

Red Oak Compliance Software:

Helping IT Organizations Sleep Better at Night.

A view into the features and capabilities that Red Oak's software offers
IT groups to lower risk, reduce costs, and ensure IT policy adherence.



Introduction

As an IT leader, read the following narrative and see if it sounds familiar.

Recently, during a cross-functional project meeting, one of the top departmental executives submitted a project proposal to the group. The executive said that they had been researching a new business application to fulfill the expanding goals of the department. They further explained that they already had two demonstrations of the application, showed it to their users, and that the departmental users absolutely loved the application. They thought the application was extremely usable, would increase productivity, and increase quality while keeping departmental costs down. The executive continued to say that they would like the rest of the organization's stakeholders to perform some due diligence on the new proposed application with the hope that it would be chosen as the department's new solution.

For the next week, you began to research the application to see how it matched up with your organization's IT policies. During that time, you heard through the grapevine that all the other organizational stakeholders were going to give their vote of approval for the application at the next project status meeting. Unfortunately, during your investigation, you discovered a few issues in the vendor's deployment and data architecture which were either very unclear or placed squarely at odds with your organization's IT policies. As you completed your written assessment of the application, you felt disappointed and stressed because (yet again) your group was placed in a position where it would be forced to reject an application even though it met the needs of all other stakeholders in the organization because it could not address the needs of your corporate IT policies in a satisfactory way.

Sound familiar?

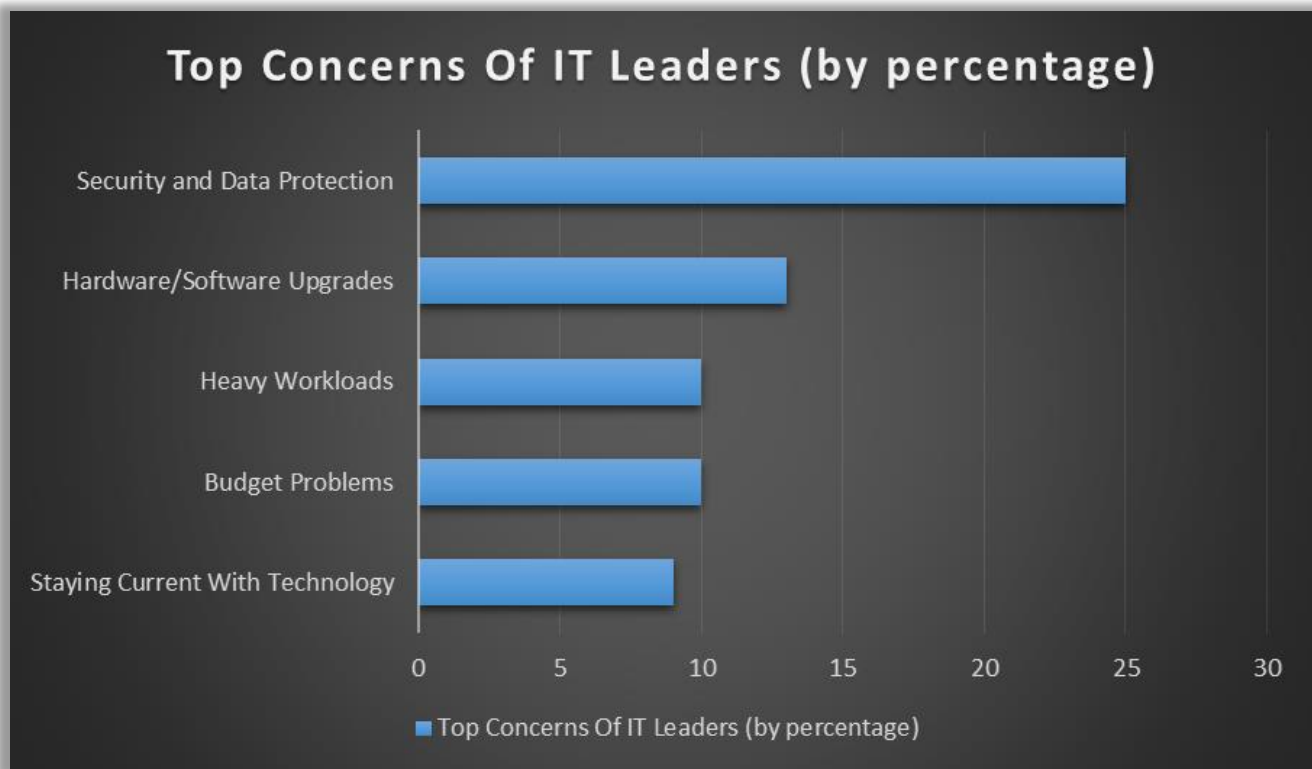
A frequent problem with enterprise application vendors is that many only focus on prioritizing features for their target departmental business users. As a result, IT departments have to do a lot of heavy lifting in order to glean nuggets of information about the enterprise application which address their own concerns around IT policies. Worse yet, IT organizations frequently come under huge pressure to give exceptions regarding their own policies and procedures in order to accommodate the increasing needs of departmental users. If applications vendors solely emphasize the features and benefits they give to business users, IT owners are left without a clear line of sight towards what options a vendor offers for IT to help them mold the application to fit their own policies and practices.

