

Lessons from the Big Boys

Companies—whether large enterprises or Small Medium Businesses (SMBs) – are often looking for practical solutions that maximise productivity and minimise costs. While some technologies may seem too complicated to be deployed on a “small and mid-size” level, they are in fact, necessary for SMBs. After all, large enterprises and SMBs share the same needs: the only difference is that large enterprises have more resources than SMBs to enjoy smart solutions. What are some of the technologies that large enterprises deploy and SMBs can also integrate into their business functions?



“If you have a product that is 10 times better than anything in the marketplace, you are going to get enterprise customers...”

Jason Lemkin, CEO and co-founder of EchoSign in an interview on Sramana Mitra.¹

BIG VS SMALL

Large enterprises and SMBs are different in terms of business structures, functions and levels of technology deployment. As compared to large enterprises, SMBs have²:

- Lower amount of annual revenue
- Lower number of employees
- Less regulated and more “intuitive” spending patterns

In terms of technological mobility, SMBs are also different from large enterprises in various ways³:

- SMBs tend to focus more on technological investments that are less complex than the larger enterprises. Some of them include moving from paper to electronic systems, upgrading of accounting systems, and operational changes to address security loopholes.
- Most SMBs tend to enhance their internal IT operations by consulting external IT experts.
- Most SMBs do not deploy technologies that are as sophisticated as the ones utilised by large enterprises.

Despite the differences between large enterprises and SMBs, some of the technologies in the areas of security coverage, backup system and business mobility that large enterprises used, are also essential on a small and medium business level.

¹ “Towards paperless contracts”, Sramana Mitra, February 4, 2009
<http://www.sramanamitra.com/2009/02/04/towards-paperless-contracts-echosign-ceo-jason-lemkin-part-1/>

² “CRM at the speed of light”, Paul Greenberg
http://books.google.com.sg/books?id=vLOKDIGDI2sC&pg=PA321&lpg=PA321&dq=smb+vs+enterprise&source=bl&ots=vWQI62DnTP&sig=ucUZFNdZvXT5-cgUy72187Yijk&hl=en&ei=v1ySbe4HNXJkAWivNm7BQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result#PPA321,M1

³ “What’s an SMB?”, Cisco blog, September 26, 2007
http://blogs.cisco.com/wireless/comments/whats_an_smb/

EXTENSIVE SECURITY COVERAGE



When it comes to securing the company's network assets, large enterprises take vigilant steps in implementing security solutions that cover all corners of the business. They include protecting data on the end-point or backend, during transmission and during processing.⁴ As network threats are indiscriminately propagated via the Internet, any Internet-connected company, regardless of size, is going to face the same threats.⁵ Therefore, SMBs should learn from large enterprises in adopting a comprehensive solution

portfolio that guarantees their safety and meet all aspects of data security requirements.

Peng Hong Hardware Sdn Bhd, a leading dealer in ferrous and non-ferrous metals in Malaysia, is an example of an SMB that deployed a cheaper, user-friendly and reliable server essential security protection after experiencing unexpected problems from the previous system. One of the major flaws of the previous server was that it was potentially exposed to security vulnerabilities. As an SMB, Peng Hong Hardware was aware that it was not big enough to hire an IT specialist. As such, it implemented a user-friendly IT platform that was not only secured and supported, but had extensive functionalities that matched its business needs.⁶

The example clearly shows that implementing thorough security coverage that matches the company's business needs is essential. Despite having tighter budgets, SMBs should always gain a full understanding of their needs before making any technological investments.

RELIABLE BACKUP SYSTEM

Data protection and quick disaster recovery is necessary for most businesses. Large enterprises often take efforts in maintaining their backup systems so as not to lose the amount of data generated in large amounts everyday. This is clearly shown in the following example by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore.

