

Build vs. Buy: Assessing Your Options
"Constituent Relations in an E-World"
Rob Herzog, David Lawson

A checklist of issues to consider:

✓ Multi-year cost	<p>Run the numbers for multiple years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third party product: Annual license fees for third-party product and cost of customizations. • Contract development: Ongoing maintenance contracts/server costs for externally-built custom product • Internal: Cost of continued support and maintenance, pulling IT staff away from other responsibilities, outsourcing other functions while developing in house, additional servers..
✓ Features	<p>Are you really getting what you need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third party product will offer a bundle of features. All features may not fit with your needs. You have little influence on future functionality • Contract development: options allow you to concentrate on features you need, but time or money may create piecemeal implementation
✓ Integration with campus systems	<p>Understand the technology trends (more services=more integration)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will third party product integrate with your legacy data or other interactive services? Your campus calendar, your existing news system? • Contract development: How much experience do application developers have with your array of systems (web, alumni/donor data). • Internal: Does your internal staff have expertise/time to integrate your systems?
✓ Staff impact	<p>On a small campus, an important factor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third-party products: Minimal staff impact. Requires someone knowledgeable to manage relationship and provide quality assurance. • Contract development: Who will outline requirements; be technical liaison during implementation on your campus, provide quality assurance? • Internal: Who will manage timelines and objectives (you or IT)? Will additional IT staff be required? IT will be required to have full range of programming expertise; If key staff member leaves, does development come to a stand-still?
✓ Implementation time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third-party products: How responsive will your school be to establishing requirements; how quickly can vendor "flip-the-switch" with your logo on their web products. • Contract development: Significant time to outline requirements, familiarize them with your system • Internal:
✓ Positioning for future projects	<p>What course are you setting upon?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third-party products: If vendor doesn't deliver down the road, how hard is it to change course and find another vendor or start from scratch? • Contract development: Are you going to rely on that firm for all customizations, upgrades. All work is still billable. •
✓ Campus politics	<p>The intangible variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third-party product: Will a small price tag be too good to pass up on a limited budget and with limited staff? • Contract development: Will a larger price tag for contract development scare off senior staff? • Will IT department want to prove itself at all costs, at the expense of other projects/needs?
✓ Other benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third-party product: The ability to try before you buy: It's already built • Contracted development: Take advantage of industry expertise of entire company • Internal: Lowest start-up cost, can quickly respond to needs without new contracts