INTRODUCTION

One of the most common type of website is those that are used to access databases. This is most likely done for user-friendliness; the majority of users do not want to enter SQL statements into software applications such as SQL Developer, Toad, or SQL\*Plus. However, not every organization has the expertise in-house to develop and maintain such web-enabled systems. Thus the choice must be made to either outsource its maintenance and development, or hire the personnel needed to accomplish this task.

ADVANTAGES OF OUTSOURCING

The first advantage that I can see for outsourcing this task is that of speed. Going through the process of advertising a job position, interviewing, and the remainder of the hiring process can be cumbersome and lengthy. By outsourcing it, an organization may be able eliminate this process, and hence have a web site up and running much faster. The organization can then focus its time and energy on its overall business plans. Second, this project may only be a short-term one, with most of the effort going into the development phases. The maintenance of such systems may not require full-time employees. If this project was contracted to an outside vendor, a deal can be struck where maintenance only requires a certain number of hours a week. Perhaps another advantage is that of mitigating the risk of employee turnover. An outside organization specializing in web design and maintenance can better manage this through required documentation ensuring that employee turnover will not result in instability.

DISADVANTAGES OF OUTSOURCING

The first disadvantage that I can see for outsourcing this task is that of communication. In-house employees are better connected to other employees, and are more “in-tune” with the organization’s culture. With an outside contractor, the risk of communication problems is obviously greater. These problems increase even more when the outside vendor is located in another country. Perhaps the biggest disadvantage I see is that of the security and privacy risk. An organization with valuable intellectual property puts it at risk by contracting an outside vendor. I see this risk increasing if the vendor is located in another country that has a history of not respecting intellectual property (e.g., China). Proprietary information is often stored in databases (e.g., trade secrets). The money saved in development may not be worth the risk of losing company secrets.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation that I would make regarding choosing to outsource the development of database enabled websites would depend on the organization. For small, non-profit organizations without valuable intellectual property, the rewards of outsourcing probably outweigh the risks. For larger organizations with an abundant amount of intellectual property, the risks are probably not worth the potential savings. I would advise these types of organizations (e.g., large pharmaceutical companies) to manage their own team of software and website developers.