Software delivery

Build vs buy decision checklist

From the field note "Build vs buy for internal tools: when off-the-shelf SaaS stops fitting".

The short version

- Buy when the workflow is the same in every company like yours. Build only the parts that set your operation apart.
- Compare **three-year cost at your expected headcount**, including admin time and maintenance, not the first-year subscription.
- Low-code tools are a real middle option for small teams and simple data. They get harder to run as logic, users and integrations grow.
- The most common good answer is a **thin custom layer**: keep the SaaS tools that work and build only the workflow and integrations between them.
- Before you build, name who maintains the tool after launch. Without an owner, a custom tool turns into a liability.

The checklist

- [ ] Is this workflow a differentiator, or would a peer company say "we do exactly that"?
- [ ] How many systems must it read from or write to, and do those systems have usable APIs?
- [ ] What is the per-seat cost at your expected headcount in three years, including likely price rises?
- [ ] Where must the data live, and do compliance rules, client contracts or audits limit which vendors can hold it?
- [ ] How often do the rules change, and can you change them yourself in the tool you're considering?
- [ ] Who will own the tool after launch: fixing bugs, applying security updates and handling change requests?
- [ ] If the vendor raised prices or shut down, how hard would it be to leave with your data and history?

Want a second pair of eyes on your answers?

Book a free 30-minute discovery call at www.seriustech.com/contact or email contact@seriustech.com. We reply within 1 business day.

Read the full note with examples and sources at www.seriustech.com/blog/build-vs-buy-internal-tools. © SeriusTech.