



Stopping SaaS Sprawl in Its Tracks

The enterprise world has come a long way from the days the cloud was seen merely as a security risk. While security is still a concern, the benefits of moving on-premises applications to the cloud far outweigh the potential risks—and adoption rates prove it.

According to one study, [62% of organizations will run their entire IT stack in the cloud](#) by 2022. To accomplish this goal, companies will continue to convert to cloud-based applications. While the average enterprise ran 18 apps in the cloud in 2015, that number was expected to reach more than 50 by the end of 2017.

The only problem is that provisioning these apps has become easy enough for business users to do themselves. As much as IT wants (and needs) to stay in control, SaaS sprawl is becoming cumbersome for even the most experienced teams.

Cloud application adoption and migration aren't showing any signs of slowing down, so SaaS sprawl is something you'll have to learn to deal with. Luckily, stopping SaaS sprawl in its tracks doesn't have to be so difficult.

SaaS Sprawl Isn't Necessarily a New Problem

Unless you got your start as an IT leader just as SaaS adoption began picking up, you've likely dealt with application control problems in the past.



Think back to the early 2000s, when enterprise resource planning (ERP) software implementation became the premier way for CIOs to impact their organizations. Using software to streamline and automate key business functions like finance and HR seemed like a great idea—but suddenly, niche business apps started to spread throughout the enterprise.

It wasn't long before key business data was sprawled across the organization and the complexities of managing this data sprawl became the biggest challenge for early-2000s CIOs.

Although it may feel as if those problems are long gone, they've returned in the form of SaaS sprawl. IT teams were lucky enough to watch vendors consolidate and integrated software suites like Microsoft Office and Google applications emerge to resolve the problems that ERP systems introduced.

But unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be a similar solution in sight for SaaS sprawl. Instead, there's a cloud-based application for every business need (no matter how small) and employees are taking full advantage.

On the one hand, employee productivity is on the rise as business users gain access to best-of-breed applications rather than compromising with a productivity suite. On the other hand, there are hundreds (or even thousands) of potential best-in-breed applications for each individual business function, and IT is tasked with securing, managing and monitoring them all. Small changes to IT management won't be enough to overcome SaaS sprawl challenges.

The first step to overcoming SaaS sprawl is understanding exactly which challenges you're dealing with.

4 Challenges That Make SaaS Sprawl So Frustrating

Trying to fix SaaS sprawl problems on an application-by-application basis will be fruitless. Instead, IT teams need to take a higher-level view of the challenges they face. Before trying to solve SaaS sprawl, understand the following four problems that can result from over-deployment of applications:

- 1. Losing Track of Your Data:** While SaaS sprawl simply refers to the ever-increasing number of cloud-based apps invading the enterprise, we can't forget about all the data that comes along with those applications. You already have millions of files stored throughout your business network. Introducing new applications leads to more files, and it certainly results in more data sharing. Can you guarantee IT visibility into all of this data and ensure it remains secure at all times? These are tall tasks that only become more difficult as more cloud-based apps come into play.
- 2. Managing an Increasingly Distributed Workforce:** From an employee perspective, the rise of SaaS applications makes it easier to work anywhere and at any time. But from an IT perspective, it means keeping track of even more network endpoints and trying to [maintain performance across remote and branch offices](#).
- 3. Staying on Top of Access Control:** SaaS sprawl is a security incident waiting to happen. If IT doesn't have a strong grasp on exactly what's going on across the enterprise network, there's no way to ensure application data is protected. And part of this conversation is access control. Understanding app ownership and access will help contextualize IT management.
- 4. Suffering Application Performance:** This is the primary concern when SaaS sprawl becomes unwieldy. For every SaaS app, there's a new SLA being introduced to IT. And while SLAs are supposed to give you an idea of the performance you can expect, it's impossible to manage them all if they overlap at every turn. There's only so much bandwidth to go around, and SLAs alone won't help you maximize performance (or employee productivity).

These aren't the kinds of problems that can be solved with another new application. They are deeper problems that require careful management. To effectively manage the impact of SaaS sprawl, you and your IT team need to maximize visibility across the network.

Visibility Is the Key to Keeping SaaS Sprawl in Check

The adoption of cloud-based applications isn't necessarily a problem—what's wrong with giving employees access to best-of-breed solutions that will keep them productive day-in and day-out?

The sprawl concept only happens with the sort of free-for-all of app deployments across the enterprise. But to reduce sprawl, you won't be able to take power away from employees to choose their own applications (at least not without diminishing workplace productivity and satisfaction). Instead, the solution is to maximize visibility into these apps and maintain central control over their resource utilization.

There are many different tools and techniques to accomplish these goals, but there are two main principles to keep in mind:

- **Internal SLAs Are No Longer Just Nice to Have:** The concept of an internal SLA isn't new. But business users have been opposed to them in the past because they seem to limit application performance and employee productivity. As so many new apps come onto your network, it's time to get everyone on board with internal SLAs. These agreements will keep you and the business users on the same page in terms of app performance, because you'll have set expectations from the start.
- **Quality of Service Enforcement Is Critical:** When you've set internal SLAs, you still need to make sure you have the tools necessary [to enforce QoS policies](#) throughout the enterprise network. It would be nice if enterprises had unlimited bandwidth to utilize, but the reality is that some of your applications will be more important than others. Set standards for mission-critical app performance and make sure the right apps are set to use the remaining bandwidth. Without this kind of proper QoS enforcement, your app performance will suffer, employees will be less productive and business results will diminish.

With continuous monitoring and automatic application identification, you can keep SaaS sprawl in check. The AppNeta platform was built with [SaaS and web application visibility in mind](#), so you can see every detail of app traffic and end-user experience.



ABOUT APPNETA

AppNeta is the only network performance monitoring solution that delivers deep, actionable, end-to-end network performance data from the end-user perspective. With AppNeta's SaaS-based solution, IT and Network Ops teams at large, distributed enterprises can quickly pinpoint issues that affect network and business-critical cloud application performance, regardless of where they occur. AppNeta is trusted by some of the biggest Fortune 1000 companies, including 3 out of the 5 largest corporations in the world, as well as 4 out of the 5 largest cloud providers. For more information, [visit www.appneta.com](http://www.appneta.com).

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