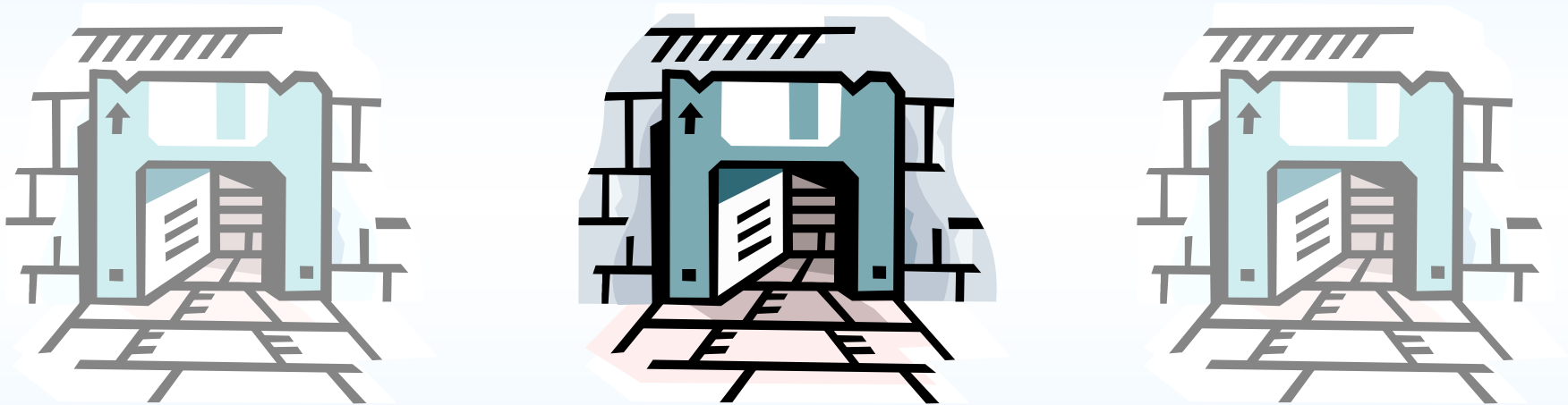


“WHAT’S BEHIND DOOR NUMBER TWO?” CONSIDERATIONS AND CHOICE WITH REGARD TO INFORMATION SYSTEMS



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A NEW COMPUTER SYSTEM: THE IMPORTANCE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT PRIOR TO PURCHASE

SELF-INTEREST - UNDERSTAND YOURS AND THEIRS.

PROCESS – THE DECISION PROCESS ONE UTILIZES WHEN PURCHASING A HOUSE OR MAKING A CAREER CHANGE IS SIMILAR TO THAT FOR ASSESSING COMPUTER SYSTEM NEEDS. IT IS NOT TO BE RUSHED OR TAKEN LIGHTLY.

PATIENCE AND TIME - THE DECISION PROCESS SHOULD BEGIN AT LEAST 36 MONTHS BEFORE THE PURCHASE. THE LARGER THE SELECTION COMMITTEE, THE LONGER THE TIMELINE.

**NO PRODUCT CAN SUCCEED
IN MEETING YOUR NEED
UNLESS THAT NEED IS:**

CLEAR

SPECIFIC

MEASURABLE

**ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND THE
FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
WHAT IS NEEDED AND WHAT IS DESIRED**

QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED TO ACCURATELY ASSESS NEED

1. WHAT SYSTEM(S) IS (ARE) CURRENTLY IN USE?
 - WHAT IS THE LOGIC STRUCTURE OF THE SYSTEM LANGUAGE?
 - HOW ARE THE DATA STORED?
 - WHAT TYPE OF HARDWARE IS USED?
 - WHAT HUMAN ASSETS ARE IN PLACE AND NEED TO BE IN PLACE TO OPTIMALLY RUN THE CURRENT SYSTEMS?
 - WHAT WOULD BE THE COST/BENEFIT OF UPGRADING CURRENT SYSTEM?
 - WHAT ARE THE CURRENT SECURITY CONCERNS?
 - WHAT ARE THE CURRENT INPUT STANDARDS AND INFORMATION AUDITS?

2. WHAT IS THE THE PRESENT NEED FOR SYSTEMS INTEGRATION?
 - WHAT IS THE CURRENT SYSTEMS/DATABASES CONFIGURATION? SILOS? HUB(S) AND SPOKE? DO YOU WANT TO KEEP IT?
 - WHAT ARE THE TIMETABLES FOR LEGACY SYSTEMS REPLACEMENT?
 - WHAT WILL BE THE FUTURE NEED FOR SYSTEMS INTEGRATION?
 - WHO WILL PROVIDE THE CROSS-TALK PROGRAMS?

ASSESSMENT: KEY EVALUATION POINTS

THE PRODUCT ITSELF

**DOES THE PRODUCT'S CAPABILITY MEET
OUR NEEDS**

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

THE EMERGING ENVIRONMENT

ISSUES

**ALL NEW SYSTEMS ALTER WORK PATTERNS AND RELATIONSHIPS.
HOW IS WORK CURRENTLY ACCOMPLISHED?
HOW WILL THE NEW SYSTEM AFFECT THE WAY EMPLOYEES
COMPLETE THEIR TASKS?**

**HOW CLOSELY DOES THE LOGIC STRUCTURE OF THE NEW
SYSTEM RESEMBLE THE LOGIC STRUCTURE OF THE CURRENT
ONE?**

**CAN EXISTING HARDWARE CONTINUE TO BE UTILIZED? FOR HOW
LONG?**

**WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR DATA CONVERSION? IS THE “MIGRATION
SOLUTION” AN ADDITIONAL COST?**

What is the cost? Who is responsible? Is it your plan or the vendors plan? If theirs does the timetable fit with your needs?

