title

Customize your Cloud Business Applications with aPaaS

meta-description

You need not wait for your cloud software vendor to develop the features you need. You can add features without risking problems with upgrades.

keywords

customize cloud applications,add features to enterprise applications,application extensions with aPaaS,mobile app integration with LMS

body

The benefits of applications in the cloud have established them as the preferred deployment method for business applications. Lower TCO, faster deployment, and scalability provide significant advantages. Having all customers on the same software platform speeds innovation and enables frequent product updates. Competition drives a focus on the user experience.

Even these advantages are not enough to keep pace with today's speed of business. The demand for more functionality is outpacing vendors' ability to provide it.

Typically, customers must submit a feature request to their vendor, then try to influence other customers to "vote it up" until it reaches the point the vendor takes action. A scan of conversations in user groups and social media tells the story -- frustration -- as users wait months or more for features to appear.

aPaaS to the Rescue

Quick application development gives us an easy path to trouble-free customization. Almost all vendors provide standardized APIs and integration development platforms. These features enable us to extend applications for almost any need without risking problems with upgrades.

With the growth of application Platform as a Service (aPaaS) providers, we now have comprehensive application delivery platforms. Visual modeling languages speed development and leave traditional IT coding methods far behind. We have established, mature solutions like ASP.NET from Microsoft and Force.com from Salesforce. Specialists like Mendix and MIOsoft are growing, and we have browser app development platforms from Google and Mozilla. Open source platforms like Red Hat also have a strong presence.

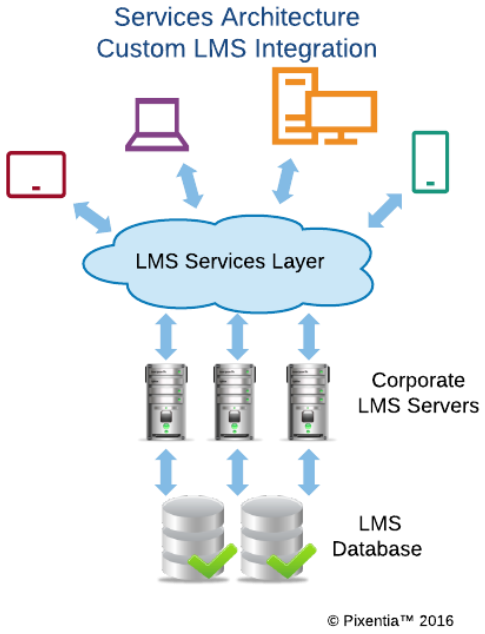
With these tools, we can develop robust extensions independent of the enterprise platforms they support.

Mobile App Integration

One of the most common needs we see now is to connect mobile apps to enterprise cloud software. The apps are often developed independently for customer service and sales functions. Then, companies find they need to connect those apps to their LMS or CMS to offer relevant learning and other content to customers.

Some companies have tried using website calls to an API but find that method is not scalable, and that software updates can break the integration.

The solution is a services layer that handles one or many mobile platforms and apps and uses the host application's APIs to handle GET functions. This method creates a stable customization independent of the host application and not vulnerable to regression errors.



The integration is invisible to users and requires virtually no maintenance. You can apply the same methods to any custom application.

Things to Consider

Here are a few things to think about when you are planning an aPaaS deployment.

- When you are choosing an aPaaS, select an enterprise-class platform that will provide security, technical support, high availability, disaster recovery, and external service access.
- Some aPaas offerings are user-friendly enough that business users can develop applications. Consider whether you need a high-control environment or want to extend the ability to produce micro-apps to users.
- If you need an aPaaS partner, choose a trusted provider with experience in integrating custom solutions with enterprise applications.

Don't let the lack of customization in cloud applications keep you from meeting the needs of your business. The possibilities of aPaaS are limited only by your imagination.