

Build vs Buy

A WHITE PAPER FROM



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Overview

If there's one central theme surrounding end users of SharePoint®, it's that many of them experience shortcomings with base SharePoint functionality. Most SharePoint users have unique solution requirements and SharePoint's base potential isn't always equipped to adequately deliver to all end users.

Is it better to build custom software or buy add-ons?

So when solution requirements demand custom software development, as opposed to simple configuration, IT organizations often discover that the results are unpredictable. Furthermore, it brings about the "million dollar question" that we will explore: Is it better to build custom software for SharePoint and own the resulting intellectual property? Or buy commercial base software add-ons and configure them to support unique solutions?

Here at Bamboo Solutions, we believe that building custom software for SharePoint is not a cost-effective approach, as it can be an ineffective use of time and resources.

01 *A Brief History of SharePoint*

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SharePoint began in many organizations as a simple intranet, a document repository, or a place to manage lists. From SharePoint 2007 to SharePoint 2013 (and soon SharePoint 2016), broad market acceptance and technical flexibility have both allowed companies to use it as part of their mission-critical IT infrastructure, with the goal of delivering business applications directly to end users through a consistent SharePoint interface.

These days, it's not uncommon for SharePoint uses to include forms of collaborative project and portfolio management, case and request management, social applications, sales, marketing automation, document management and a seemingly endless list of special-case departmental sites that enhance team collaboration. In addition, budget tightening has caused both corporations and government entities to use SharePoint as an alternative platform to legacy enterprise content management (ECM) applications that routinely cost millions of dollars to develop and maintain.

For example:

- A global oil company that currently uses SharePoint to underpin cross-plant Facilities Management by initially presenting content from their legacy ECM system, and plans to eventually migrate into a "pure" SharePoint solution.
- A major financial services company that has standardized on SharePoint as their "presentation layer" to aggregate data from legacy SQL[®] databases and display meaningful risk management dashboards.



- A defense agency using SharePoint to replace disparate ECM/workflow solutions that currently assign and track tasks across component agencies.

When it comes to improving efficiency and functionality, the above examples are just a few scenarios where using SharePoint is effective. Of course, when it comes to what drives admins and end users to the million dollar discussion of “build vs. buy,” it’s always a business need. Here at Bamboo, we have plenty of success stories and other positive benefits of “buy” over “build,” but we’ve found that there are other factors that are important in this decision. While our customers bottom line is always front and center, providing quality product demos help our customers as well in the long run.

02 *Solutions for (Almost) Every Situation*

When we at Bamboo® talk with customers, we are often surprised to learn that many have no real overarching SharePoint strategy. In fact, AIIM® estimates say that almost half of SharePoint customers lack a clear strategy. (Source: **AIIM 2015: Connecting & Optimizing SharePoint**)

What's even more significant, is that SharePoint users often tell us there is no high-level agreement among their staff about what role SharePoint should have as a collaboration platform relative to email, voice communications and the various social media approaches.

Thankfully for these SharePoint users, there are solutions available to get the most out of their SharePoint experience. Here's an overview of the types of industries and business objective solutions that Bamboo has to offer:

SOLUTIONS BY INDUSTRY



SOLUTIONS BY BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

However, when discussing the solutions strategy for build vs. buy, there are scenarios where it's advisable for your company to undergo a customized build. For instance, sometimes business requirements are unique enough to where the "build" option is the best course of action, or a scenario where a large portion of the functionality won't be utilized for a considerable period of time.

While we here at Bamboo are always confident that we have the solution 99% of the time for SharePoint optimization, sometimes it's just better to build your own solution. That said, there are plenty of obstacles that come with that approach, and we'll take a closer look into that in this next section.

