



 a higher state of eCommerce

**INFOPIA**

## Infopia Professional Services: Customizing the Software

### Executive Summary

Infopia is the industry leader in providing multi-channel, online selling solutions for eCommerce businesses. Incorporating best practices in eCommerce, Infopia serves wide ranges of clients, from start-ups to top eBay Power Sellers to multi-billion dollar corporations. Online merchants use Infopia to increase revenue, profitability, and customer satisfaction through:

- + Optimized product merchandising
- + Managing the buyer shopping experience
- + Maximizing online presence in premier marketplaces and comparison shopping engines, such as eBay, Amazon, Overstock.com, Shopping.com, Shopzilla, Yahoo! and Google.

Infopia delivers its software solution using the Software as a Service (SaaS) model. With this model, Infopia provides merchants with a complete solution that solves the challenges and mitigates the investments faced when installing and maintaining software and its required infrastructure. However, sometimes businesses require customizations to the Infopia solution. Infopia provides professional services for those clients who need additional or altered functionality.

This white paper describes the professional services provided by Infopia and the processes involved in realizing customizations to our software.

### Background

Historically, software has been expensive to deploy and maintain within a business. Software was installed on individual PCs and had to be regularly updated and patched. Companies hired technical staff dedicated to maintaining their software and its supporting infrastructure. Those who required custom functionality hired programmers to extend their software systems.

With the advent of Software as a Service (SaaS), this is changing. Large, internal staffs dedicated to developing and maintaining an infrastructure, are being replaced in favor of on-demand services. Software that used to be installed and maintained inside a business is available over a network and maintained by the software's supplier. Business data is also managed securely in world-class data centers that would be unaffordable for many businesses to implement independently.

The SaaS model can be extremely appealing to businesses because it is flexible and can drastically lower the costs of software solutions. SaaS providers use economies of scale to provide solutions that would be beyond any one company's ability to develop or maintain.

## Customizing inside the SaaS model

Because many companies share the same application, SaaS software is built from a “multi-tenant” perspective. When customizing inside the SaaS model, three critical impacts need to be considered:

- + **Functionality:** Because many businesses rely on the core functionality of Infopia’s product, what affects one business could potentially affect them all. Therefore, customizing SaaS software has some unique challenges, is more complex than it might appear, and can be more expensive than many anticipate.
- + **Reliability:** Any changes to SaaS solutions could impact performance, security, and uptime. Infopia prides itself on the reliability of its solution and its commitment to ensure our clients’ businesses function smoothly, 24/7.
- + **Maintainability:** Because customizations must interact with Infopia’s core multi-tenant solution, Infopia must maintain the customization, even as the SaaS solution is enhanced with new functionality. Customizations can affect functionality and must be considered when integrating with new partner solutions such as marketplaces, checkout systems, and ERP and CRM systems.

## When should you consider a customization?

Sometimes, software just doesn’t do what you need it to do. Perhaps your business has a special aspect to it that requires the software to be modified. Or you are changing your business model or logic, and there is no existing path in the software that accommodates those changes. Finally, you may simply want additional functionality that enables you to more effectively sell your products on your web site or online marketplaces.

In these cases, it may be time to consider customization through Infopia’s professional services organization. Because Infopia supports a large, diverse client base, and due to the unique aspects of the SaaS model discussed above, Infopia evaluates customization projects carefully. Our experience shows that these projects are often surprisingly resource-intensive. Consequently, there are a minimum number of hours required for any professional services request within the Infopia solution.

Ultimately, customizations make sense when their benefits to your business outweigh their costs. The questions to ask when considering professional services are:

- + Have we fully identified our business processes and worked with the software long enough to determine that it does not do what we want it to do?
- + Have we worked with Infopia’s implementation team to accomplish our aims without customization?
- + Will the customization make our internal business processes more efficient, affecting the bottom line?
- + What competitive differentiation will we achieve through customization? If there is no measurable differentiation, is it worth going forward?
- + If Infopia tailors the software, will we see a corresponding return on investment (ROI) that more than offsets the cost of the changes?
- + Is the customization part of Infopia’s Product Road Map for software development? Can we wait for it to be implemented as part of that effort?

