Seven Ways To Make The Right Software Match For Your Business

By Claire Alexander, GM at Capterra

(NAPS)—We're all looking for the "right" match in our personal and professional lives. We visit online real estate marketplaces to help us make one of life's most important choices. We read online reviews to choose the perfect restaurant for a special occasion.

We search for online matches because we're unsure and confused by the too-many options out there.

Businesses have the same problem: According to Capterra, a business software review site, the average small to medium size business takes a little over two years to find the right software.

This process requires a great deal of effort and time because buying business software isn't straightforward. It can be tricky, even when choosing the everyday project management tool. While most of the time, any competent project management tool will work, there can be factors such as budget, compatibility and specific use cases to consider.

Tips for Finding The Right Match

Implementing the right software can help you close the skills gap within your organization, make wiser budget choices and ultimately save your company valuable time and resources.

However, even if the software is great, the wrong selection process can sink your business due to additional IT implementation costs, training expenses and lost productivity during your ramp-up stage.

You need to have a well-informed software match to make a great purchase decision. The secret to finding a good software match is simple: Gather the right requirements from your organization and then validate those needs against actual users' experiences.

Here's how to find the right software for your company's particular needs:

1. Talk to your stakeholders: Your software must meet the needs of all stakeholders, or you might end up re-

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gretting your purchase. Bear in mind that business software affects not only the direct end-user but also others, indirectly. Software preferred by one department may impact another through service slow-downs. End users, as well as those who will be affected by its processes, should be able to identify the problems that need to be solved, as well as contribute to purchasing requirements.

2. Identify your priorities: Start with the specific problem you're trying to solve and stick to your plan. Determine which features are must-haves and which are optional—otherwise, you may spend a lot of money for a platform that does a lot, but nothing as well as you need it to.

3. Start with a broad search, then drill down: Don't get overly specific right away. Rather than searching for software by brand name, search by category. There may be software alternatives you've never heard of that are less expensive and better for your use case. That lesser-known software with an avid user base may be precisely what you need. Explore your options and look at all your alternatives.

4. Seek out reviews by verified software users: Look for the websites with

verified business software reviews from human users. Verified users provide invaluable ground-level perspective: They'll know if that spreadsheet app actually saves time, or whether the interface is just too clunky. Want to know whether the software upgrades are as seamless as the vendor promises? Actual users will know.

5. Evaluate the number and recency of reviews: Software evolves—that's what makes it great. A product with 20 reviews from the past six months is probably more helpful than one with 200 reviews that are two years old. If you're looking for highly specialized software, realize there will likely be fewer reviews for you to consider because the user base is smaller. That doesn't mean the software isn't right for you.

6. Look for trends: You've already identified your business goals, so look for reviews that mention the things on your punch list. Does the product effectively act upon the specific tasks you've already decided were must-haves? If many users have reported it doesn't, move on.

7. Validate with a user persona: Look at the reviewer's profile: Is that reviewer in the same position as you and is their use case (more or less) the same as yours? If someone is in the same industry as you, assign a higher value to their commentary. Once you become familiar with their profile, you can see what software they use. Perhaps there's a mention of a type of software you might want to consider getting, too.

It's important to follow a disciplined process along with consulting independent, validated user reviews to ensure you make a wise purchase decision—and do it in a way that saves you time. In the long run, this approach will significantly decrease your risk of software purchase regret, freeing you up to tackle new opportunities with great, software-enabled capabilities in hand.