



The 7 Biggest Software Selection Mistakes

7 Software Mistakes You Don't Want to Make

Smart FSM Software Purchases Begin With Superior Knowledge

You've finally decided to look into purchasing field service management software for your business. That's smart. You're using some accounting software here and some word processing software there, but you suspect you could be making better use of technology to really kick your business up a notch. But where do you start?

You walk into your office supply store and wander around the software shelves. Brightly colored software boxes – row after row of them – are big on hype and stingy on concrete information, so you leave empty-handed.

You get a postcard in the mail from a vendor trying to interest you in their software – and hey, it *is* only \$99, for a limited time. You put that one in the “maybe, but probably too cheap to be any good” pile and move on.

You notice an online ad for some very expensive software that looks like it *could* drive up efficiency and cut costs, but you hesitate to lay out that kind of cash on a hunch. And you're back to square one with nothing to show for it but wasted effort and time. What should you do?

Hold on right there! Don't let anyone or anything pressure you into making what could be one of your most crucial business decisions ever! You might not realize it, but you're dangerously close to making one of the 7 biggest software selection mistakes.

Before you do, let's take a step back and examine what exactly is at risk here. First, there's the money you'll be spending on this software. Whether you go first class all the way or bargain basement, you risk wasting your money on a product that you'll someday regret buying. Second, using the wrong software could be the fastest way for your back office to go from being a well-oiled machine to a rusty clunker. And last, but certainly not least, picking the wrong software can hamstring not only you and your employees, but drive your customers to the competition, as well.

And that's not smart.

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No matter how big or small your business is, 7 huge mistakes lay in wait for the chance to sabotage your best intentions. Here are the baddies you might encounter on the path to purchasing field service management software that works for you and your customers:

#1...No clear idea of what you want the software to do

Sounds almost silly, doesn't it? Yet it's probably the number one reason why software evaluation and selection goes astray. Start by figuring out who's going to actually use the software day in and day out. Ask those people what they need, where the bottlenecks are, and what would make their lives easier. Chances are you'll get some good, practical suggestions and also some very cutting-edge (read: *expensive*) wishlists, but don't be dazzled by the glitter of new technology for its own sake. Always ask yourself if it really makes sense for your business, or if it will cause more problems than it's supposed to solve. And how might the new software affect the procedures in your business? There's always a learning curve, but it shouldn't be too steep or last too long. What's your vision for your business, now and in the future? Are your expectations realistic? Beware of vendors' promises, and don't assume that software will fix all your problems.

#2...Miscalculating your budget

Do you actually have a budget for buying software? You should. Even that too-good-to-be-true \$99 package could end up costing you a lot more than you bargained for. Many vendors charge for training, support, upgrades, data conversion, customization, and other crucial services. Don't forget related costs, either. Having to buy new computers, additional software, or specialized devices can really jack up your initial outlay.

#3...Relying solely on the vendor's claims

As Ronald Reagan once said, "Trust, but verify." Buying software is a little like getting married, and it's likely that you'll be in a relationship with your software vendor for a long time. Do you know enough about them – and has a trusted friend clued you into their quirks – to make that commitment? What do other customers think about the vendor and the product? There's no shortcut for this – you have to do your homework before saying "I do."

#4...Trying to evaluate too many products or not evaluating enough products

The true culprit here could be not having a clear picture of what you need from the software (see #1, above). Unless you employ someone in your office who does nothing for a few weeks but evaluate software, it's going to be impossible to look at every product that's out there. On the other hand, if time and manpower constraints limit your search to only two or three software solutions, you risk missing out on a product that could be just right for you.

#5...Buying a software product "sight unseen"

Any good vendor will be very happy to give you a demonstration of their software. Some even provide this right on their websites. While this is certainly useful, if you're really trying to zero in on a product, you'll need much more than a "canned" demo to make your decision. Many vendors offer limited-time trials of their software so that you can test drive it with your own real-world data. This is an extremely important step in the selection process and should not be overlooked.

#6...Your computer environment doesn't match the software's requirements

Imagine going through the whole software selection process and buying the best software package ever created only to find out that your computers won't run it! In these days of ever-increasing computing power and resource-hungry applications, it can be hard to keep up. That's why it's crucial that you know where you stand with your current computer environment. If you need to make new purchases, remember to include this in your budget (see #2, above).

#7...Feeling overwhelmed and frustrated

With all the things you have to take into consideration when trying to choose field service software for your business, it's easy to feel overwhelmed very quickly. This can lead to a hasty decision ("let's just get it over with!") or even no decision at all ("analysis paralysis"). Either will cost you big in time, money, and sanity. Don't let this happen to you! Read on to learn how you can avoid this obstacle to your business' success.

How to Avoid the 7 Biggest Mistakes

There's a kind of "catch-22" in this software evaluation game: how can you figure out what to expect from field service management software if you don't have an idea of what's even possible? And how do you come up with a reasonable budget if you don't know what the price range is for these products? You need reliable, unbiased information up front – some pre-evaluation insurance against choosing a loser. You need someone who knows these software products inside and out and who can summarize all the information you need in order to help you narrow down the possibilities. Do you have someone like this on your staff already? If you don't – or if you'd rather spend your limited man-hour budget in other ways – you'd do well to consult an outside firm, such as **myCTO**, whose entire focus is evaluating and categorizing field service management software.

For many overextended business decision-makers, a resource like myCTO is a smart way to reduce research costs, save staff hours for other important business, and get the most current insider knowledge of field service management software – all in one place. Really, it's like having your own Chief Technology Officer who's ready to drop everything and tell you exactly what you need to know to make the best technology decision for your business. The myCTO website (www.mycto.com) offers free articles that explain what you can expect from field service software in general, and myCTO's **Product Roundups**[™] give you a bird's-eye view of all these products and how they compare to each other in features, price, and value. From there, you can quickly and easily spot software packages that meet your needs and get an idea of their relative costs. Once you have this "short list," you can take a look at myCTO's **Product Detail Reports**[™]. These valuable reports serve up the nitty-gritty details on each shortlisted software product, such as how much – in cash, manpower, or training – you're likely to spend after your initial purchase.

There's no reason to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or pressured into making an ill-informed, knee-jerk choice you might later regret. There's no need to divert costly human resources to software research and acquisition, or pay a high-priced consultant to do it for you. And there's no call for you, yourself, to waste hours scouring the Internet for information that *might* be objective or might just be vendor hype. When you use an expert resource like **myCTO**, all of that work has already been done for you. Hours of painstaking research is collected in an affordable, easy-to-access form that you can use immediately – and profitably.

Knowledge is the key to smart, cost-effective business decisions, but sifting through mounds of useless software propaganda to find the hidden information that really matters could leave you feeling a lot less smart and costing you a lot more than you'd planned. The expert help you'll find at sites like www.mycto.com gets that FSM software purchasing task off your desk in a lot less time – for a lot less cash – and you'll make a truly informed decision.

Faster, cheaper, *and* wiser software purchases?

That's just smart.

myCTO is dedicated to helping small businesses evaluate and select the right software to run their businesses more profitably. We act as a "Chief Technology Officer" to small companies, giving them access to the same quality of research and analysis available to large companies. Visit our website at www.mycto.com or email us at info@mycto.com to learn more.