

## VIEWPOINT INTERNET LIMITED

ViewPoint Internet has successfully established itself in the marketplace for providing and developing web-based software applications for customer relationship management solutions.

### OBJECTIVES

ViewPoint Internet wanted to be able to offer excellent software to its clients without the associated problems of updating and patching. Anyone using software is aware of the constant battle to make sure that applications are patched and updated so that they work correctly, give the maximum business advantage and don't compromise the security of the user. ViewPoint aimed to make it easier for its non-technical customers to manage the software update.

At the same time, it wanted to offer the familiarity and ease that is associated with a 'normal' windows software application and make software available through the internet, without the expense and inconvenience of distributing it through traditional media such as CDs.

### SOLUTION

The company developed its software, also called ViewPoint, and now sells it online. The software operates entirely within the users' browser and is accessible to each customer from any location that has a connection to the internet. This offers ViewPoint's clients two huge advantages. Firstly, they need very little technical expertise, other than an ability to use their browser, and, secondly, there is no software installation process. If a software update or fix is required, it is developed and checked by ViewPoint staff on its production servers. It is then released to the operational servers where it is instantly accessible to all clients without any need to disrupt their workflows.

The company's servers are connected to the internet by broadband connections to ensure that access is provided constantly and at high speed. Without broadband, this business model would simply be impossible.

A range of security levels can be deployed, depending on each customer's needs. This can, for example, restrict access to the software to machines at the customer's office or the software can be accessible from anywhere.

The resulting system means that a ViewPoint customer who is an estate agent, for example, can keep a full database of all the properties they have for sale or to let, a database of all the

**Best practice in:**  
Broadband

**Sector:**  
Computing Activities

**Size of firm:**  
2 employees

**Location:**  
Bracknell, Berkshire

**Website:**  
[www.viewpoint.net.uk](http://www.viewpoint.net.uk)



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STEVE GRIFFIN – DIRECTOR

people interested in buying or renting those properties and a database of the people with whom they do business. With these databases in place, the customer can then manage their entire property sale workflow. Because the software is entirely browser-based, the customer needs minimal training to use it.

“The benefits of broadband have allowed us to create and operate a very valuable and useful service,” says Steve Griffin, Director of ViewPoint Internet. “Our customers can now obtain great software without any setup or hardware issues. All they need is broadband and a PC. Broadband is the reason we are in business and have a business.”

Broadband also allows staff to work effectively from home, removing the overheads associated with running an office.

## **RESULTS**

ViewPoint customers are now able to access their software without any setup or hardware issues. They also have no backup, staff training or accessibility worries.


The product’s effectiveness is demonstrated in the way that ViewPoint staff can use it to sell the product itself. “Our database of enquiries and target customers is stored in our own application,” says Steve. “We can produce mailing lists and sales campaigns with a minimum of effort. We can track every enquiry and the level of response to our own sales campaigns.” The whole sales presentation can be carried out with potential clients viewing the system online while talking to Viewpoint staff on the phone. The company does not even need its own office and rents offices in Bracknell solely for meetings and training facilities.

To recognise its success, ViewPoint Internet was a regional winner of the broadband category in the DTI and InterForum Awards for E-commerce 2004.

## **CHALLENGES**

The cost of development proved to be high as the company attempted to meet burgeoning user requirements. It was also difficult to decide whether to develop the software using a Microsoft programming framework, which offered much promise but was still in experimental format when development began. “We decided the risk of going to market using a technology still in development was not prudent, even if Microsoft was delivering it,” says Steve. Instead the development went ahead with proven technologies.





ViewPoint constantly has to avoid the temptation of developing other services, such as printing peripherals. When it has done so in the past, it has proved to be a diversion and not sufficiently profitable. As a result it has learned to focus entirely on the application and core service it offers, rather than dilute its efforts across a range of related services.

**Top tips:**

- Develop systems using proven software with which you are familiar.
- Be ruthless with user requirements. It is better to earn income by getting to market with a product that has less functionality and then build it up, rather than spending excessive time producing a formidable product before launch.
- Careful analysis of customer requirements and early planning are essential when building a large and ambitious system.

**THE LAST WORD**

“We have developed more unique features simply because we understand the scope better,” says Steve. “Broadband has enabled us to develop and host a market-leading web-based software solution. Without broadband it wouldn’t have been possible. Broadband is the reason we’re in business, and have a business,” concludes Steve.

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