Off the shelf software solutions

There are many off the shelf helpdesk and servicedesk systems available for use within businesses like Numatic. Currently Numatic are using an off the shelf solution – SupportWorks ITHD system, which has been in place at Numatic for many years now, Numatic now require a new software to replace their current system. They have

Comparison of different software available:

Below a comparison of different helpdesk systems has been undertaken to find the best solution for Numatic.

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|  | SupportWorks | Cherwell Service Management Tool | Richmond Service Desk |
| Functionality | Integrated knowledge base,  Email integration,  ITIL processes,  Asset management,  Email integration,  SaaS based, | Self-service portal,  ITIL processes,  Complex workflows,  Integration with other systems,  Knowledge base, | Customer service portal,  Complex dashboard,  Export to Excel function,  Post resolution survey,  ITIL processes |
| Cost | £ 9,500 plus yearly licence and maintenance fees | £74,360 plus yearly licence and maintenance fees | £25,200 plus yearly licence and maintenance fees |
| Application type | Desktop application | Web application and mobile app | Web applications |

From the table above, the SupportWorks system is best matched to the business needs of Numatic, this software is an updated and newer version of the currently used system. Simply upgrading has many advantages including, ongoing support with the system and already being aware of how the system works. However, this could also be a very risky option, many of the problems that exist in the current system, may still be prevalent in the upgraded version, meaning the client will be paying more money but still may not be happy with the system.

Bespoke vs off the shelf systems

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|  | Off the shelf | Bespoke |
| Cost | There are many costs associated with an off the shelf system, there is the one of cost associated with the purchasing of the software. As well as more regular costs required, such as licencing and maintenance. | Normally the cost of bespoke systems are very high, due to not only the cost of development but also investigation and requirement elicitation and the rest of the software development lifecycle. However, in this instance bespoke development will be free due to being part of a university project and therefore would be an ideal opportunity to develop a system to the client’s exact requirements. However, there will be a slight cost incurred in deploying the system and training users. |
| Future Development | Many of the off the shelf systems are continually developing throughout updates and newer versions of the software, however, these updates add additional costs to the business and require installation. There is also limited scope for customisations to the software, which has been done with SupportWorks used at the moment. These customisations allow the generic system to be slightly tailored to Numatic. | After deployment of the bespoke system, Numatic will have full control over the system and this means that any additional requirements and functionality to the system can be added if required. Numatic have in house developers that could do this if required. |
| Functionality | The systems investigated had a wide selection of functionality available, including additional parts of the system, such as, an asset management system. Whilst these additional functionality is helpful to have, it may not all be required for use within Numatic. | There will be less functionality in the bespoke software compared to that of the off the shelf systems. The functionality would be limited to the initial requirements of the system, however, this reduces the complexity of the system, making it easier to use. It also means that there is not a lot of unused parts of the system. |
| Fit into the business needs | The system will be not be tailored to Numatic’s way of working and is a generic system. This means that the business needs to work around the system which often causes problems or additional work for the department and is not ideal. | A bespoke system will fit into Numatic’s way of working and business needs. Before development will start, analysis of requirements will be done allowing for the system to be developed exactly how it is wanted. |
| Support | Off the shelf systems, have the advantage of being used by many different customers meaning that finding a major bug in the system is unlikely. Most of the systems have dedicated support methods, such as, 24/7 support for major issues, bug reporting and online forums offering support. | Bespoke systems do not provide that level of support, however, once the system is handed over to Numatic, the system will be their own and the developers at Numatic will have the knowledge to be able to go through the code should it be required. As a bespoke system will most likely be a lot simpler, it will also mean that debugging any issues should not be too complicated. |

Conclusions

From the above research and discussions with the client about a solution to a helpdesk system, they felt that it is a great opportunity to develop a bespoke helpdesk system to meet their exact requirements. As cost was a main factor in choosing a solution, it meant a huge saving and having the added benefits that bespoke development will bring; tailoring a system to Numatic, options for future development and all required functionality.