're sales-oriented; they do CRM. That's not bad, it's just not EaaS. They have limitations that Verizon doesn't. But, much like GoGrid they seem to know the user who is going to buy into Cloud computing at some level. Taking cues from their visual dynamics and modularity can greatly enhance Verizon's offering by creating a cohesive path. Analyzing models like GoGrid and Salesforce allow us to think in a clear conceptual way at a base level, and then apply that base level concept to the larger EaaS environment. It's simply a case of building out the concept.

Conclusion

That's all for the comparisons for now. I'll expand upon this document as my research quickly continues. We don't want to have so much analysis of a competitor that we end up looking more like them than something new anyway, but we are trying to develop a UI that draws the user into our services. By analyzing how others are engaging users, even at their public Web site level, concerning the Cloud environment, we can gain insight into how they think about users, their knowledge level, and how the company is positioning themselves in terms of information design.