Chapter 5.21
A Case Study on the Selection and Evaluation of Software for an Internet Organisation

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ABSTRACT

The author conducted research to determine whether IT managers, IT auditors, users, management, etc. (all decision-makers) use a certain evaluation and selection process to acquire software to meet business objectives and the requirement of users. An argument was used that the more thorough the software evaluation and selection process, the more likely it would be that the organisation will chose software that meets these targets. The main objective of the research was therefore to determine whether Media24 uses evaluation methods and obtains the desired results. The results confirmed that Media24 uses suggested protocol as noted in the theory for software acquisition correctly during most stages.

INTRODUCTION

There is a wide variety of methods that can be used for selection of software in various fields of business (e.g., manufacturing, service providers, insurance, wholesale, retail, etc.). This software is used for a variety of purposes in businesses. However, selecting the software that meets organisational requirements and business objectives could prove to be a challenge considering the number of vendors and software available.

Choosing the right software for your company can be bewildering. There are thousands of titles to choose from, and programs and their functionality differ frequently. (Buyerzone.com, 2002)

A hurried, uneducated choice could lead to various problems in the company. Some of these are

failing to support an important business process, supporting a process inaccurately or inefficiently, unhappy customers, disgruntled employees, loss of sales, and poor financial performance.

Competition in the Western Cape requires good performance in all aspects of the electronic publication industry. Bad judgments or decisions in terms of software acquisition could cause a company some losses and complications in their daily operations. Choosing the right software is therefore important and can be achieved by using pre-determined evaluation and selection guidelines.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF A COMMERCIAL SOFTWARE SYSTEM

Decisions Made Prior to the Software Evaluation Process

As mentioned by Capterra's software selection methodology (2002), certain procedures should be completed before the actual evaluation is conducted. They suggest that the company should start off by interviewing some staff members, addressing corporate vision, analysing existing systems limitations and features, and looking at present policies and procedures. The company should also determine whether new software will help the business and if it will increase competitive advantage.

They argue that when the decision is made to purchase software, a project plan should be developed to evaluate and list the evaluation criteria that will be used during the process. A project team should also be selected to carry out the evaluation. This team must include representatives from all levels the organisation. If the proposed software incorporates financial aspects, the audit team should also be included.

Determine Requirements for the New Software Package

The purpose would be to create a comprehensive and prioritised list of requirements to help evaluate the software. Base Consulting Group (BCG) (2000) state that the requirements definition should consist of several processes (such as managerial requirements (budget/timing, reporting requirements), functional requirements (stated business needs, technical requirements), and IS standards (data flow diagrams, system interfaces, and hardware and network requirements with emphasis on capacity).

They also note that some companies do not develop detailed requirements and as a result may be dissatisfied with the final outcome. Romney and Steinbart (2000) support this statement and suggest that one or any combination of four strategies (listed below) should be used to determine requirements for the new software:

- Survey end-users to determine what their requirements for software is by using questionnaires, personal interviews, and focus group discussions.
- Analyse the existing system and eliminating requirements that have already been defined.
- Examine how the existing software is used, helping to determine the shortcomings of the system, and identifing any new requirements needed by users.
- Pilot demonstrations of applications/software systems could be utilised when there is a problem in identifying requirements.

Document the Requirements

The systems requirement document or software requirement specifications should be the starting point for measuring performance of the final

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