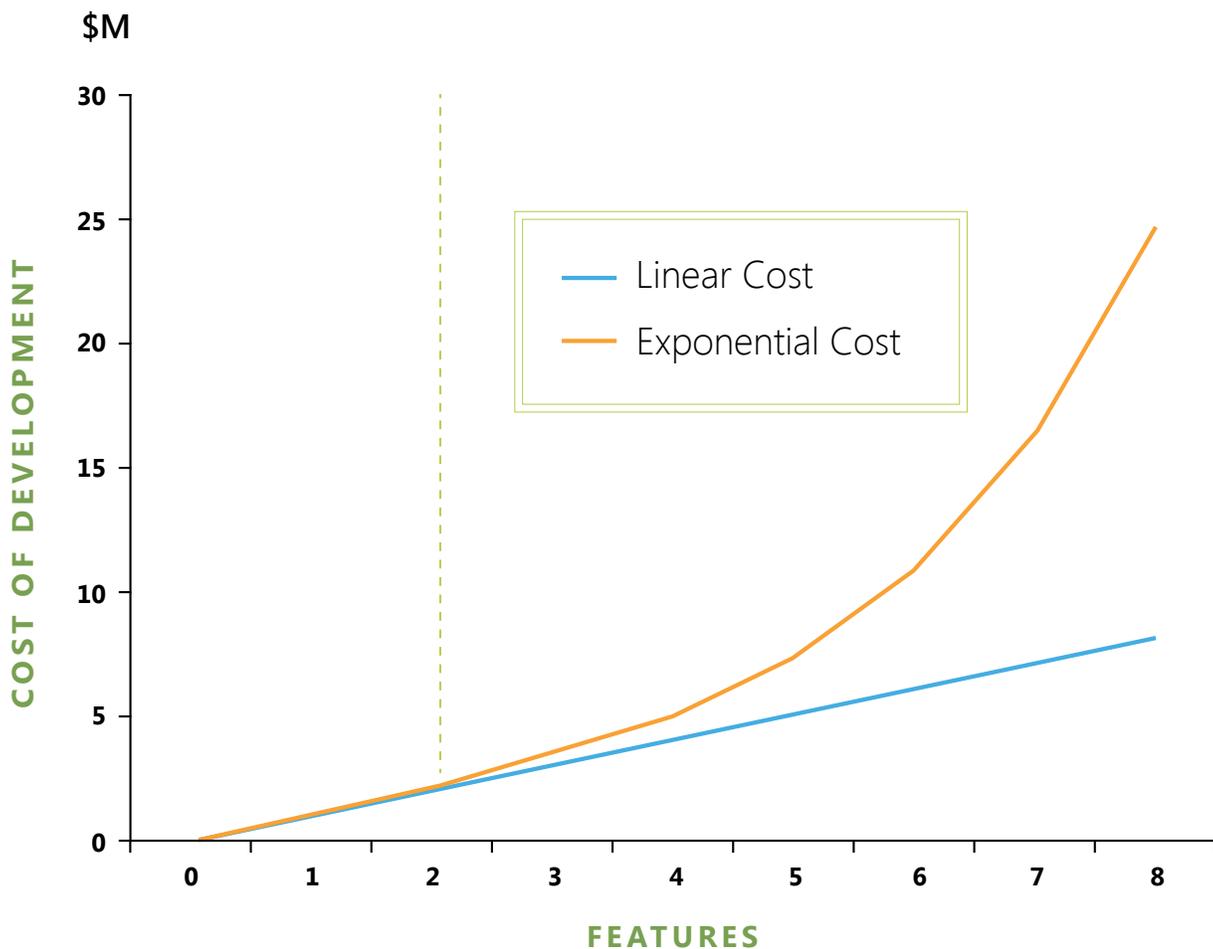
03 *A Developer's Roadmap Has Hidden Potholes*

When the decision is made to build a customized SharePoint solution, there are some statistics to consider. In addition to the increasing cost due to software complexity, projects themselves carry a variety of risk. The annual CHAOS report by the Standish Group International, states that the average software project success rate is 34%, with 15% of projects failing outright and 51% categorized as "challenged." A December 2013 Ambysoft project success survey presents information that when it comes to quality, 10% of responders prefer to deliver on time and on budget, 56% prefer to deliver high-quality, easy-to-maintain systems and 34% say both are equally important. Clearly, projects of this type present very specific challenges to IT organizations.