From the very beginning, Red Oak Compliance Software has been dedicated to the proposition that we never merely have a single departmental group as a customer. We have always worked hard to ensure that our software offers the features which satisfy not only the business end-users we serve, but also the other critical stakeholder groups within the entire organization – especially IT.

Things That Go Bump in the Night

How does an application vendor ensure that they offer a solution which not only satisfies the needs of their business users, but also the needs of IT groups? Vendors must do the research and become familiar with the things which truly keep IT leaders up at night.

The “CIO Insomnia Project” published the results of a worldwide survey of over 1,400 CIOs and IT leaders who were asked that exact question. The top five expressed concerns (by percentage) of those surveyed were as follows:



We’ve seen the data. We know what keeps IT leaders up at night. Red Oak’s software has the features and options needed by IT leaders to mold the application to meet the needs of their IT organization – whether large or small.

Security and Data Protection

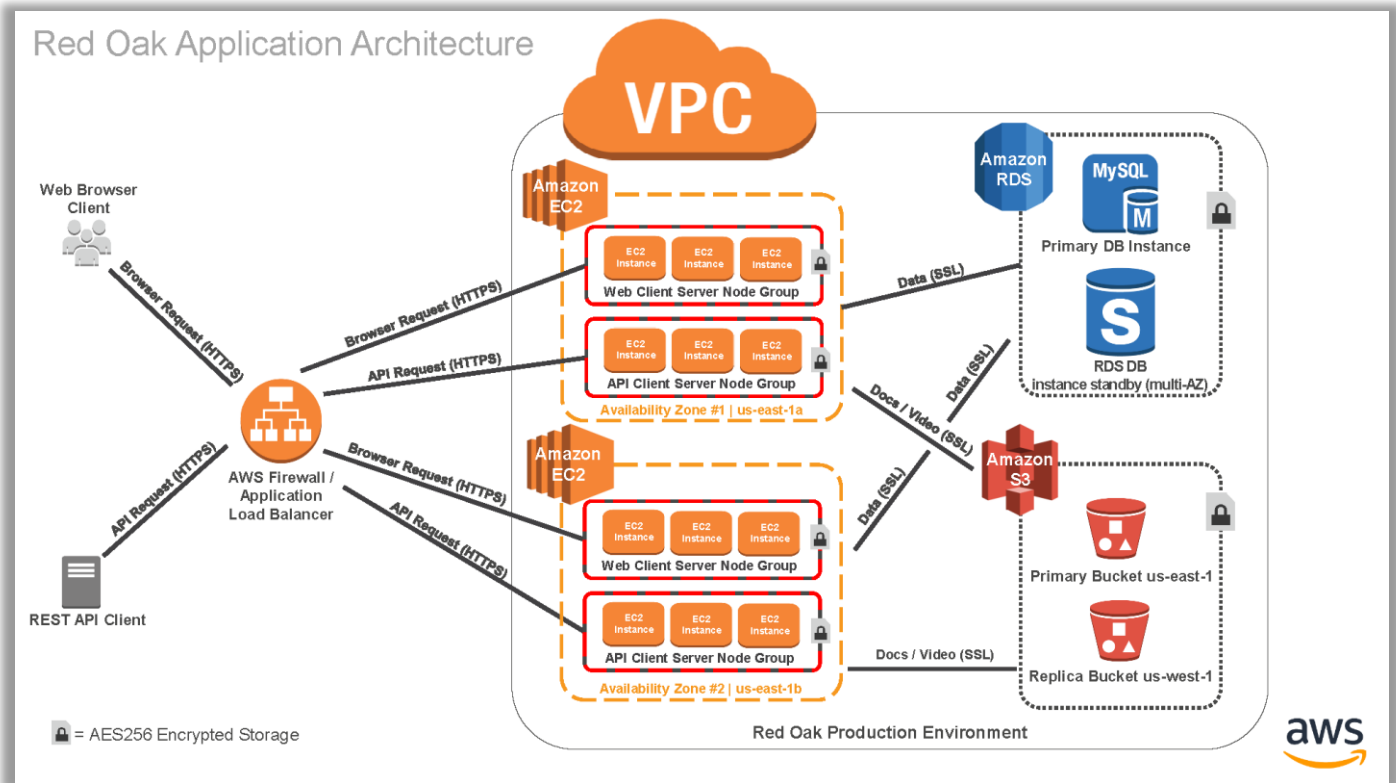
Many SaaS applications do not have the options for enterprises – both large and small – to customize their application to meet varying IT needs around security and data protection. Red Oak Compliance Software has taken care to make sure they offer the features that organizations need to tailor their implementation to meet their specific IT policies and practices.

