



## When to Outsource

### **CrownPeak Technology's VP details why you shouldn't build your own Website management application.**

As marketers, we're particularly susceptible to marketing. I know whenever I see new whiz-bang technologies emerge, I'm like the kid in "Christmas Story" opening up the Red Ryder BB Gun—"Careful son, that'll put your eye out". But as many of us all too painfully know, integrating technology for online marketing solutions can be an incredibly cumbersome task. It's like when you open your gifts on Christmas morning and the train set is strewn about the house as you tear through the 400-page installation guide... Ah, the holidays.

We know inherently that we need to keep up with trends, and now we need to even more carefully measure the ROI of our digital marketing campaigns. Information we can gather about the way customers interact with our products and services is an essential bit of effectively growing our sales.

I've previously written about some of the specific advantages that the software-as-a-service platform has vs. installed software for deploying new marketing applications. From digital asset management to site search, content management, sales force automation, Web analytics, email campaign management, CRM—almost every marketing application can be purchased as a software service these days.

That said, I still (even today) encounter digital marketers who are contemplating doing something I consider even more outrageous than buying an installed software package. They seriously consider *building* their own software applications to manage their Website and digital marketing applications. They hire consultants who build requirements documents, who in turn build RFP's, who in turn propose more discovery phases and then build a set of tools to manage pieces of the digital marketers' solution. One digital marketer even told me, "I can't purchase software, because my CFO wants my new Web site project to be a capital expenditure—so I can't have any recurring costs." Okay, so how we, as marketers, should be communicating with our CFO is the topic for a whole other article. But throwing all common sense to the wind, and metamorphosing your marketing department into a software development startup simply because you don't want to have a confrontation with your financial folks makes no sense at all.

Now, I never say "never." I'm not saying that it's *never* a good idea to build technology. There are some specific applications: Google needs to develop their own technical infrastructure; Amazon needs to own their own ecommerce technology. These are competitive advantages to their core business. But building your own content management system, email campaign tool or banner ad management system is not a competitive advantage. If you're even asking the "build vs. buy" question about the applications that manage your Website and marketing campaigns— you're not one of those companies that needs to develop it.

## What are the arguments?

Here are the top four arguments often made for building a Website management application, and why they're not true:

### **1. It's less expensive.**

This just simply isn't true. Developing custom applications for your business is always more expensive for your organization in the long run. Now, if you're architecting a tin roof shack and

► When to Outsource

you're comparing it against the cost of a Beverly Hills mansion, of course it will be less expensive. So when considering the expense, make sure that you're comparing like-featured products. With solutions for digital marketing applications coming in all shapes and sizes, it is more than likely there is something you can utilize within your budget constraints.

**2. We'll get what we want.**

This one may be true— but probably isn't. With so many products on the market today encompassing all aspects of the digital marketing arena, it's a rare feature or integration that you're dreaming about that hasn't either already been developed or done. Besides, why do you want to try and capture every single thing that you might ever want in your development project? What if you miss a critical feature during your scoping phase with your developers? How long will it take them to deliver that feature?

**3. We'll own it.**

Well, this one's true— but why would you want to? I dare say that any of us that are computer savvy have desk drawers filled with CD's of software we've installed and given up using. They end up as drink coasters. Software products, by their very nature, are meant to have a shelf life. Why would you want to go to the trouble of developing your own software application, only to see it become stale? How much value is that adding to your company? Or, as Dr. Phil would say, "How's that workin' out for ya?"

**4. Better support— if we own it we know how to fix it.**

This is an argument posed by those who've been burned. Yes, the software industry has been notoriously sloppy when it comes to customer service. Everyone has a horror story or two to share about support from one of their previous software vendors. Today, much of that has changed. Take, for example, the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform. SaaS vendors (CrownPeak included) realize that software as a tool is a commodity. Software as a solution is only as good as the people who make it work. So, they are vested each and every month to ensure your company is maximizing its software investment.

Software-as-a-Service has radically changed the landscape of all software – both installed and hosted – for not only vendors, but the customers as well. In a memo to Microsoft employees in November, Bill Gates outlined Software Services as "impacting most everything we do." He said that he's come to realize the "transformative potential for combining software and services."

With this in mind, as you consider the next redesign of your Website and how you'll integrate email marketing, Web analytics, content/digital asset management, site search, banner ad management, lead generation and/or CRM application – you should consider very carefully the differences in products – whether they be installed or software-as-a-service products.

What you should *not* consider is having the same old buy vs. build argument with yourself. That's one argument you can throw out the window this year— Happy Belated New Year!