Unless you have substantial competency in software development with SharePoint, your overall project is probably at risk of up to 50% in time and cost. For instance, an IT team would have to undertake a huge responsibility that cuts into valuable time, and is even more difficult in an

environment where resources are already stretched thin. There's another component too, and that's the cost of custom software development not ending when the project ends. Specifically, there will always be a variety of ongoing maintenance after the project goes live, which includes bug fixes, testing and optimizing new versions of SharePoint, .NET, SQL or other changes to the platform. Due to a discernible lack of documentation when going the "build via developer" route, it is often unclear what is customized and how it will be sustainable down the road. That becomes an even bigger challenge when a company experiences a change in IT resources.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT COSTS vs FUNCTIONALITY



In this day and age, employees aren't staying with the same company forever, and that goes for IT/developer professionals as well. The problems of going the "build via developer" route are further exacerbated if the specific individuals involved take on new roles or completely leave the company. Also, recruiting employees with the right mix of tech expertise is not an easy task, and once you start on a "custom path," it is difficult to detour from that path. That means if you scale or extend functionality features, custom path often requires a good amount of reverse engineering, which can waste valuable time and resources

For the next section, let's review how Bamboo has come up with a way to address the issues mentioned in this section.

04 ***Using Commercial Solution Frameworks to Extend SharePoint***

Bamboo Solutions has pioneered a portfolio of commercially-tested SharePoint components that can be deployed by non-programmers. Bamboo has architected these components to "snap together" into Solution Frameworks that support the growing breadth and complexity of SharePoint-based applications.

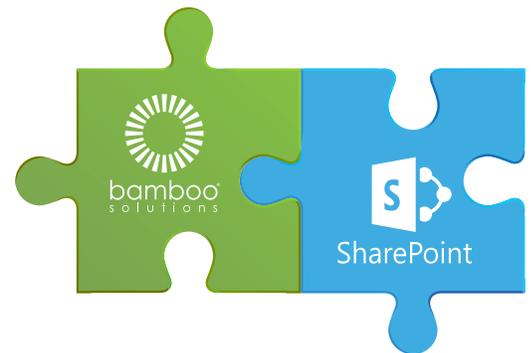
From our perspective, each category of software within a Solution Framework should solve a tactical problem in its own right, but also integrate into a complete set of capabilities that allow you to use SharePoint over a broad set of use cases, including:

- Individual Web Parts (components). These are the individual software building blocks that can be put together and configured to help create unique solutions, but also tend to be functional and very specific in nature.

- Business process and/or workflow automation. Tools that allow you to define and automate business processes in SharePoint, including decisions related to each process.
- Management tools such as system management, user management, content administration, archival and systems analysis.
- Migration and integration tools within SharePoint, and between SharePoint and external or cloud environments.
- Purpose-built business applications. For example, project management, social software, community management, document management, document conversion, and knowledge management.

There are a number of software vendor offerings in the marketplace, and many of these suppliers focus on one area, while others will focus on specific business use cases where their domain knowledge is particularly strong.

Bamboo's approach is to develop web parts as part of a solution framework that allows our customers to deploy a broad set of use cases. As a result of this methodology, whether our customers use components within a Solutions Framework and configure them to their needs, or deploy purpose-built applications and configure them, the same parallel library of components are available to be used in new ways.



To measure the value of buying a solution, you have to examine the perks and benefits of it. With Bamboo, we are responsible for adapting the product to meet the changing tech landscapes, correcting UI/UX issues and making sure the data migration is efficient from one release to the next. Sometimes you have to look closely at these sort of benefits to see how valuable working with an entity like Bamboo can be as opposed to doing a risky custom build.

05

In Summation: Find the “Why” in “Buy”

The debate of “Build vs. Buy” is a popular one in the SharePoint world, and for good reason. What we do at Bamboo is offer products and services that help our customers get more from their base SharePoint experience. With us, our clients receive updates and feature enhancements for the products and services that they purchase. Comparatively, any in-house company would have to spend a lot of time and money to get those sort of beneficial resources. We have the answer that our clients are looking for today and not six months down the road after a lengthy “build” process.

That’s our “why” when it comes to our “buy” business model, and we have years of experience with satisfied customers to show for it.



ABOUT BAMBOO

The Leading Provider of Software Solutions for Microsoft® SharePoint.

Established in 2001, Bamboo® Solutions provides innovative products for the management of applications, processes, data, and users on the Microsoft SharePoint platform. The technologies we have developed enhance SharePoint while saving our customers significant time and money. Our evolving portfolio of more than 70 products — ranging from components and applications to solutions and suites — provide a broad range of enhanced capabilities and solutions that enable organizations to maximize their investment in SharePoint.

Learn more about what Bamboo Solutions can do for you. Submit your inquiry [HERE](#).