Full Data Encryption, Isolation, Redundancy, and Network Protection

Many SaaS applications fall short of expectations by only providing a partial implementation of encryption with regards to their client data. Some vendors provide encryption in transit while having unencrypted data at rest. Some provide encryption at rest for only select pieces of their data set – while others remain unencrypted at rest.

Red Oak’s software architecture is built such that every piece of client data is encrypted while in transit (through strong SSL), and encrypted at rest using the strongest levels of AES encryption. This includes all unstructured documents and media files, and all relationship database data.

Red Oak’s software architecture is designed from the ground up to ensure that each component of the system is isolated from every other and that only secure transmission using SSL is permitted between system components. Moreover, every system and data component have multiple completely redundant hot standbys, in physically independent geographic area, ready-to-go in the event of an availability failure of any component. The application server has redundant standby application servers. The database has redundant standbys. Every single piece of client data is not only encrypted at rest, but also has a completely redundant backup copy ready to go in the event of an availability issue with a primary resource. All application system components are completely inaccessible from the public network or a DMZ and are protected by a Load Balancing Firewall which provides full stateful packet inspection (SPI).



Single-Sign On

Many IT groups have already taken steps necessary to centralize credential management and application authentication into a single Active Directory or LDAP server. If an organization chooses to use single-sign-on (SSO) and not to use Red Oak's native application authentication, then authentication can easily be integrated with any SAML-enabled SSO server. This is done without your IT organization poking any holes in their corporate firewall, requires no custom coding, and is completely adherent to current SAML standards.

We fully recognize that organizations may have some employees, contractors or third-parties who do not authenticate through a corporate Active Directory/LDAP server. As a result, Red Oak's single-sign-on gives IT owners the ability to have their users authenticate in a hybrid mode. It can be specified at the user-level whether or not a particular user can authenticate through SSO, through native Red Oak authentication, or using both methods.

Red Oak goes the extra mile to ensure user authentication can be configured to meet the specific authentication needs your IT organization might have for its business users.

Configurable Session Timeouts / Automatic Logout

A part of the data protection policy within many organizations includes strict standards that deal with automated session inactivity timeouts. Red Oak offers customers the ability to configure their business users' session inactivity timeouts to match their corporate requirements. You can be assured that if a user walks away from their desk that Red Oak will automatically log them out after the configured time period – keeping user's information and business data safe from unauthorized exposure.

Multi-Tenant or Single-Tenant Deployment Options

Red Oak's software utilizes a true multi-tenant architecture at all tiers. This allows the application to scale horizontally to massive levels for performance and redundancy purposes. With our default multi-tenant deployment, the data for all tenants is hosted inside a single, redundant, and secure data store. Each critical record is logically isolated by tenant identifiers within the data store and our redundant persistence tier is programmed to be unable to serve data from one tenant client to another. Our multi-tenant deployment environment is also the most highly-available (HA) because we have multiple hot failover environments which allow for transparent failover/disaster-recovery in the event of failures.

Even though our customers generally prefer to be hosted in our multi-tenant production environment, we fully recognize that some organizations may insist on being hosted in a single-tenant environment. As a result, Red Oak also offers the option for a customer to have their tenant deployed on an isolated server where all its resources and data will be isolated from any other tenants. In this situation, a customer can be guaranteed that all data, documents, and resources are in a totally isolated environment, and still enjoy the same quality and upgrade-proof updates that our multi-tenant customers enjoy. Both multi and single-tenant customers can be provided with a test tenant (sand box) that they can use to configure workflows and configurations, API code, try them out and ask us to migrate portions to their production environment when ready.

