



Software in Thailand for 2010: An IT Pros Viewpoint

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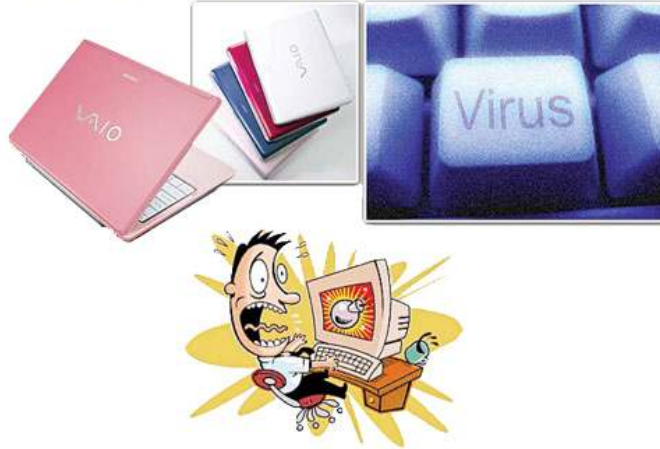
BANGKOK, January 8, 2009 –The start of every year is a sensible time for business people to reflect on the last twelve months and to make resolutions to better themselves and their businesses in the year ahead.

For those of us in the software and IT industry in Thailand, the start of the year is no different.

With that said, I've compiled a list of observations, resolutions and predictions about things happening in Thailand's software and IT industry that I think will be important to business people in 2010.

- One topic that is sure to remain a hot-button in 2010 is the debate over open source software and proprietary software. Open source software is being promoted by some as the free and easy way to avoid the legal ramifications of software piracy. We have helped companies in Thailand implement open source software systems. It is without a doubt, better than violating software copyrights. However, people should know —as the saying goes—there is no such thing as a free lunch. The reality is that open source software applications for business come with their own costs, which may be more or less than those for comparable proprietary software, depending on the circumstances.
- For those companies that are considering using open source software, here's what I think you should know. First, recognize that while there may be financial savings in initial costs, this must be weighed against challenges in learning a new software system, challenges collaborating with clients, challenges in moving data to your new open source system and, finally, challenges in finding capable service. These challenges can be overcome with time, but I think it's only fair that business people considering open source software know what hurdles they will face.

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- One thing that has given me hope for 2010 is the Thai government making efforts to implement economic policies that leverage intellectual property rights. Thailand has the talent, the creativity and the youthful energy to make new products the world will want. The Creative Economy policies and stimulus package are promising, and we encourage all of our colleagues in the IT industry to support this agenda. As an entrepreneurial company, we have seen first-hand the way piracy can drain the enthusiasm from young software developers. My wish is that the Creative Economy will foster an atmosphere in which software innovators can thrive.
- I am also hopeful that in 2010 we will continue to see the growing enforcement of software intellectual property rights in Thailand. Since the founding of our business, we have refused to provide IT consultation to any company that fails to fully license its software. Ethical reasons aside, our rationale for requiring our clients to use genuine software is that it is impossible for us to secure pirated software. We don't want to be blamed for security lapses—so our policy is to steer clear of companies that use unlicensed software.
- Now that the Great Recession of 2009 appears to be behind us, I resolve to encourage all business people in Thailand to assess their IT systems and software assets, and consider making investments for the year ahead.

An average company spends about 5 percent of its operating costs on software and IT. Given the value that software and IT provides to business, this is one of the best investments a company can make.

- I foresee security issues remaining a serious issue for the business community in the year ahead. Spammers, hackers, creators of malicious software—they operate in growing numbers, and we all need to prepare our IT systems to withstand their attacks.
- There is a growing chorus among some policymakers to promote open source software over and above other forms of software. I agree that open source software serves a purpose and I am fully supportive of government support for the software and IT industries. But government favoritism for one type of business over another can be counter productive and actually undermine the growth of the Thai software industry. There is a lot of great Thai talent making a wide range of software products. They should all be given an equal and fair amount of government support.
- My last observation is one that I share with clients and colleagues annually: Back up your data. After your people, your computer data is your most valuable asset. Yet every year, 30 percent of all PCs lose all their files, often due to events beyond their control. For the sake of your business, make a small investment of time and energy to get your company fully backed up.

As I look ahead, I am excited and energized by the possibilities for Thailand's software and IT industry. I have always felt that Thailand has the natural ingenuity and competitive spirit to become a world class developer of intellectual property in the IT industry. And now, with the momentum created by the government to get the public and business community thinking about the possibilities that exist in intellectual property development, I am more optimistic than ever about the years ahead.

(SafeComs is a software development and web security solutions company for small and medium sized businesses in Thailand. For more information, SafecomS may be reached by email at info@safecomS.com)