## The customization process

If you determine that you require customization to the Infopia solution, the process begins to involve many aspects of Infopia's business.

Your first point of contact in this process is the professional services team, who works with you to define your business needs, pinpointing the changes that must be made in the software from your business' perspective.

After we've determined the scope of your changes, Infopia's technical team clarifies the customization points throughout our system, including user interfaces (UIs), data structures and queries, reports, and internal processes. Oftentimes, changes have ripple effects and involve multiple layers of our technology stack — from the Marketplace Manager display down to the very structure of our large production databases. The interplay between different components may not be obvious, and we research this carefully to avoid negatively impacting our other clients and system performance as a whole.

When a solid technical estimate is complete, you will be given an approximate cost of customization. This estimate includes the cost of scoping, implementing, testing, and maintaining your customizations. Because professional services requests affect so many aspects of Infopia's business, and because they can potentially affect a large number of other clients, the costs may be higher than you might expect.

If you decide to go ahead with customization, then Infopia works with you to implement the changes, thoroughly test them in our quality assurance environment, and provide you the opportunity to review the modifications or enhancements. Infopia then updates its infrastructure to make the customizations available to your business. Finally, behind the scenes, Infopia's technical team addresses the internal processes affected by the customizations. They then make the changes needed to support the new functionality, such as implementing tests and maintenance plans to ensure seamless, ongoing integration with the core product.

## Why doesn't Infopia just make the change? Other clients would love it!

Infopia is always evaluating potential changes and enhancements to the core product. We are also actively searching for ways to add new functionality to support our clients' core businesses.

Every week, these changes, enhancements, and new features are discussed by the Infopia Product Council. The council examines proposals from many viewpoints, including those of our clients and their customers, our partners, the many online marketplaces, our competitors, and a myriad of systems integrators.

After weighing all the requests and considerations, the Infopia Product Council prioritizes development efforts in the form of a Product Road Map, outlining the product development path for the months to come.

Some customization requests end up on the Product Road Map. However, for various reasons some requests may not mesh with the immediate Product Road Map and priorities. Therefore, when you need custom work done more quickly than the Product Road Map permits, you can bypass the Product Council by purchasing professional services.

## Contacting professional services

When you have determined that customization is necessary, contact your Infopia representative. We then work with you to outline the scope of your changes, and determine any derivative impacts that your changes may have on our system as a whole. When we agree on the work to be accomplished, we will work with you throughout the implementation and testing phase. After final acceptance of the implementation, it will be made available to you in our production environment, and will be maintained according to terms agreed upon at the beginning of the customization process.

## HIGH-LEVEL COMPANIES FIND INFOPIA'S HIGHER GROUND

*eBay*

*Salesforce.com*

*Overstock.com*

*uBid*

*Bid4Assets*

*Amazon.com*

*Google*

*Yahoo!*

*Shopping.com*

*Shopzilla*

*HammerTap*

*Oracle*

*UPS*

*FedEx*

*USPS*

*Google Checkout*

*PayPal*

*VeriSign*

*Authorize.Net*

*Cardservice International*

*ShipWorks*

## AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS:

*Breakthrough Application of the Year - Salesforce.com*

*Oracle-on-Demand Customer Advisory Board*

*eBay Star Developer 2004 and 2005*

*eBay Certified Solution Provider*

*eBay Advanced Solutions Program*

*eBay Developer's Program Member*

*Top Performer - Marketing Experiments Journal*

*Utah 100 - Fastest Growing Companies*

*Utah Business Magazine - Best Companies to Work For*

## LEARN MORE TODAY

See how Infopia can transform the destiny of your business. Contact one of our representatives, or visit our website for more details. And experience a higher level of eCommerce.

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