

# Parallels® System Automation

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White Paper

## Professional Services

[www.parallels.com](http://www.parallels.com)

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## Introduction

Service providers differentiate themselves through pricing, branding, unique service bundling, customer support, superior service delivery, and unique product offerings. Excellence in any one of these areas can lead to market differentiation and a competitive advantage. Gaining this advantage requires flexible systems and frequently involves custom integration and development. For this reason, companies need to weigh the costs of customization with benefits of unique product offerings.

The Parallels System Automation solution from Parallels delivers a platform that can be customized to support virtually any method of differentiation. Parallels System Automation can be utilized “out of the box” for rapid deployment, or customized by Parallels professionals or service providers to create unique and differentiated offerings. Parallels System Automation offers a common programming framework, including APIs and an SDK that can be utilized to customize business processes, workflows, and services. After deployment, Parallels System Automation remains flexible, thereby increasing the service provider’s ability to adapt to change.

### **Parallels Automation Software + Parallels Services = Optimized Delivery**

This paper will discuss how to maximize profits by taking advantage of professional services that are offered by Parallels. Providers should take an objective look when weighing the benefits of customization against the costs of professional services. Core service offerings include:

- Installation services
- Customization services
- Integration services
- Migration services

Related offerings for Parallels System Automation that are equally as critical to success are:

- Training
- Support
- Customer Relationship

Each implementation of Parallels System Automation is a multi-phased project involving both business and technical resources to ensure success. Most Parallels System Automation implementations involve some degree of customization to deliver unique services or to integrate with an existing infrastructure. Different types of services require different levels of involvement from Parallels.

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## Parallels Services and Knowledge Transfer

Parallels System Automation includes a fully documented application programming interface (API) and a software development kit (SDK) for providers who want to perform their own customization. However, we recommend joint participation with Parallels in order to benefit from the knowledge transfer that leads to a seamless launch and successful ongoing maintenance. The interaction between engineers is an important part of the education, partnering, and learning process.

Working with experts who understand the tools and goals of the solution is important when installing a customizable automation platform such as Parallels System Automation. Installing an automation solution without contacting experts is analogous to creating a web page using only basic HTML commands. In either case, your solution will work, but your solution will provide a much richer user experience when customized for your audience. In the case of HTML, this could involve adding flash animation, java scripts, etc. In the case of Parallels System Automation, Parallels experts can implement unique product bundles, new services, and customized business processes.

### PARALLELS COMPANY STRENGTH

Parallels has acquired deep industry knowledge from over five years in the application hosting space, including thousands of successful customer installations throughout the world. Parallels' focused, proven experience, has helped customers achieve maximum returns on their IT investments.

The company and people behind solutions and services such as Parallels System Automation are critical. Parallels is well financed, growing, and profitable. Parallels already has sizeable revenue streams from several products for the hosting market, including Parallels Plesk Control Panel, Virtuozzo, Parallels Plesk Sitebuilder, Parallels Business Automation - Standard, and Parallels System Automation. Parallels continues to grow responsibly using its revenue and positive cash flow to fund research and development investment, with much of it dedicated to Parallels System Automation design, development, testing, support, and services.

Parallels has been able to outpace its competitive solutions and reach greater customer and market success despite lower investment levels, giving future customers the confidence that we will continue to grow, aggressively innovate and deeply support and stand by our customers with our Parallels System Automation solution.

A critical component of Parallels' strength is the balance between top talent in the United States complemented by access to high quality engineers in Russia. Many of our founders and key employees are affiliated with Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT) which is the top engineering school in Russia and one of the top technical training grounds in the world.

## Parallels Engineering Organization

Parallels' engineering organization is deeply involved with customer support. As of January 2006, Parallels has the largest and most advanced development team, with over 500 expert engineers. The vast majority of our company's people resources are dedicated to engineering covering development, testing/QA, support, and services. Our engineering team includes substantial contributors to Linux and have over 20 patents pending. To ensure this large base of high quality engineering talent is focused on the right R&D, a large number of the engineers travel regularly to meet with customers to fully understand and validate requirements and priorities for further R&D investment. More information on several of our senior engineers is available on our website at <http://www.parallels.com/en/company/team>.

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## Installation Services

Parallels installation services include more than software installation and configuration. During this time, Parallels gets to know the customer's business model while the customer learns how to configure and manage the Parallels System Automation solution. Knowledge transfer is a key component of installation services and is closely tied to training.

The phases of a Parallels System Automation installation typically involve the following:

- Analysis and Design
  - Project owner assignment
  - Integration points internally and externally (applications, information, flow, owners, protocols)
  - Migration path
  - Discovery of additional product functionality/capabilities needed
  - Definition of adjustments to existing product functionality/capabilities
  - Analysis of third party applications to be packaged with solution
  - Determination of visual/GUI customizations with priority ordering and weighting
  - Identification of risks to mitigate as well as escalation paths
- Documentation and confirmation of the functional/business description of the solution to be built
- Estimation of time and resources (including phases, milestones and deliverables)
- Development of missing functionality and adjusted functionality, integration, and customization with early customer access and feedback
- Comprehensive testing of built system including numerous checklists, testing cases, and a security review
- Installation and configuration of the production system with one or more onsite engineers. This phase also encompasses pre-installation preparation, installation, and post installation testing and follow-up. It also includes necessary training.

The process can be modified to include extra steps or delete processes that are not applicable in each situation.

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## Customization Services

Customers receive the maximum benefit from Parallels System Automation when they customize the solution to meet specific market needs. Customization improves service differentiation and can provide features that benefit a specific market niche or have wider appeal. Many of the Parallels System Automation technical innovations have been developed in conjunction with customers who needed to architect specific solutions.

