

Deriving Value from Your Technology Investments



With the right technology solution, you can increase employee effectiveness and efficiency – all leading to increased job satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

Technology. With its ever-changing nature, it is increasingly becoming more difficult to stay up to date with the latest applications that will take your business to the next level.

How do you navigate the complex landscape as new technology products enter the market? Companies who experience frustration with their technology solutions typically fall into one or two buckets:

1. Quick to jump on the sales pitch for the “latest and greatest” tool to be set apart from competitors (while disregarding business priorities)
2. Have existing technology that is inhibiting progress (because it’s antiquated or not being used effectively)

Regardless of your current situation, this guide is designed to help you take steps towards leveraging your technology as an asset. By the time you are done reading, you will understand what it takes to become a more technology-enabled company.

With technologies ever-changing nature, it is increasingly becoming more difficult to stay up to date with the latest applications that will take your business to the next level.

These days, technology is the lifeblood of many organizations. Whether you realize it or not, technology enables or disables your business.

From unnecessary costs to loss of productivity, security concerns, and even employee turnover, there is a lot at stake with the technology you implement.

With the right technology solution, you can increase employee effectiveness and efficiency – all leading to increased job satisfaction. Although not often top of mind, ineffective systems cause employee frustration and can lead to increased employee turnover.

Additionally, technology touches not only internal staff but also plays a role in how prospects, customers, and partners engage with your business.

Let’s learn how to use technology to enable your business.

Part 1: Business Needs Before Tools

If you have been swayed by the shiny sales pitch and persuaded to purchase a tool that fails to solve your business needs – you aren't alone.

People commonly make the mistake of purchasing technology to gain a competitive advantage, but fail to have the processes in place to support the purchase. To effectively leverage technology, first understand the true needs and desires of your business; then consider the investment.

Begin your search by asking yourself the following questions:

What are your business goals and objectives?

At the highest level, determine what you want the business to achieve. Create goals and objectives that align with the business vision.

How established are your processes? Are they closely followed by the organization?

Timing is critical when it comes to implementing new technology. Implementing solutions without refined processes in place can set companies back instead of helping move them forward. Technology should support processes, not define them. Ensure that the solution you're considering is an enabler for efficiently changing processes and assisting you in achieving desired outcomes.

Who are the people that will be using the tool? What are their strong personality traits and skills that may affect tool selection?

Even with the best possible processes in place, if your people are not committed to them, new technology will only further aggravate current issues. Both people and processes must be aligned. Refine processes, ensure your people are on board, then select the technology.

In addition, know your people. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Do they quickly adapt to technology? Are employees excited about change or do they fight it tooth and nail? Take time to understand how your people feel, then plan accordingly. Set up focus groups, create how-to documents, establish regular communication, and schedule training for quick user adoption.



How established is the product? Who are you buying from?

It is easy to get excited about a new product as it launches in the market. Before investing in a new product, take into consideration the company behind the product and work to understand their product roadmap. Find the right long-term partner and take a step back to avoid becoming shortsighted during this critical decision.

Is this technology flexible enough for the future of your organization? Will it handle anticipated growth?

It can be extremely painful to grow out of a technology solution. Balance what you need now against the product roadmap as well as future plans of the company. Then determine how long the product will serve you. Switching technology is disruptive for a company, and you should try to reduce the frequency change as much as possible. The more you analyze the technology you select up front, the easier it will be to find a solution that will grow as you do.

After considering these questions in depth, the needs of your business will be at the forefront of your mind. And now the fun part begins - identifying places where technology will support and enable change in your business.

Skipping over this step may seem tempting with new technologies launching every day and, often, limited-time special pricing accompanying. What may seem like a shortcut will most likely leave you with a product that ultimately fails to meet your expectations. Taking the time to work through these questions, instead, will help you find a product that can transform and differentiate your business.

Part 2: Technology Tool Inventory

To get started, ask yourself these questions:

1. What technology tools do you currently have in your toolbox?
2. How are you leveraging them?

Before technology has the capability to become your differentiator, these questions should be carefully considered. It is all too easy to forget about the tools you already have when excited about something new. Check your inventory; then review it with your team. Before taking the next step, ensure you have a full understanding of the existing technology tools at your disposal.

Once the list has been compiled, it is time to honestly assess how the tools are being used. To do so, determine who uses the tools and how each one is being leveraged.

This stage is often a good time to bring in a third party. An outside perspective can help identify where technology is effectively being utilized and where improvements can be made.

Part 3: Making the Purchase

You've thought through why you need technology, now it's time to consider how you will purchase it. There are more options than you might think when it comes to purchasing technology. Let's dive in.

RENT VERSUS BUY

There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to renting versus buying technology. Ultimately, you must make a decision that most effectively meets your business' needs.

Recently, a shift has occurred in which people are opting to rent their solutions as opposed to outright buying them thanks to Software as a Service, or SaaS. In this model, software is licensed to companies on a monthly or annual basis, dependent on the contract. SaaS is often referred to as on-demand or cloud software, as it can typically be accessed from any web browser as long as an Internet connection is available.

Although SaaS has become a popular option, when you have the opportunity to make the decision about your solution, spend time determining what is best for you – don't just follow the crowd.

