

Platform Options for Xtendable Customers

Web Application Platforms Available Today

If you Google “web application framework” you’ll find thousands of sites that describe a sea of solutions designed to make creating web sites secure and easy. It wasn’t always that way. In fact when Xtendable was created by DefenseWeb (later nLiven) it was one of the very few frameworks for rapidly developing secure websites. Simply put, a web application framework is a set of software tools that work together to reduce the overhead and cost involved in developing web applications. Xtendable, like other frameworks of its kind, offered a set of “modules” that allowed developers to rapidly assemble a set of discrete business functions into a complete application. Another key characteristic of Xtendable and web application frameworks of its time is that connections between the database and the application are abstracted so that the web application developer didn’t have to be a database guru to build dynamic, database driven web sites.

Today, if you’re a Xtendable customer, you’re likely looking to switch to a different platform because Xtendable is fast approaching end of life. In this article we compare Xtendable’s features to current leading web application frameworks and platforms. There are hundreds if not thousands of “web application platforms” out there and comparing them all is not all that useful. We instead selected a few that provide some key functions we know all Xtendable customers expect, namely:

- Support for customer facing, self service portals with image and document libraries, calendars, discussion forums and responsive design.
- The ability to manage case files that pertain directly to incidents and/or people.
- The ability to support complex workflows that require input from a variety of stakeholders inside and outside of the organization.
- Robust security that protects the Personal Health Information (PHI) and Personally Identifiable Information(PII) held in the system.
- The ability to generate reports and documents in standard formats set by the organization, the DoD or civilian federal agencies.

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- Open source, standards based platform that reduces incidence of “vendor lock”, increases opportunities for innovation and fits within the limited budgets these programs face.
- Can be hosted behind or in front of the agency firewall depending on need.

Drupal is among the most popular web based Content Management System platforms in the open source sector. Initially developed as a bulletin board in 1999, Drupal became an open source project in 2000 making it one of the earliest platforms to emerge in this space. Drupal is commonly associated with the LAMP stack of technologies that include Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP, but the platform has ports for IIS, SQL Server and Oracle as well. There is a large international developer community supporting this platform. Xtendable customers looking for a Content Management System, portal application would do well to consider Drupal.

WordPress started in 2003 with a single bit of code to enhance the typography of everyday writing and with fewer users than you can count on your fingers and toes. Since then it has grown to be the largest self-hosted blogging tool in the world, used on millions of sites and seen by tens of millions of people every day. Today WordPress is more than just a blogging tool; millions of users leverage this open source tool to create rich, responsive, data driven web content management systems.

SugarCRM Community Edition fulfills the case management requirements of Xtendable users. SugarCRM is a Customer Relationship Management platform that allows organizations to focus on the individual and the cases, incidents and activities surrounding them. Three Wire Systems’ VetAdvisor Veteran Relationship Management Platform is based on SugarCRM to provide a secure, flexible platform for case management in non-clinical coaching applications. What SugarCRM lacks is a robust portal solution to deliver rich content and interactive experiences to the customer. SugarCRM answers that problem with a rich community of developers that publish custom modules and interconnections to a variety of portal systems. SugarCRM is written in PHP and is generally associated with LAMP stack applications.

DotNetNuke Community edition is an open source Content Management System originally built by Microsoft as a reference application showcasing the power of .Net. After rapid adoption of the platform by a wide community of developers, Microsoft released the project to the open source community that has made it a rich platform with a large development community. Today DNN supports a commercial version of the platform so adopters have a full spectrum of support from the open source community edition all the way up to a commercially supported professional and enterprise versions.

SplendidCRM Community Edition is a .Net port of SugarCRM’s popular open source Customer Relationship Management solution. Splendid uses SugarCRM icons and terminology but is



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developed on a completely new code base. SplendidCRM is an ideal CRM choice for organizations that have an existing investment in Microsoft technologies like MS Office, Exchange and Sharepoint but want the freedom to customize and configure the application to meet their unique needs.

How do you choose the right platform to replace Xtendable?

Clearly Xtendable provided a variety of features that don't fit neatly into a readily available COTs portal platform or case management tool. Xtendable's strength was the breadth of its offerings as a platform and as a case management solution. Luckily, interface standards like ReST and SOAP enable us to combine two or more solutions to create a safe, secure and speedy replacement to nearly all legacy Xtendable systems.

At Three Wire, we're convinced that the CRM is the right technology stack for solving most case management problems. We cover that issue elsewhere, but given our belief in CRM and Xtendable's .Net legacy SplendidCRM is a natural choice. Couple SplendidCRM with a .Net based open source portal platform like DotNetNuke Community Edition and you have a compelling offering that leverages the speed, responsiveness and security of modern platforms with a solid framework to deliver on the promise that Xtendable once provided.

