Happen
BUSINESS

Amazing Things. Happen.

10 Things to Think About
When Considering New Business Software

Jim2®
BUSINESS ENGINE

AUTOMATE
systems

COLLECT
information

PROCESS
workflow

ANALYSE
reports

CONNECT
mobile

GROW
your business

Contents

Introduction

Implementing or changing business systems/software is a huge step for businesses of all sizes. This document raises some general questions you should find helpful when assessing any business system. If you are moving up from a reasonably basic business system, or indeed entry level accounting software, you will find these questions quite helpful.

The 'normal' steps in looking at new business software are as follows:

1.   Research (Make a list of your requirements)

2.   Compile a short list of suitable software

3.   Make contact with software supplier

4.   Run through a demonstration

5.   Assess suitability of each software

6.   Identify prime candidates

7.   Check references (functionality and support)

8.   Don't forget to budget for training, support and implementation

9.   Make a decision

10.   Implement

Before you make any sort of decision, start at the beginning

Step 1 – RESEARCH.

10 Things to Think About

1 Will your software grow with you? Is your business dynamic? Does your software need to evolve to suit the changing needs of your business?

Choosing business software is an extremely important decision for the future of your business. The decision you make today will have ramifications long after you've paid your money, installed the software and entered your first transactions.

What are your plans for the future? You need to be thinking 1, 3 and 5 years ahead when purchasing business software. What serves you well today may not be suitable when you add extra staff to your business.

Adding staff and resources to your business should not place any burden on your business software – it should cope with these demands and grow with you.

If you are having problems keeping all your different systems up to date right now, how will they keep pace when you experience even more growth?

Moving to an integrated system that brings all your Accounting, Reporting, Purchasing, Resourcing and Scheduling tasks together is definitely worth serious consideration.

2 Where was the software developed? Can you pick up the phone and talk to your software trainer, business analyst, programmer, system architect?

Was the software you're considering developed in Australia for the Australian market and for Australian users? Are the people who developed the software still contactable? Is the software being constantly revised and improved? Or is it a 'set and forget' piece of software that becomes outdated and does not keep pace with your business?

Are the developers and people who support the software in touch with their customers?

3 Who supports the software? Do you know the people who support your software?

One of the major frustrations with any piece of software is when you're having difficulty executing tasks. When there is no-one else in the business to ask...and when you've exhausted the help file...you have to turn to the software developer themselves. Are they Australian? Are they contactable by phone? Do you have an expected level of service?

If Support is not local, are they contactable in your business hours?

Is Support included in the price of the software? If not, it could really cost you.

4   How often is the software updated? Is your software updated regularly, using customer feedback as a guide?

Regularly updated business software means you are using the absolute latest in technology. You should consider asking the question "Why does my software need updating anyway?". The answer should be "Because the customers demand it!"
User feedback and software revision by the developer is the key to making the best software possible. Without customer feedback and the follow up of that feedback by the developer, how does the software developer know the customers are extremely happy?

5   What is the suitability of the software to my business? Will the people who implement my software take the time to understand my business?

One size does not fit all. Was the business software you are considering hastily patched to suit your Industry, or was it carefully crafted in consultation with businesses FROM your Industry? The only way to make a brilliant piece of software is to talk to the users of that software on a regular basis.

Does the business software developer employ software installers, or business analysts? Are the people setting up your software to achieve the maximum benefit to your business? (Or they are just doing another software installation?) Is the software installed by 3rd party consultants, or by the developer of the software itself?

6   What is the Installation process?

How will your business software be installed? Is it a planned and carefully managed process? Will all the preparation work be done before the installation date?

CAN I RUN THE NEW SYSTEM FROM DAY 1? Will the business experience minimal interruption? Will I have to run both systems side by side at the same time to make sure the new one does its job?

All of these items should be documented and requested in writing from your software provider BEFORE THE EVENT. It is too late once the implementers are at your office, installing the software. Don't be trapped into paying for services you did not or could not foresee because of poor planning. Make sure your software provider spells all of their costs out, lets you know what you will be getting for your money, and how long the entire installation / implementation will take.

7 Does the software do anything other than my accounts? Does the software help manage all aspects of my business, or simply my accounting?

A business system needs to be more than just numbers. The success or failure of a business will depend largely on its PROCESSES and their adherence. As your business grows, the only way to control the resources in your business is to put in place certain procedures and processes. These are the rules that will ensure that actions within your business are performed correctly, accurately and in the right order. Purchasing, Point of Sale, Accounting, Reporting, Recording Jobs – all these business processes need to be documented and built into your business system. Typically business systems in the price range of small to medium business DO NOT contain process-driven management systems, however they DO EXIST.

8 What additional systems will I need to complement the Accounting software?

Customer relations management, resource planning, point of sale, job tracking, warehousing, manufacturing, open to buy spreadsheets, machine tracking and reporting...

Or you could look for a solution that contains all the systems you need in one.

9 Will my existing hardware run the new software? What hardware is required to run my software?

Changing software is also a good time to be taking a close look at your hardware that runs your business system. What is your back-up strategy? Do you use a server? Are you making the best use of your current resources? Who looks after your network?

10 What is subscription based software? When will my software be out of date?

Subscription based software means paying a yearly subscription fee to be able to continue using the software. Subscription based software allows a software developer to continue to improve the product, release updated and improved versions of the software, and also to continue to provide customer support for the software.

Subscription based software has the advantage of never actually being out of date, as it is improved on a regular basis, often up to twice a year, and these improved version are available at no extra cost to the subscriber above what they normally pay.

11   Are you able to speak to other businesses freely about their experiences with the business software you are considering?

Speaking to other businesses about their experience with the installation, training, ease of use, migration process and benefits of the business software is probably the closest thing you can get to surety of the claims made by the software salesperson you have been dealing with.

What system did they upgrade from? Why did they upgrade?

While software companies may have quoted you for the software and installation alone, often is the case that there are many hidden extras involved in getting the software to do what it is intended to (And I'm not talking about the travelling costs of the implementers here…). After-sales costs such as custom report writing, additional modules and support not covered by your licences can add up to the same cost as the software itself. That quote doesn't look quite so affordable now does it?…Again – ASK FOR REFERENCES. These people have ponied up their hard earned business cash to buy the software you're looking at – it will pay dividends to get their opinion and learn from their experiences.

At least 2 customer references should be mandatory in your due diligence process in selecting your business system.

Summary

I bet you noticed there was 11 items on that list…? That's because there's a LOT to think about when looking at different types of business software.

Purchasing Business Software is a big decision. Current assessment of your business is crucial, as well as using your business plan to dictate where you want to be in 1, 3 and 5 years. Your business system is either going to be the vehicle that will take you there, or the hindrance in your quest for growth and efficiency.

If you have any further questions about business software – please feel free to contact us here at Happen Business. Our developers, Implementers, Support AND Sales Staff will be happy to answer any of your questions about business software, and also to see what sort of solution you are after.

Happen Business – Developers of Jim2® Business Engine