



5 IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

...FOR BUSINESS SYSTEMS

- Build business critical
- Buy generic
- Big picture

1 BUILD OR BUY?

It is a very common question. Do you build a (bespoke) system or buy a (ready made) system?

If the business process is **generic** to most businesses e.g. accounts which is so legislated or controlled, then a **package** ('off-the-shelf' ready made system) is more likely to be suitable. After all, why reinvent the wheel? – especially when there is so much choice of ready made software.

However, if the process is **business critical**, or a **unique strength** of the business then a bespoke system is more likely to provide the business benefits. Technology is a key asset in competitive business. You need to maintain that lead by providing your business with the exact systems it needs.

In each case, the benefits & value need to be evaluated; some bespoke systems offer 80% of the features you want, many features you do not & will never need, but not the 2 or 3 features that are absolutely vital.

Realise too that though it might be relatively easy to reach up, take that ready-made system off the shelf (so to speak) & install, however your business might spend months (years) adapting to it. A bespoke system might require months to design & construct but then fits your business like a 'glove'.

There are pros & cons to each approach - hybrid systems should also be considered.

2 CONSIDER THE 'BIG' PICTURE

Do not just consider the requirements at one point in a business, look at the **entire** business process involved - at all ends of the business. It might be pointless solving a problem in one department only to increase problems in another.

Similarly look to the future development of the business & how it might be different.

3 WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED?

IT companies will go out of their way to tell you what is included in their service, but be sure to understand what is **not included**. Questions such as "What else will we need to do (to make this business project work)?" or the straightforward "What's not included?" are all that's required to be asked. Systems are more than just technology; people & processes are equally important.

4 SUPPORT?

IT systems can be a big investment, but the **ongoing cost** of maintaining & supporting them can be far greater. Consider the ongoing costs charged by the vendor, annual licensing, upgrades, support costs, staff time, consumable costs, periodic changes required in the system configuration (e.g. report layouts), or even new system configuration (e.g. to allow for new users, or new processes). Importantly, consider who is allowed to support the system (see the next point, below).

5 LOCKED IN?

It would take years to develop the skills to maintain some sophisticated systems. However, you should be able to carry out the daily, weekly, & monthly housekeeping yourself. Always be sure to understand exactly **who can maintain** any system & what they can do. Some IT companies will only allow their 'resellers' to develop their systems even though you might be more than capable or willing to do this yourself.

Of course, systems involve much more than this. Even so, these are wise rules to remember.

