

Imperative of Universal Access

Dan Kusnetzky, EVP Marketing Strategy
An Open-Xchange Position Paper



This is another in a series of Open-Xchange position papers on important IT topics affecting individuals, not-for-organizations and for-profit enterprises. Each of the papers will focus on a trend Open-Xchange has observed, what impact this trend is expected to have on the industry and how Open-Xchange Server can help organizations respond to that trend.

This position paper addresses the questions, "What does universal access mean?" and "Why does my organization need it?"

What is Universal Access?

Universal access means helping people collaborate:

- (1) From wherever they are
- (2) Over whatever network is available to them
- (3) Using whatever network-enabled device they choose

Why does my organization need Universal Access?

Organizations are increasingly dealing with a world on the 'go'. Customers, staff members, and partners can be found working in their offices on their desktop computers less and less of the time.

Today it is far more likely that these people are at home, conferences, off-site meetings, another site location, visiting a customer facility, staying in a hotel, waiting for a flight at some airport, or driving down some highway. So, it's unwise to build important collaborative systems that cannot be accessed by mobile individuals when they are outside of the office.

A better assumption is that the people need information at their fingertips and the ability to collaborate with one another are using one or more of the following devices:

- A Windows-based personal computer or laptop
- A Linux-based personal computer or laptop
- A Mac OS-based personal computer or laptop
- A Smartphone such as a Blackberry or Treo
- A kiosk located at a show, hotel, internet cafe or some other location
- Some other browser-based device such as an Internet Tablet

Systems that help people collaborate under these conditions make it possible for the organization to work more efficiently. They pave the way for increased sales of products and services and higher profits.

Why aren't all collaborative solutions designed to support Universal Access?

Many of today's collaborative and messaging solutions were designed to support proprietary client systems, proprietary client software, proprietary server software, proprietary communications protocols and proprietary data formats. The key word here is "proprietary." This was seen by the vendors as a way by to maintain control customer accounts. Another goal was using collaboration application as a method of selling other kinds of software, such as operating systems, middleware and development tools. Furthermore, the proprietary client software often requires a special package of code to be installed on every device connected to the network.

Open-Xchange Server, on the other hand, is built completely on open standards. Such as POP3, IMAP4, HTML, XML, JavaScript, LDAP, SQL and the like. This architecture enables Open-Xchange Server to be accessed by hundreds, and in some usage scenarios, thousands of standard devices.

Other collaborative and messaging solutions were designed only to support only a single operating system, such as Windows, UNIX or MacIntosh. Unfortunately, the world can now be characterized as heterogeneous, i.e., lots of different systems and devices are found in a single, extended organization. So organizations need to retain the flexibility to interface with devices running on multiple operating systems or virtualized systems.

In short, the world has changed and messaging and collaborative solutions need to deal with this new open and heterogeneous world.

Universal access is one of Open-Xchange's key benefits

Open-Xchange believes that software should be based upon open, international standards. This means using standard APIs, standard protocols and, whenever possible, standard data formats. Taking this approach offers organizations the greatest flexibility while still offering a high level of interoperability with products offered by many different suppliers. Organizations who select standards-based approaches are less likely to find themselves locked in to a single supplier's products or tools.

Furthermore, Open-Xchange believes that people need to be able to communicate and collaborate from wherever they are using the client device of their choice. So, Open-Xchange Server was designed to work with rich clients, Web browser-based clients, SyncML enable devices, and Smartphones of many types.

In the end, the messaging and collaboration solution should make systems work for people rather than making people work for systems.

If you have any questions please contact:

Open-Xchange Inc.
info@open-xchange.com
www.open-xchange.com