Web-Based Versus Web-Enabled

Web-Based Applications
Microsoft's new .Net technology has created a paradigm shift in the software business. The basis of computing has become web-centric as a result of the benefits received when utilizing web technology. This change is as significant as the move from DOS to Windows, and the introduction of PC's into a mainframe environment.

Thriving Versus Surviving
Web-based products are thriving. Their proven Return-on-Investment (ROI) and lower Total Cost of Ownership (TOC) than traditional client/server based counterparts cannot be disputed.

The formula to assess ROI and TOC has also changed because web-based products allow for the investment and ownership costs to be distributed across multiple departments. Business improvements and savings are also recognized across the entire organization's bottom line. These improvements and savings are ongoing as your business grows and expands adoption of web-based applications since the deployment is not IS resource intensive and there is no large initial investment.

The 3 Defining Rules of Web-Based Products
1) Web-based applications require only a web browser, security, and access to the web site, (intranet or Internet) for a user to connect and use the product.
2) Web-based products do not require any additional client/server companion products to set up, maintain, or use the product.
3) The product resides on a web server.
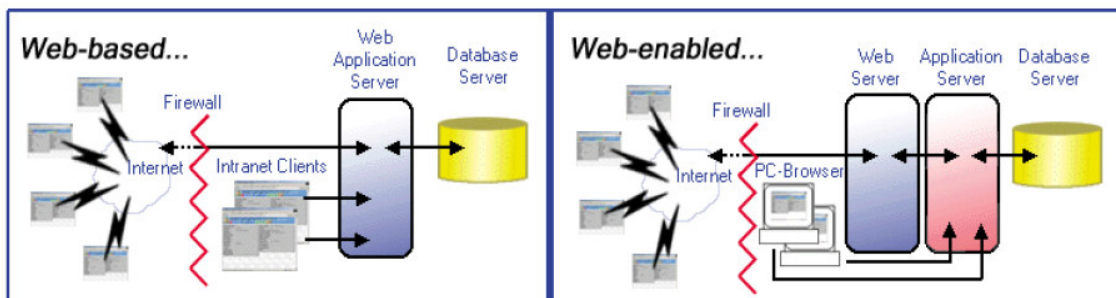
Common Signs of a Web Enabled Application

A limited set of functions or capabilities are available in the web browser product.
Terms to describe web-enabled products are web viewer, web component, or web front end.
The product requires an additional product or 'component', which is the traditional client/server application.
The product cannot 'stand on its own' and 'cannot exist' without its counterpart.
Web-enabled products are typically first generation initiatives by companies to provide some form of limited access to their original client/server programs.

Benefits of Web Technology

Easy to Install: Web-based applications are installed centrally on a single server. In an enterprise environment, this means saving tens of thousands of dollars because there is no need to visit each user PC to install the software.

No Driver Conflict: Maintaining a client/server network is difficult because you must install software on each PC. This often means hours of labor during the installation process and after the fact to ensure that there are no driver conflicts among the applications installed on the PC.

Lower Database Licensing Cost: A web-based product changes the database licensing cost from a per-seat model to a concurrent user model. This results in decreased deployment costs ranging from 25 to 75 percent. This will result in a savings of several thousands of dollars in an enterprise environment.

Easier On-going Maintenance: New releases of the software are installed at a central server, eliminating the need to update each workstation. This significantly reduces the on-going maintenance costs.

Reduced Training Costs: End users are already familiar with their browser and its functionality. This provides a familiar starting point for the end user making it easier for them to adapt to a web-based system.

Minimizes Network Traffic: A true web-based product operates efficiently in a network environment by minimizing the volume of transactions moving up and down the network. Users of the system receive only the information they need. Procedures stored on the network do all the database work which minimizes the amount of horsepower needed at the client PC.

Web-Enabled

A review of tracking system solutions on the market today will show that almost all companies, with the exception of WINN Solutions WITS Tracking System, claim to have web-based software when, in fact, they only have web-enabled software. The browser-based modules they deploy generally have very limited capabilities. All of the core functionality is still in their traditional client/server products.

Web Enablement

The world is moving very rapidly towards web-based products and ones that are web-enabled will not survive and are rapidly being pushed out of the market by newer, more-powerful products. Web-enabled products suffer some major deficiencies that will create significant problems for the groups that deploy them. These problems include:

Out-dated Approach: A web-enabled product merely continues the traditional approach to tracking. Items are entered using a centralized approach with a traditional software product. This information is then made available to the intranet for viewing and requesting.

Second Product Required: A web-enabled product only provides partial functionality.

Training: Deployment of a web-enabled product has a major impact on training. You will need to train on two very different platforms: a traditional client/server product for managing the content and a browser based product for viewing, searching, and requesting. One objective of an enterprise system is to 'keep it simple'. This means providing all the necessary functionality to the end user in a single package.

Greater Cost of Deployment: In an enterprise application, web-enabled products are far more expensive to deploy because they will also require the installation of the fat-client component. The more users you have, the greater the deployment cost will be. Cost of deployment will also increase due to more database licenses required and the costs incurred from installing the product on every client PC.

Replacement: Web-enabled applications have limited life in the market. They will eventually be replaced by more robust web-based products. Product replacement is always an issue with end users because the new version will have a different look and feel along with a new set of functions. When you upgrade you will have to obtain more training and deal with the disruption of a new system all over again. This problem can be completely avoided by going to a web-based product immediately.