Let's compare some key aspects of renting versus buying:

Rent (Software as a Service):

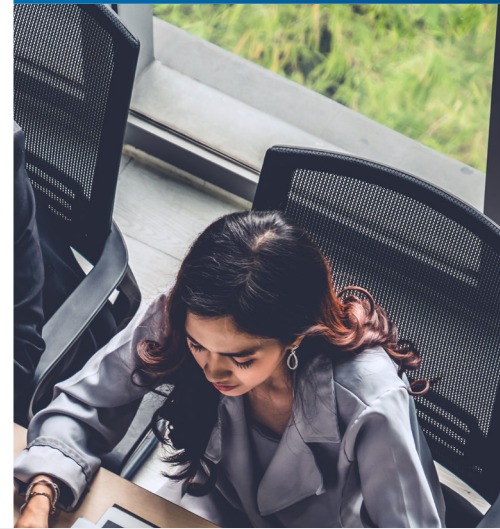
- Operating expense (tax savings and lower upfront cost)
- Add and remove licenses on an as-needed basis
- Regular software updates (without any additional costs)
- Tech support included

Buy:

- Capital expense (value depreciates over time)
- Product ownership
- Internal maintenance
- Pay for updates

If you decide that SaaS is best, there are some additional factors to consider to obtain the best deal with the vendor. Do you plan to sign a monthly or multi-year contract? This may significantly change your monthly costs. Can you wait to buy at month end, quarter end, or year end? Sales representatives often have quotas they must meet and will lower their rates at these times to close a deal.

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PRODUCT DEMOS

Although it is important to be wary of the sales demo initially, once you've narrowed down the list of applicable tools to meet your needs, a product demo becomes your asset. This is especially true given that software companies rarely issue returns.

These days, with SaaS, cloud-based solutions, you have the ability to test drive a product and really get a firsthand feel for the functionality it offers. Most companies will set up a free trial if they know you are serious about the product. This way, you can ensure that the product truly meets the needs of your team.

CUSTOM VERSUS COMMERCIAL OFF THE SHELF

The first fork in the road you may encounter is whether or not to purchase a custom solution or one straight off the shelf. Consider if a straight off-the-shelf solution will suffice for your organization or if your needs require a great deal of customization for processes or people involved.

Custom solutions typically require a significant investment up front as well as a greater investment long term to account for system updates and improvements. Commercial-off-the-shelf solutions often cost less, but you have to consider if there are any expenses outside of actual cost, such as configuring and customizing the solution to fully meet your needs. Custom solutions typically make the most sense if nothing in the marketplace currently exists that will meet your needs and requirements.

Review these considerations for a custom versus commercial-off-the-shelf solution:

Custom:

- Significant initial investment
- Long-term investment in system improvements
- Meets users' exact needs
- No solutions currently in the market

Commercial off the Shelf:

- Lower initial investment
- Generally meets users' needs
- Expenses must be considered outside of cost

There are, in fact, circumstances when you might need both an off-the-self and custom solution. Or, you may need a few off-the-self solutions to integrate with one another. Combining approaches has become a common approach and may deserve consideration.

Custom solutions typically require a significant investment up front as well as a greater investment long term to account for system updates and improvements.



Part 4: Implementation

You have made a technology purchase. Congratulations! There is still significant work ahead, but you can breathe easier knowing you did your due diligence to find a tool that will work for your processes and people.

Hopefully, you've been thinking through implementation while you evaluated options and have a partner in mind, or are even under contract already. Picking the right implementation partner to assist you through the process is imperative.

Most software companies lack internal implementation teams. Instead, they rely on partners to help their clients through the transition. When deciding if you should work with their designated partner or another third party, it may be helpful to know if you prefer to work with a local or remote company.

Across the board, the quality of implementation varies. Some companies are exceptional, while others have room for improvement. Take the time to vet your implementation partner so your investment doesn't go to waste.

Implementation encompasses more than simply installing or turning on the tool. A strong implementation partner will pay attention to change management and employee training. Often people are haphazard about these steps, but they are critical for success. Make this a well planned and serious initiative.

Overall, ensure your implementation partner has a plan for a strategic and holistic implementation. For better or worse, implementation can make or break the success of your solution. Take care to focus on the impact the technology will have on the business.

As a final step in the implementation process, take a phased approach in which you develop a solution, plan, implement, and continuously repeat whenever possible. This phased approach allows you to continuously gain feedback. Often missed, using the process can transform adoption of the solution. Use feedback from internal stakeholders to enhance and evolve the solution as well as keep momentum going. Users are often involved too late; make sure their voice is heard up front.



DON'T DO TECH FOR TECH'S SAKE

The biggest mistake you can make is to invest in technology for the sake of the latest shiny object.

Remember to define what you want to achieve first. Without a clear understanding of what you are trying to solve, you will get distracted by every shiny object that crosses your path. This results in a cost that impacts more than your balance sheet. It includes the time to find a new solution, implementation of the solution, and determining the value of the decrease in employee productivity.

Determining your needs and finding the perfect technology solution to match is a process. Often, companies find it beneficial to have a third party guide the process to ease the resource strain.

Resultant helps companies find the right technology to meet their needs.

ABOUT RESULTANT

Our team believes solutions are more valuable, transformative, and meaningful when reached together. Through outcomes built on solutions rooted in data analytics, technology, and management consulting, Resultant serves as a true partner by solving problems with our clients, rather than for them.



TECHNOLOGY

In an ever-evolving world of technology, clients trust us to have the insight and foresight to deliver transformative and sustainable solutions. We meet technology problems with human solutions focused on achieving better outcomes for people.

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