

Accounting Software Selection Tips



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10 Practical Tips for Selecting Construction Accounting Software

1. Do the Research

Purchasing an accounting system is a major investment. Search for vendors. Gather information. Interview key personnel in your company that will directly use or require reports from the system. Create a detailed list of system features that are critical and one of wish list items. Talk directly with the vendors. See demos and ask questions. Don't short change yourself by ignoring this area.

2. See a Live Demonstration of Each System Being Considered

CD demos are wonderful tools to use during the information gathering stage, but nothing beats seeing the system work in person. Getting acquainted with the look and feel of a system will tell you about its ease of use and how technologically current it is.

3. Ask the Sales Representative to "Show You How"

Many salespeople will give a canned presentation. Don't be afraid to interrupt at any point during the demo to ask questions. Make them "show you" the processes involved in creating that report, reversing an invoice or posting payroll. Do they ask questions about your business and needs? Also, ask about your representative's background. Have they ever supported the product they sell by working in the support department?

4. Check User References

Vendors should willingly supply you with the names and phone numbers of several clients currently using their accounting system. When calling references, be prepared with a list of questions to ask. It is advisable to call a minimum of three references.

5. Check Professional References

Ask for a list of professionals with whom the vendor works, such as CPA firms with a strong construction focus.

6. Be Wary of Competitors who Use Too Much "Trash Talk"

Friendly competition is to be expected between vendors; however persistent bashing and bad-mouthing should signal a red flag. Be wary of any vendor that uses unscrupulous methods to get your business.

7. Use Reviews and Purchased Evaluation Guides with Caution

There are several trade-publication reviews and guides available for purchase that critique accounting software. Although these can be helpful as a research starting point, the information found in many are supplied by the vendors themselves with little-to-no verification of accuracy. Don't base your buying decision solely on a review.

8. Check Out Their Support Services

The perfect software won't do a thing for you if your staff isn't properly trained and supported. Analyze their support department. Do they provide toll-free, unlimited support? How many representatives are on staff and what is their average tenure? What training options are available? Is training included in the price? Ask for reports on their support statistics.

9. Don't Just Go with the "Big Name Brand"

Just because several contractors, including your buddy at Wally's Contracting down the street, uses the well known "Widgets Accounting" doesn't necessarily mean that it will work for your business. Buying a system on name alone doesn't guarantee success. Your company is unique. Find what is right for you, be it the big player or a small upstart.

10. Get It in Writing

If you are asking for a unique feature or service, make certain to get it in writing. A verbal mention or promise of your special request will mean nothing after the sale is final.