Parallels System Automation customization is most effective when performed with the assistance and guidance of Parallels engineers. By leveraging Parallels' product and industry knowledge, customizations can be made without pursuing dead-end development paths. Previous Parallels System Automation customizations have involved the following:

The phases of a Parallels System Automation installation typically involve the following:

- Changing Parallels System Automation functionality or processes to fit a customer's specific business needs
- Defining the required Parallels System Automation configuration
- Customizing visual aspects of the solution (colors, logos, images, layouts, screen behavior)
- Addressing visual customization of 3rd party applications involved in the solution
- Developing additional product functionality or capabilities

Customization can include several modules within Parallels System Automation. The billing system, the provisioning processes, the control panels, as well as various interfaces and operational support processes need to be considered. Parallels experts can quickly help you determine the key areas that need to be modified.

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## Integration Services

Parallels System Automation provides a complete operations support system and billing support system; however, some providers prefer to integrate with existing systems that are already familiar to users. Integration may also be desirable if the cost of migrating customers will be more expensive than the cost of integration services.

Parallels System Automation is a distributed, modular, multi-tier hosting automation platform that includes built in connectivity using open, standard technologies. Parallels System Automation's flexible architecture allows enterprises to make efficient connections internally, as well as with customers, suppliers, and business partners.

Parallels service experts already have experience integrating a broad range of systems and applications into a Parallels System Automation solution, including:

- Customer care (trouble ticketing, FAQ)
- Billing/accounting/ERP systems
- Domain registration
- Monitoring and statistics systems
- Online payment systems
- Third-party services (site builders, webmail)
- Service provisioning systems
- Existing control panels

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## Migration Services

Migration Services help providers running solutions consolidate their server infrastructures onto the Parallels System Automation platform. Migration Services has helped customers migrated customers from internally build systems as well as from 3rd party providers.

### MAXIMIZING RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Updating systems has always been an expensive proposition for providers both in real costs and potentially in goodwill and opportunity costs. Poorly planned migrations can result in dissatisfied customers. These customers may increase customer support costs or leave your service.

Well planned migrations will minimize support time so technical personnel can remain focused on innovation instead of customer support.

Our migration services can help with moving to Parallels System Automation from the following products:

- Custom coded in-house systems
- Competitive products
- Parallels products  
(Parallels Plesk Control Panel, Parallels Confixx, Parallels Business Automation - Standard)

Parallels System Automation migrations typically address:

- System configuration migration
  - Physical server configuration
  - Services such as web servers, mail servers and database servers
  - Customer services such as website and mailboxes
- Customer content migration
  - Web content
  - SSL certificates
  - Databases
  - Mail
  - Other files
- Business data migration
  - Customer account information
  - Billing data
  - Hosting plans
  - Other data

## BEST PRACTICES FOR MIGRATION

There are several published papers on “best practices” during customer migrations. The list below is a summary of the most important factors to consider during a customer control panel migration.

**1. Involve Parallels** specialists in the beginning stages of the Analysis and Design. A thorough system analysis by a Parallels specialist is important at identifying potential costs and hazards.

**2. Notify customers** in advance of the migration. Inform customers of key migration milestones. Communicate with customers the day before, the day of, and the day after their scheduled migration.

**3. Backup** all databases, customer records, and customer data before beginning.

**4. Test your migration process on a few “friendly” customers** before involving less sympathetic users. Name an employee account as your first “customer” to migrate.

5. Migrate customers in manageable groups. Do not attempt to migrate all customers at once. After each group migration, ensure that adequate system resources exist.

For example, ensure that a 1GB mailbox on the old system does not accidentally get translated to 100GB on the new system.

**6. Monitor alerts** on the new system and the old system during the migration process.

Ensure that support personnel understand the new types of alerts and how to respond to them.

Ensure that audit trails are properly installed.

**7. Test security procedures** after migration is complete. Ensure that the same protection policies on the old system are applied to the new system. Security concerns are frequently overlooked because they do not result in immediate problems. Follow the “best practices” for each application that is part of the new system.

Most providers agree that these best practices are common sense. However, in the middle of a migration, common sense is frequently misplaced. Creating a well documented plan before beginning a migration is very useful for preventing mistakes.

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## Training, Support, and Customer Relationships

In addition to the services described above, Parallels provides extensive training and support. The Parallels/customer relationship is initially cultivated by training and continues after deployment through the support teams. Parallels’ customer relationship approach involves senior management, specific top engineering team members, and dedicated account-specific technical support personnel. If a customer has an issue or question, they know exactly who to contact quickly and have the confidence that this person has the experience and talent to quickly address the issue.

Parallels has built its reputation on strong customer relationships and responsive support processes.

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## Summary

Services are a critical component of large software technology solutions. Customization by a professional services team provides an optimized software solution which meets a customer's specific needs and resources. Parallels provides the Parallels System Automation platform and an experienced services team to deliver an optimized web and application hosting platform to leading service providers. After deployment, Parallels provides training and ongoing support to cultivate an ongoing partnership with Parallels System Automation customers.

Parallels' unique services toolset is designed to help clients assess their current environment; prioritize customization, installation, integration and migration investment options; and create a road map that is tied to business objectives. From early design and training through deployment and post-launch support, Parallels is committed to serving its Telco, ISP and major hosting customers and tailoring its services to their specific environments and requirements.

Please visit our website at [www.parallels.com](http://www.parallels.com) or our sales team at [sales@swsoft.com](mailto:sales@swsoft.com) for more information.