A regional research centre, ISEAS conducts research programmes, organises events and publishes journals and books. It also maintains a library containing more than half a million items. On a daily basis, a lot of fresh data is generated by several people at one time. For obvious reasons, data needs to be kept current and available at all times. However, the existing software solution did not support RAID and could not back up open files. As such, ISEAS implemented a new system that was fast, easier to operate and could provide broader and deeper functionality. Daily operations are thus smoother as server operations need not be interrupted or reconfigured all the time. Server downtime was also greatly reduced, with incremental backups performed every day and full backup every week.⁷

⁴ "Large Enterprise"
<http://www.utimaco.com/C125748F0037440F/vwContentByKey/W27HAJ42433OBELEN>

⁵ "An In-depth Analysis of SMB vs. Enterprise Security"
http://209.85.173.132/search?q=cache:j1ZKx7ZW6MkJ:www.prosecure.netgear.com/pdf/whitepapers/smb_vs_enterprise_security.pdf+An+Indepth+Analysis+of+SMB+vs.+Enterprise+Security%E2%80%9D&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=sg&client=firefox-a

⁶ "Malaysian steel dealer case study"
<http://www.microsoft.com/malaysia/business/casestudies/linkpage4206.msp>

⁷ "Acronis True Image Success Story — Institute of Southeast Asian Studies", November 11, 2005
<http://es.acronis.com/resource/case-studies/2005/11-11-ISAS-trueimage.html>



Specifically to SMBs, their business functions often require them to use an intuitive, integrated system that is simple, reliable and affordable to back up their data. SMBs can also learn from Taiwan Adventist Hospital that has benefited greatly from integrating good data backup systems into their daily operations.

Taiwan Adventist Hospital is another example of a company that required a good remote backup system to overcome sudden power shutdowns or system errors in Taiwan's disaster-prone location. It was also looking to update its IT infrastructure to ensure efficient delivery of high-quality medical treatment. In order to have the best of both worlds, Taiwan Adventist Hospital deployed a virtualised infrastructure to consolidate its major systems. With the new system, the hospital benefited greatly from significant costsavings in IT procurement and equipment maintenance. It also experienced improved productivity and efficiency where its staff can fully focus on developing high-quality medical care.⁸

Depending on the business nature and operations, it is essential for all companies to seamlessly integrate suitable backup systems into their business structures that match their daily needs.

FLEXIBLE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

Maintaining a mobile business is a productive way of conducting your business quickly and efficiently, with instant access to business information and intelligence.⁹ Large enterprises tend to find ways and means to cut costs in various aspects. An example of a mobility solution will be the implementation of VoIP PBX as a telephony solution so that there can be cost savings generated by reduced overall call costs. Some advantages of implementing mobile solutions include:

- Giving businesses the assurance that employees are able to efficiently and safely complete their jobs anywhere and anytime.
- Enabling businesses to redefine processes with voice, guest, location, security, and other mobility services.

Lippo Bank in Indonesia is an instance of a company where it needed a new messaging solution for information security and support for its mobility requirements. As its existing solution put its entire email system in a high-risk condition, it required a secured mobility system that enabled its employees to remotely and safely access email and calendaring using mobile devices. As such, Lippo Bank benefited from increased user productivity and flexibility, and critical protection against viruses, and spam and support for high availability.¹⁰ SMBs can learn from Lippo Bank by adopting a through and through messaging solution in order to achieve the same benefits in the areas of increased productivity and flexibility in their business processes.

⁸ "Dell Case Study
<http://www.dell.com/downloads/global/power/ps1q08-20080239-TaiwanAdventistHospital.pdf>

⁹ "The benefits of business mobility", *Dynamic Business*, January 15, 2009
<http://www.dynamicbusiness.com/articles/articles-growth/the-benefits-of-business-mobility.html/3/>

¹⁰ "PT Bank Lippo Tbk.", May 12, 2006
<http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/casestudy.aspx?casestudyid=200410>

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SMBs can learn from large enterprises to integrate technologies in the aspects of data security, files backup and mobility solutions and benefit from them as shown in the examples mentioned above. However, most SMBs, despite being more flexible and versatile, tend to face certain limitations when it comes to implementing appropriate solutions that can fit into their business functions. On one hand, there is no doubt that SMBs have to upgrade their technological functions when

necessary. On the other, it is always advisable to obtain enough valuable advice and market knowledge from professional IT providers before rushing into “copying” successful examples from large enterprises.

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