Examine the plan and make them test a critical area to see if it really works.

**HOW WILL THE NEW SYSTEM INTERACT WITH ALL OTHER
RELEVANT EXISTING SYSTEMS?** Insist on testing.

10 QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED

1. Does the representative have “technical” knowledge on the product?
2. How much support does the company provide on their product, and how many employees work on supporting the customer?
3. What is the total cost of the software?
4. Is this product in production, or is it still being tested or developed?
5. How will data be migrated from the old system to the new system?
6. Can the system be easily modified to accommodate ever changing state and federal mandates?
7. How will this new system integrate with our existing systems?
8. What type of hardware is required?
9. Will it cost extra for the vendor to install the software?
10. How long does the vendor plan to support the system?



**“DAZZLE
AND
FLASH!”**



Don't get bewitched by a salesperson's charm. Insist on credentials for all vendors under consideration and the individuals with which you will have the greatest level of interaction. Insist on a client list and call for references.

Note: Relevant questions regarding a consultant's expertise would relate to their time with their company, experience in the industry and competency with the vendor's platforms and products.



**“WE OFFER FLEXIBLE
PRICING AND
CUSTOMIZATION!”**



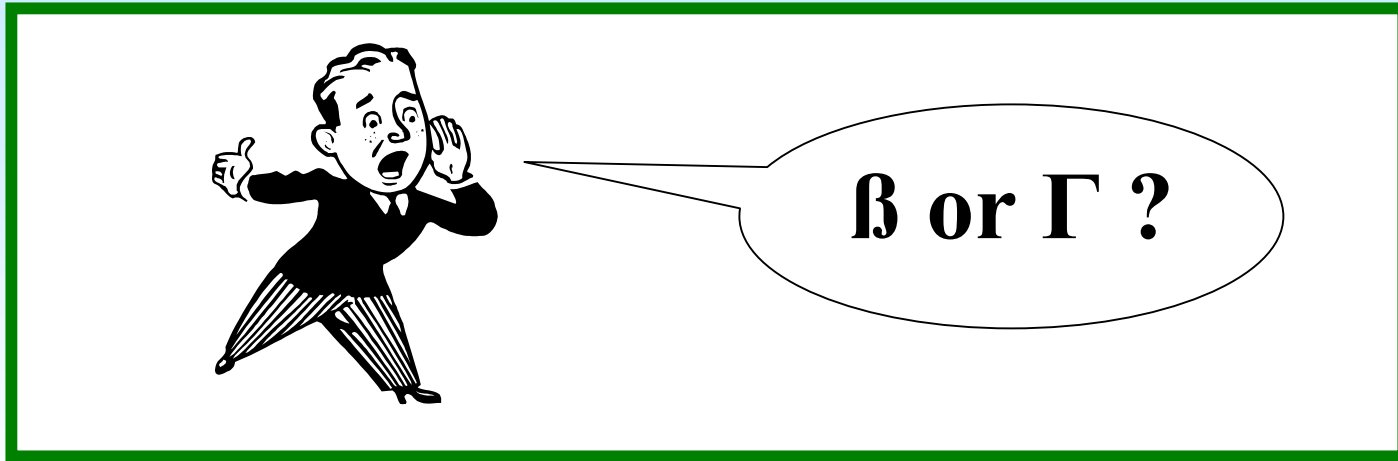
Beware of the “total solutions” framework offered in a knowledge vacuum. Insist on credentials for the products the vendors are selling, upgrading and maintaining. Insist on a firm price for the product, not a “flexible” price that will be determined after the product is installed.



**“I’LL GET BACK
TO YOU
ON THAT!”**



**Salespeople are not technicians.
Insist on interacting with the
vendor’s technicians to address
your technical questions.**



Beware of the words “beta site” and “gamma site”. If the vendor considers your site to be a beta site, this means the product being installed is still in the testing and debugging stage! If this arrangement comes with discounts or other incentives this might not be a bad deal, but be prepared to invest a great deal of time debugging the new system.

If the vendor considers your site to be a gamma site, that means the product will soon no longer be supported by the vendor. Do your research! A vendor will not always tell a client that this is about to happen!

GREAT EXPECTATIONS...

Expect a multitude of small problems to arise when the new system is installed.

Anticipate time for these problems and the delays they might cause by building additional time into your implementation schedule. It is better to have too much time, than rushing a solution to meet a critical deadline.

More often than not, it will be your people, rather than the vendor or consultant, who will locate and find solutions to any problems that may arise.

The vendor might ask you to “donate” your solutions to them so they can incorporate and improve the next upgrade of their product. You are not required to do this UNLESS the contract you signed requires all solutions to be given back to the vendor. Read the fine print carefully!

There might be a short life cycle on the new version or product as supported in your environment.

BUY OR BUILD?

DOES A PRODUCT EXIST THAT WILL MEET YOUR NEED?

IS A NEW SYSTEM AFFORDABLE?

**WILL A COMPLETELY NEW DESIGN
BEST MEET YOUR NEED?**

**DO YOU HAVE PERSONNEL WHO CAN DESIGN, DEVELOP
AND MAINTAIN NEW SOFTWARE?**

**WHAT PLATFORM AND CODING LANGUAGE
SHOULD YOU USE IF YOU DECIDE TO BUILD?**

ANY QUESTIONS?

**We would be happy
to comment on that!**

