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Tags: [IWMS](#), [Software Selection](#)

Taking the sting out of IWMS software selection

Today we have a guest post of Mike Singleton and Anthony Brown who are with Houston-based eBusiness Strategies, LLC (www.ebiz-strategy.com) . In their post they discuss IWMS selection processes.

IWMS [software selection](#) is a complicated and highly-technical process, with selection committees generally comprised of space managers, maintenance supervisors, lease administrators and mid-level management. While committee members know their own domains well, they usually have little or no experience evaluating and selecting software systems.

Therefore, they typically begin with no clear direction of the overall game plan and often lack the Big Picture perspective necessary to make an informed strategic decision of such magnitude. IT is commonly involved to evaluate a good fit within the existing infrastructure and insure compliance with the organization's technical guidelines. However, IT has no experience with IWMS issues and requirements and quite often exerts considerable pressure on the selection committee to adopt add-on solution offerings from well-entrenched corporate systems such as SAP.

Also, organizations often fail to document current or future-state processes prior to initiating the IWMS selection process. As a result, considerable confusion can result from software vendors driving their own demo content which typically focuses on "bells and whistles" rather than true operational requirements. In the end, the selection committee is left with a jumble of impressions and expectations which may or may not be accurate and rarely result in a clear conclusion.

Instead of an ad-hoc uncontrolled process, the selection committee should do the following:

- Engage a trusted technical advisor with proven experience specifying and selecting successful IWMS solutions
- Develop RFI and RFP templates around the organization's desired functional requirements
- Develop vendor demonstration scripts unique to those functional requirements
- Implement a consistent evaluation methodology and vendor scoring toolset to insure an apples-to-apples comparison
- Utilize a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) modeling tool to provide credible Return on Investment (ROI) data

Using this approach will guarantee that each vendor addresses real functional requirements, eliminating the risk of "smoke and mirrors" clouding the picture. Each vendor will be consistently scored so that compliance with the demonstration scripts and a true judgment of solution fit can be determined. And having all vendors quote the same solutions will ensure that the expected return can be vetted against perceived benefits, resulting in a more accurate measure of long-term value.

Selecting an IWMS solution is definitely complex and risky. Nevertheless, applying a consistent methodology for requirements definition, solution fit, vendor scoring and cost modeling will provide your organization the best chance for making the right decision the first time.