Session 11: Buying an application software Product

When does a project decide? What short cuts can we take? What specific tasks are needed?

A naive view

- "We’re going to buy packaged application software, so we don’t need to bother with all that formal project planning or rigorous requirements specification."
- "Let’s just invite some vendors to come in to give us a demonstration and then pick the one we like best."
- "Then if we need to, we can charter a project to install the selected product."

A common scenario

1. Project is formed to install the selected software product.
2. In the course of testing, some users discover that it lacks some feature they absolutely need.
3. Vendor is asked to provide customized features (for a fee)

Customizing packaged application software

- The vendor may either
  a. bid an add-on contract to do the customization
  b. or allow the customer access to the source code to do it themselves.

  Should we insist on seeing source code anyway?

- In either case, what happens when the vendor releases a new version of the product?
- How can we avoid that situation?
  a. Get the requirements right in the first place
  b. Restrict customization to isolatable front- and back-end under our control
Choosing the product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compile list of candidate products</td>
<td>As soon as system scope known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select leading candidates</td>
<td>ESD done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule vendor presentations</td>
<td>Start of architecture phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoroughly review winner</td>
<td>After all presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare discrepancies list</td>
<td>Architecture phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiate contract</td>
<td>Architecture phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design complete system</td>
<td>Architecture phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Install product for testing</td>
<td>Programming phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proceed as for in-house development</td>
<td>Programming phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance test per contract</td>
<td>Installation phase</td>
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</tbody>
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Requirements documentation short cuts

- When we're fairly certain that we're going to purchase rather than custom develop software, the ESD can and should:
  - avoid designing input-output *layouts & formats* (but still specify required *content*)
  - cite sections of a vendor's manual that exactly conform to some function or data definition.
  - prefer leading vendors' terminology

Should we evaluate the vendor as well as the product?

- How stable is the company? Will they be around if we need help?
- How competent are their programmers?
- Will they maintain a local office?