Industry Standard Vulnerability Testing and Certification

Many application providers will attest that they have performed extensive internal vulnerability testing and will self-certify that their application has a high level of protection against external vulnerabilities. But what assurances does a customer have that the application provider has done adequate testing? Or that the latest vulnerabilities have been tested? Or that steps and measures have been taken to ensure that the application and surrounding infrastructure has been protected?

Red Oak Compliance Software addresses these concerns by having extensive vulnerability tests performed on their production environment by a trusted third-party – TrustWave – who is a highly-reputable industry leader in managed security services. Even though Red Oak does not store payment card information, our application goes the extra mile and has achieved PCI-DSS vulnerability compliance through TrustWave. Upon request, Red Oak will provide a written attestation from TrustWave that certifies Red Oak’s software as PCI compliant. IT owners can feel confident that Red Oak is not a third-party application they need to worry about when it comes to security.

Hardware and Software Upgrades

Right next to security and data protection, hardware/software upgrades are the most critical and complex concern that any IT organization has. Red Oak helps IT owners sleep easier by shouldering the load of all this complexity.

Hardware Upgrades

Red Oak’s software is completely cloud-based. We partner with the world-renowned hosting provider, Amazon Web Services, to ensure our servers, hardware, and networking are always up-to-date, highly-available, and meeting the needs of our customers. We work with Amazon’s award-winning services teams to easily scale our infrastructure when necessary to stay ahead of the curve and ensure that our SLAs are met or exceeded.

Software Upgrades

Red Oak has always used an Agile approach towards software development and deployment. To that end, being Agile means that we deliver high-quality enhancements and fixes very frequently. This helps ensure that our changes are small and greatly reduces the risk of surprises to our customers. We never deploy “big bang” disruptive changes. Every production deployment has a small number of valuable nuggets that benefit all our users. By delivering updates to our software in this fashion, it helps us ensure a quick feedback loop with our customers. We always welcome feedback and are eager to make course adjustments when necessary. These values are built into our processes. Our highly iterative approach to deployment and quality also allow us to more easily keep current with security updates, patches, and fixes at all levels of our production infrastructure.

Every one of our deployments are guaranteed to be “upgrade-proof”. That means that every fix and enhancement we make to our software will work with any existing workflows or configurations you have built. All our customers run on the same version of software. The architecture of the application is primarily metadata-based which means

that the behavior of each customer's installation is preserved in a series of robust configurations instead of custom code.

Heavy Workloads

Enterprise applications have the potential to put huge additional workload (both hardware and human) on already heavily-burdened IT organizations. Red Oak has capabilities specifically designed to lift the repetitive administrative burden from IT groups.

Elastic Architecture That Grows as You Grow

In varying ratios, storage, network bandwidth, and compute cycles (CPU utilization) are the items which are stressed in any application – including Red Oak's software. With many on-premises and SaaS applications, increasing demands for storage, networking, or CPUs require high amounts of manual intervention and system outages to address those needs. Red Oak's software has been architected from the ground-up as a true cloud-based solution such that the allocation of needed storage, networking, and compute resources is highly elastic. That is, the underlying resources used by the platform can easily be scaled as an organization's needs expand – with no disruption of service. Being a true "cloud-based" application means more than simply being hosted off-premises. It also means that an application goes to great lengths to leverage cutting-edge cloud technology with regards to adding computer, networking, and storage resources with no downtime. IT organizations can rest easy knowing that Red Oak's software wasn't designed to use a fixed level of resources and then scale in a static way. Rather, it was designed to scale to certain compute, network, and storage thresholds and then scale elastically and automatically, in a horizontal way, to accommodate the increasing needs of organizations.

Departmental-Specific Configuration Targeted at Business Owners

Red Oak's software has an easy-to-use and intuitive administration user interface that we target at departmental managers and business owners to use for altering the behavior of the application. If necessary, departmental owners can easily configure workflows, data visibility, user profiles, data access, and user permissions by themselves. Red Oak works directly with departmental owners to train them on how to configure their system to meet their business needs without needing to involve IT owners. Because we are also subject-matter experts, our team can ensure that departmental owners configure their instance to meet the exact business objectives they are aspiring to achieve. Red Oak readily shares best-practices.

