

# Everything Fits

I went shopping last week for a new pair of pants at “Everything Fits”. It’s an amazing store. Everything fits you like it was tailor-made. No more worries about waist size, length or cut. They have a spectacular new fabric that makes your pants fit perfectly. The fabric lasts forever, and it feels like silk but is priced like cotton. Best of all it is maintenance free. You never have to wash it because it can’t get dirty!

Sounds ludicrous, doesn’t it?

If you can’t believe the unbelievable about a pair of pants, why would you believe it about software? Yet businesses continue to purchase solutions based on what a salesperson tells them. I am not sure how to break it to you, but some salespeople exaggerate and omit pertinent information.

So how do you make a sound decision? Below is a checklist, in no particular order, to consider before purchasing software or signing a subscription contract.

**Simplicity** After a brief explanation by the vendor or after a day or two of practice, screens should be intuitive. If the interface is complicated, this will make for a steeper learning curve and frustration.

**Ease of implementation** It is a lot of work to move from any system—or no system—to a new system. Explain your general workflow and practice, and have your vendor present some implementation plans that will work for you—not for them.

**Interoperability** Does the system have multiple methods of passing data securely between other systems that you may be using—either in-house or with an outsource vendor.

**Affordable continuing support** If your system requires you to have a support contract, find out exactly what functions are covered. Discuss backups and security procedures, and make sure they are included. If you are charged an hourly fee for writing custom reports or for custom templates, WATCH OUT. You may have to buy the solution several times over.

**Productive from day one** Many companies buy software but never implement it because the process is too long, cumbersome, complicated or costly. We have all heard sales people say: “You can be using it in one day.” Make sure that is reality and not just a sales pitch.

**Does new software mean new hardware?** Assess whether your new software will work on your current hardware.

**Current Source Systems** Does the program run on freeware or an old database solution? This may not apply if you are using an ASP or SaaS solution, but installed software packages can be written in old programming languages and old database engines that have a high risk of corruption.

**Data Volume** Some solutions scale badly in the number of users and in amount of information they can handle. Find out how much information the system can handle and determine if that will meet your present and future needs.

**Support Support Support** Does the support line answer just as rapidly as the sales line? Do you have multiple methods of interacting with your support agent and what is their response time?

**Cost** Cost is NOT important. It is the return on your investment that counts. It is better to invest \$100,000 and reap \$1 million than to invest \$50,000 and reap nothing. Get a true representation of both cost and the return on your investment.

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