Silverlight: the Technology Behind OPUS

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If you've seen OPUS in action, then you've seen Silverlight. We've been using Silverlight, a Microsoft technology for web browsers, for the last couple of years, to add powerful new features to and a greater level of flexibility in the software used by advisors throughout the insurance sales process.

Silverlight works on the Internet very much like a web page: Dynamic images, complex data analysis, scalable text, zoomable charts, seamless video… these are just a few of the features which OPUS takes advantage of in Silverlight. Using a Silverlight application such as OPUS is easy for the user, with no special setup or installation required, only a single plug-in, and it behaves the same way in all major web browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome and Safari.

As a result, developers favour Silverlight for their applications, taking advantage of Microsoft's commitment to enhance OOB or "out of browser" experience. OOB is rapidly erasing the lines between web and desktop applications. This triggers a financial advantage to organizations that will only have to pay the cost for development of one solution to get both web and desktop/disconnected applications. Effectively this means the same programming languages, techniques, tools and files work both for making web applications and desktop/disconnected applications.

Other development advantages include direct XAML interpretation, which enables search engines to index text within a Silverlight application. Silverlight also gives OPUS the ability to download all calculations and associated files to the client. When OPUS runs, all calculations are executed locally on the client side greatly improving performance compared to the client-server round trips required in traditional development approaches. This vastly speeds up the sales process for the carrier, the advisors and their clients.

The future for Silverlight is looking bright! Microsoft is actively improving Silverlight and extending it to new places, such as cell phones and TVs. Many other companies are working to add new features to Silverlight, such as advanced visualization and graphics. Some of these are in OPUS already, and more will be coming in the near future!

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