Robust REST API for Workflow Interaction, Data Extraction and User Provisioning

Red Oak is completely compliant with SEC Rule 17a-4, so there never is a regulatory need for a customer to keep a copy of their data behind their corporate firewall. However, if an IT group has a requirement to keep a local copy of their data, it can easily be extracted using standard automation tools through our well-documented, robust REST API. Every piece of metadata surrounding submissions, activity logs, and documents can be downloaded through our REST API by writing simple scripts or programs.

Moreover, if an IT group has a procedure for automating the provisioning of users in the event of new hires, terminations, or departmental changes, this can also be easily done through our REST API and tied directly into existing IT automated user provisioning processes.

Many times, Red Oak's software is integrated with either an upstream marketing asset system or a downstream asset library. This type of integration is also easily performed with Red Oak's robust submission interaction API which allows regulatory legal and compliance to be easily added to existing business processes in between existing departmental marketing or job tracking systems.

Full End-User Support

Red Oak Compliance Software provides full support for end-users. In most implementations, customers will designate a "go-to" departmental person internally who will field questions by users. We serve as the next level of escalation for any issues that our customers' end-users might have. It is very rare that IT needs to get involved in any kind of end-user issue because the vast majority of issues are either training-related or configuration-related – all of which can be handled by departmental owners without involving IT.

Deployment and Configuration Targeted at Departmental Owners

Most enterprise applications – even though they are targeted towards business users – have deployment architectures and configuration tooling which can only be managed and used by advanced IT users. Red Oak's software was built from the ground up to ensure that the deployment activities require very little (if any) IT involvement. The only reason IT may need to get involved is to merely ensure that features are properly enabled to assure that the organizational IT policies and practices are met. The user-interface for the application configuration was created in a way where departmental owners can easily manage it themselves. All the rest of the concerns around infrastructure and support are taken on by the team here at Red Oak Compliance Software.

Keeping Current with Technology

IT groups must constantly worry about whether hardware and software they support are keeping up with changing trends in technology. Seemingly small updates to things like standards, drivers, and productivity software can cause a massive amount of additional workload that an IT team must take on. Bringing the configuration management and scaling of on-premise enterprise applications as an additional IT responsibility – especially when it comes to hardware, software, infrastructure, and operating system upgrades – can make this load almost too much to bear.

The architectural approach used by Red Oak takes all these worries away from IT organizations. Our cloud-based infrastructure is built to ensure that it can be easily scaled. All the redundancy, business-continuity, and disaster recovery procedures are handled. The iterative and Agile update model we use ensures high quality, small incremental changes, and removes the worry about "big bang" disruptive feature drops. When new browser versions are released, or existing browser versions updated, we test all of these to ensure that our application works properly on all clients. As it should be, the IT departments of organizations who use our software can continue

uninterrupted in their primary mission – tending to the actual IT needs of the organization as a whole – instead of having to take on departmental responsibilities as a part of their everyday work.

Budget Problems

Frequently, departmental applications result in substantial additional budget load that must be borne by IT groups.

Pricing Strategy Built with Departmental Operating Budgets in Mind

Red Oak uses a pricing and billing model that is intended to be very compatible with the way the departmental budgets work within organizations. Recurring application charges are based upon the departmental usage of the application as opposed to IT/Infrastructure-oriented charges that the application must bear – there are no storage fees, hardware utilization fees, or infrastructure support fees. Since our billing model is volume/subscription-based, our fees require only a single initial capital expenditure for setup purposes. The remaining expenditures generally fall under the operating expense budgets of the department(s) that use the application. IT groups never have to worry about taking on additional operating or capital budget load.

Summary

At Red Oak Compliance Software, our highest priority is meeting the needs of the customers we serve. We strongly believe that our customer is not merely a single departmental group. A vendor cannot sufficiently serve an organization unless they address relevant needs and concerns from any departments and stakeholders involved. Too often, enterprise application vendors ignore the needs of IT groups and depend almost solely on internal departmental pressure and momentum to drive adoption of their solutions. This approach towards selling and adoption is not only short-sighted, but also can bring significant risk and cost to consumer organizations as a whole. We are not in the business of solving one problem and giving two additional problems in return for IT organizations to solve.

We have worked hard to offer features which are not merely targeted at business users. Within an organization, we know that enforcing proper IT policies and practices are critical to ensuring the successful application of technical solutions with regards to security, risk mitigation, and financial costs. Our software has the features and capabilities IT owners need to ensure that their mission can be fulfilled without compromise, undue additional cost, or sleepless nights.

Contact us today to find out why IT groups are recommending Red Oak's software to their organizations as the best solution for meeting departmental regulatory workflow needs.



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