

# How To Evaluate and Select Order Management Software

## Key Issues:

- 1) Do a high-level review to discern any “showstoppers” and narrow the field accordingly
- 2) Don’t allow yourself to be sold by the salesperson; the solution must sell itself!
- 3) Be wary of salespeople who don’t attempt to qualify *you*, just as you’ll qualify them
- 4) Don’t completely disregard proprietary solutions, but do discount their competitive value in proportion to the degree they deviate from the mainstream (i.e. Microsoft/Intel)
- 5) Check out industry trade publications such as “Catalog Age” and “Operations & Fulfillment” and consider purchasing a compiled resource (most notably Ernie Schell’s The Guide To Catalog Management Software)<sup>1</sup>
- 6) Don’t just look at software demos, *devour* them (including documentation)
- 7) Insist that your managers study (the short-list’d) demos and solicit their feedback to further narrow the field
- 8) Don’t under-buy! That’s the cardinal sin (you must think longer-term or you’ll come to regret your decision)
- 9) Determine your unique and/or key requirements and focus primarily on those when comparing solutions (e.g., Will your operation mesh cleanly with any given solution? If not, how will you compensate? At what cost to efficiency and/or profitability?)

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.schell.com> for the Guide and eCommerce and Catalog Systems Forum

- 10) Avoid customization (but do embrace this if it's very clean, advantageous and affordable)
- 11) Favor systems that provide the most user-configurability (these offer greater flexibility and demonstrate superior design)
- 12) Favor systems that support true database server engines (e.g. Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, DB2, etc.); only the smallest companies can "afford" to trust their enterprise information to a low-end, unprotected database
- 13) Get a written proposal from every vendor under consideration
- 14) Beware of hidden costs, they could be staggering (e.g. third-party products and software licenses (esp. proprietary O/S) , "optional" training that really isn't, proprietary hardware you're forced to purchase from the vendor, actual manpower required for system "care and feeding")
- 15) Gauge each vendor's overall philosophy and market stance (how well will your company fit in?)
- 16) Avoid becoming a small fish in a big pond
- 17) Compare and contrast vendor history, stability, reputation and direction
- 18) Try to determine at what point, and for what reasons, previous clients abandoned the solution (from a financial and operational standpoint), and where your company comparatively lies
- 19) You'll get what you pay for, so do NOT nickel-and-dime this critical project (a nickel saved now could easily be a dollar lost later)
- 20) Call each vendor's tech support line (and check out any related resources)
- 21) Avoid companies that don't offer after-hours support (billable or not)

- 22) Check the availability, cost and quality of on-site training
- 23) Check user references (both large & small companies; in a similar niche to yourself, if possible)
- 24) Conduct an end-user site visit, if possible
- 25) Check out the vendor's User Group (buyer beware if none exists!)
- 26) Request to be added to the vendor's User Group or Support Group mailing list; avoid vendors who either have no such resource or (esp.) refuse to include you (they have something to hide)
- 27) Read the vendor's Software License and Software Maintenance Agreements in advance (some are absurdly prohibitive and one-sided); eliminate vendors entirely who refuse to provide these for your review
- 28) Seek and be prepared to act upon a "money-back" guarantee
- 29) Analyze and choose your new system as though "there's no turning back" (that's pretty much the case here, in fact)