



# Build vs. Buy

The case for purchasing a field service management platform versus custom build



# Executive Overview

As field service organizations research and compare commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) software solutions, they often also consider building an in-house system with internal resources.

## Perceived benefits of in-house builds typically evaluated include:

- Your company knows its business better than anyone else
- The application can be built to your specific needs
- You'll have more control over the final product and roadmap
- The resources to perform the work are already on board
- An internal build is less costly than a COTS solution
- There is a one-time build cost, with no recurring fees

## While there may be aspects of truth to some of these points, our experience has shown that the perceived benefits are significantly negated by the following realities:

- Company focus is not field service management
- Limited skills and expertise
- Cost of ongoing development and support
- Challenges in creating a roadmap for the future
- Infrastructure cost, maintenance, and support
- Opportunity costs

**This paper details why it is almost always more expensive – from financial and resource standpoints – to build an in-house solution.**



# Company Focus

While there may be a team or multiple teams of strong, talented designers, engineers, analysts, and programmers within the organization, companies contemplating building their own field service management solutions are generally not focused on delivering software as a service (SaaS) solutions. SaaS companies are organized and laser-focused on designing, developing, testing, and maintaining high-quality software that can also scale and adapt to evolving corporate needs and requirements. In these typical environments, technical teams are optimally focused on helping the enterprise focus on the core business, rather than building software solutions.





# Skills and Expertise

Because your technical teams are generally not focused on field service management, despite their strong technical expertise, there is a high likelihood that there will be a lack of understanding of all the functionality that is required to build and deliver a solution that meets your company's needs.

This will likely lead to problems early on that will be difficult or impossible to overcome in the future. In addition, it is increasingly difficult to locate, hire, and retain top technical talent – finding and adding domain expertise for field service management exacerbates these challenges.

## Other critical decisions that need to be researched, analyzed, and ultimately decided upon include:

<b>Design</b>	A bad design or a design that does not account for your current environment, your evolving needs, scalability, and changing market conditions and forces will have long-lasting ramifications. This risk also includes that potential of needing to scrap the project and start over, further delaying any benefits of a new system.
<b>Architecture</b>	How your system is designed and developed architecturally will go a long way in determining the ultimate success of the project.
<b>Cloud Vs. On-Premise</b>	You will need to decide between building a cloud vs. on-premise solution. A cloud system will generally lower costs, provide more security, better secure data, and provide for easier updating. However, your business may not be organized to support this. This would leave you with an on-premise solution, with none of the associated benefits of a cloud-based solution.
<b>Database</b>	The best and most secure, accessible, and affordable database will need to be selected, involving another time-consuming and resource-intensive evaluation process.
<b>Development Frameworks</b>	You will need to research and develop the ideal framework for your system, including toolsets that accommodate any data consolidation, data migration, and system integration needs.
<b>Mobile Considerations</b>	Beyond the core system development, a proper 21st-century field service management system should consider the wide range of mobile integrations, including the evolution of your employees' and customers' mobile needs and wishes.
<b>Application Built For A Specific Use Case</b>	It is inevitable that needs will change and evolve, even in a focused area such as field service. If the application is not designed for unforeseen use cases, the likelihood of failure or at least unmet expectations will increase.
<b>Lack Of Industry Best Practices</b>	Even with a highly-skilled team, the team will not be able to maintain the highest level of field service knowledge and best practices, given that it is not its primary focus.



# Cost of Ongoing Development and Support

Your company will be responsible for all maintenance and support of the applications, a costly proposition. This includes not only the “product” or system launch, but all bug reporting and resolution, feature and bug testing, user training, security, and compliance.

Adding to the cost and complexity of ongoing development and support is the fact that development tools and methods vary and evolve over time. Keeping up with these changes is not trivial, making the application difficult to support in the long term.

“Tribal knowledge” – specialized knowledge by a small group of people within a company, even if unintended – is often a consequence of internal development. This leads to an inevitable dilution of the intellectual property that went into building the initial custom solution due to organization changes, attrition, etc.



# Challenges in Creating a Roadmap for the Future

Because business needs and market trends evolve over time, the application needs to be constantly updated and enhanced to meet these new needs.

This ongoing research, analysis, and updating takes significant resources and is difficult to implement.





# Infrastructure

Numerous infrastructure considerations and complexities include:



Hosting costs



Data privacy



Datasecurity



Monitoring



Support



Contingency  
planning



Continuous funding  
for maintaining and  
upgrading technology



# Opportunity Cost

Building software can steal precious internal resources from other high-profit opportunities within your organization. If resources are devoted to developing a field service management solution, they will be unavailable for other projects and activities, unless a temporary stop is put on the project. This can put your competitors at an advantage as they pursue other strategic opportunities, rather than devote resources to building and supporting software.



As a global leader in field service management, our solutions are designed and built with a focus on providing your customers with an exceptional experience, while delivering operational efficiencies and digital transformation capabilities. Our secure and flexible solutions provide organizations with the ability to optimally manage their workforces, while increase revenue, improving the customer experience, and reducing costs.

“With ServicePower, we have the best providers available when our customers need them, and continually drive improvement in our network through AI-based logic and real-time scheduling and warranty processing.”

- Field Service Operations and Strategy, LG Electronics USA

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