# Checklist To Buy or Build the Software You Need

*by Decision Design Corporation*

Still trying to decide if you should buy an off-the-shelf product or have your software custom-built? The following chart lists many of the considerations clients have when deciding if they should buy a pre-developed package off-the-shelf or have software custom-built to fit their needs. The chart lists the consideration and then, under Buy or Build, it lists the qualifier. Of course, each of these depends on the particular application and the specific companies involved, but this is a general guide.

| Consideration | Buy Off-the-Shelf | Build it Custom |
|---|---|---|
| **Uniqueness** | | |
| Standardization of your business model for the mission-critical feature | Features to support industry-standard practices | Custom-designed to support variations |
| Your processes and staff | Must be flexible to fit the software | Can be well- defined and specific; the software needs to fit them |
| Branding and graphical design such as logos, colors and layout | One-size-fits-all will work | Needs to be configurable |
| Text and instructions such as welcome text and help files | One-size-fits-all will work | Needs to be configurable |
| Integration with your other applications | May with support and limitations | Is custom-designed to your specifications |
| **Resources** | | |
| Timeline | Need it now | Development time |
| IT support staff | Is strong with time to support the install and troubleshooting | Is not available |
| Support | You can wait in line or pay more for premium support | You need direct access to people who know your software and your business |
| Project Management | Is available in-house | Is available in-house or from the vendor |
| Cost – Number of Users | Pay a per-seat or per-license fee | Can support as many as need with one capital investment |
| **Risks** | | |
| Competitive advantage | You don't care if the competition has the same software; it's not a competitive advantage issue | You don't want to be just like everyone else; you can compete better if you have something unique |
| Maturity of the functionality needed | The process being automated has been around awhile (i.e., no one builds database software on their own anymore) | The process being automated is relatively new |
| Updates and bug fixes | Standard cycle; next release date | As soon as you need it |
| Testing | Tested the way the company believes the product will generally be used | Tested for your specific business model |

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