

# Software Build vs. Buy

Questions to Consider

There's a lot of factors to consider when choosing software for your company. Depending on what you need to achieve, there may be a case for having a solution custom-built or it could be that an 'off-the-shelf' solution will provide what you need. This short document is designed to act as a checklist that will help you decide whether you should go with 'build' or 'buy'.

As you think through these questions, try to answer each of them in the following context:

1. How does the off-the-shelf solution address this question? Included? Additional cost? Something that's on their roadmap?
2. How long (and how much would it cost) to address this question if building the solution?
3. Is this question relevant to where we are as an organisation?

## Workflow

1. Have you done a full review of the processes and procedures within your organisation?
2. Have you reviewed the way things are against the way you'd like things to be?
3. Have you ranked both of these lists in order of criticality, and have you put a line between the must-have ends and the nice-to-have begins?

## Features

1. Have you decomposed the workflows and processes described above into a list of features?
2. Based on the ranking and "must-have vs. nice-to-have", have you applied that information to this feature list?

## Technical

1. How will the software be delivered? Web, Desktop, Mobile, or a combination?
2. What's the deployment method? Cloud? On-Premise?
3. How will data be accessed programmatically? Via direct database queries or an API? Is the API a modern RESTful API?
4. What's the disaster recovery strategy? If a disaster scenario strikes, will their plan be sufficient to restore operations in a timeframe that's acceptable?
5. What's the high availability strategy? Is it sufficient / suitable for my business?
6. Is there a track record of consistent (ideally, monitored by a 3rd party) SLA adherence over the last few years? Is this record public?

## Future

1. How will you incorporate future tools, processes, best practices, etc. with the solution you're considering today?

2. What confidence do you have that you can expect to see improvements in a regular fashion?
3. How “open ended” will the system be? For example, you may have 10 reports you live and die by today, but what happens in the future when you need to have an additional report or two (or twenty)?
4. What are the macro-trends at work in tech, and how does the considered solution correlate with or address them?
5. How many software engineers does the company employ? What is the makeup of the team profile (technical, customer success, etc.)?
6. Is there a track record of consistent feature delivery?
7. Is there a public roadmap?

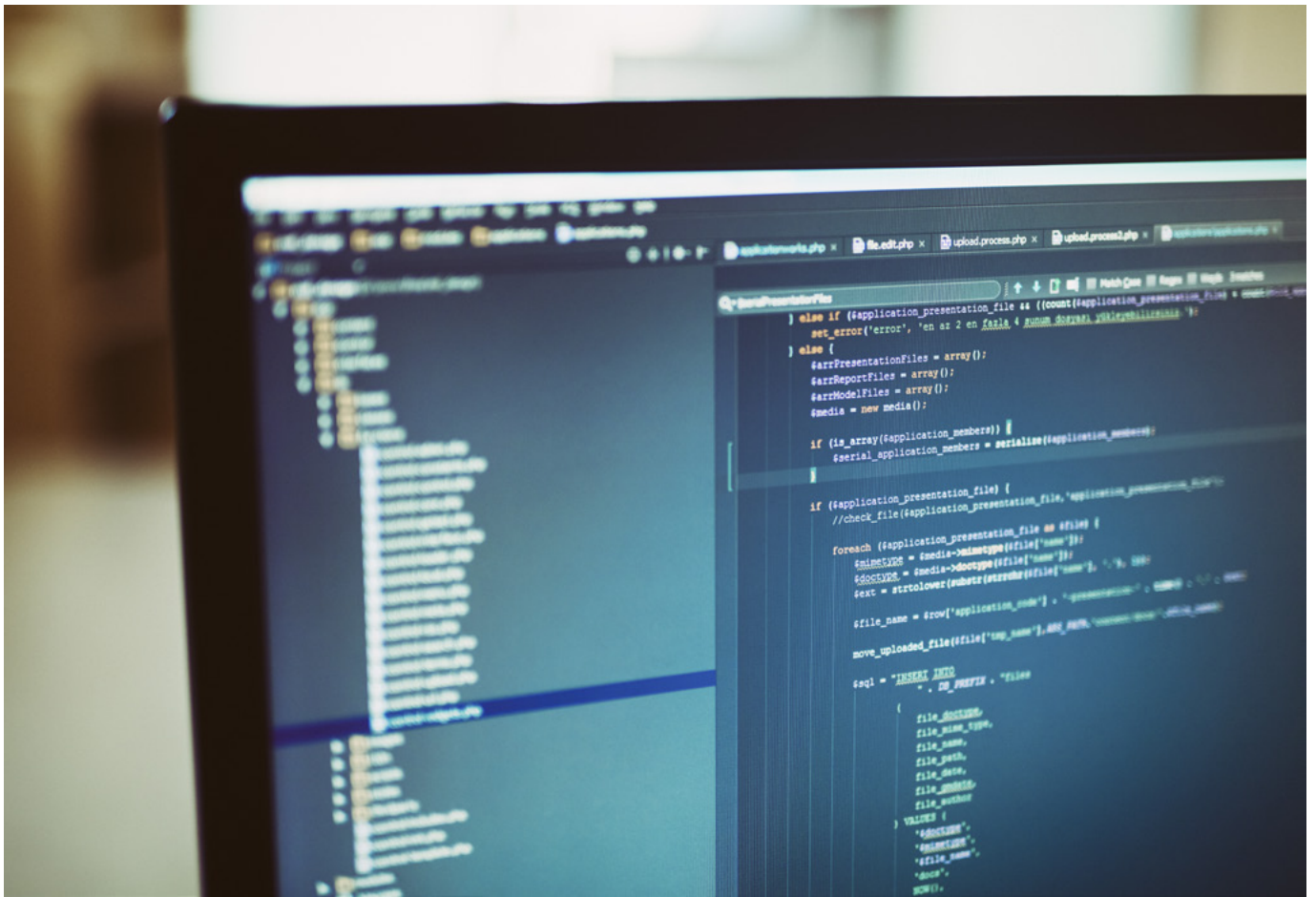
## Skillset

1. Does your organisation have experience (people or teams) who have experience managing software projects or software implementations?
2. Is this experience in-house or external? Will you have ongoing access to this experience?
3. Does the vendor you’re evaluating have an experienced, dedicated implementation team who will help you get up and running?

## Total Cost of Ownership

Have you considered the cost of the following components:

1. Infrastructure (servers, ancillary software, libraries and services, IT support, internet connection)
2. Personnel (wages / contracting fees), including all implementation, support, development, and operations personnel required.
3. Ongoing maintenance in the form of upgrades to all software and physical (or cloud).
4. Ongoing feature development in response to both new trends but also in response to changing needs within your operation / business.



Good luck on your journey! If you need help evaluating what might be best for your training organisation, make sure you check in with us. We've had the benefit of helping hundreds of training organisations, thousands of users, and millions of students, and we'd love to assist in your decision making process in any way we can.

Our blog is full of great advice for training and learning providers, read it [here](#).

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