

Commercially available software solutions are developed with specific technology expertise and deliver a faster return on investment than an in-house development.

In contrast, custom developments are expensive and time-consuming, demanding a high concentration of expensive internal Research and Development resources and create risk to the business. They also almost always fail to meet the business requirements given the complexity of today's corporate document needs and fast moving market conditions. In effect, these in-house developments are not flexible enough to enable swift change to critical documents should market conditions or competitive pressures dictate.

Preliminary Checklist

Before you begin an in-house build program, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Can you predict how your document automation needs will change during the next few years?
2. Do you have the in-house development and project management expertise required to complete the project?
3. Can your business support the long development cycle of a custom build?
4. Do you want to support, maintain and enhance the application as your needs change?

The Business Challenge

Assuming the answer is "yes" to the above, it is relatively easy to cost a custom build. These costs include developer salaries and benefits, possibly including training for developers if they are using new technology; additional infrastructure costs associated with maintaining development and testing equipment; and on-going code maintenance and bug fix costs. The real challenge is to evaluate the wider implications for your business.

In House Development Risk	ActiveDocs Advantage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unknown costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Known costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Estimated delivery time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Known delivery time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Known functionality
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One off development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing product development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra programming required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple processing capabilities in ActiveDocs today allows for use within your enterprise
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developer expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experienced team dealing with document automation since 1999
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In house testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality assurance team; field testing by ActiveDocs client base
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unknown performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proven performance and scaling
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported internally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Software Assurance by an international team ensuring the latest features and compliance to MS technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff directed from other applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share a dedicated team with ActiveDocs client base

Short Term Process Improvement

In-house developments tend to fall back on tried-and-tested development and process methodologies. Specifications are naturally grounded in “What we need now” and development is based around the skills available.

Commercial suppliers spread the cost of development across their customer base, whereas in-house builds necessarily concentrate on vital features. By the time the build is finished, your users may well be demanding more functionality, support for new industry standards, and extra delivery channels.

Your Core Competency

A real danger with custom builds is they dilute your organisation’s core competency. (We’ve yet to find an investment bank that also wants to set up business as a world-class developer of document automation software). The opportunity costs of tying your IT resource up in long-term projects when they could be involved in propelling the business forward are high.

Complicating Software

However, the build versus buy question has been complicated by the limitations of some commercially available document automation software.

As Glenn Ricketts, ActiveDocs CEO explains: Often organisations have been forced to develop these applications in-house because the off-the-shelf products available are expensive to support, require customisation and ongoing programming effort, and can be difficult to use. When faced with these high on-going costs of ownership the obvious choice is to hire developers and do it yourself. The problems only surface after you start the project and the real costs become known.

Such software products have blurred the demarcation line between self-build and off-the-shelf, and have made it more difficult for organisations to determine a true Total Cost of Ownership.

Why ActiveDocs Opus wins Build Versus Buy

ActiveDocs Opus transcends the risks; costs and complexity of either Build or Buy options. The software was developed after years of dedicated research into the document automation needs of a variety of organisations globally, primarily in the Financial, Banking and Insurance markets. It is these sectors where the most complex documents are usually found, however ActiveDocs products have been tested and implemented by major corporations throughout the World in every market sector.

Clients who were considering a custom build have chosen ActiveDocs for the following reasons:

Research and Development

ActiveDocs software is the product of extensive research of organisations in various vertical markets Worldwide. Every year we devote a significant portion of our resources to ongoing product development. This means your managers and IT developers can concentrate on high-value projects, while we ensure ActiveDocs always leads the field.

100% Open Standards

Faced with proprietary commercial offerings, custom builds seem to offer control and flexibility compared with being locked into a sub-optimal solution. ActiveDocs is the first solution built 100% on open standards. This delivers enormous benefits: rapid integration with third party applications and cross-functional processes; efficient scaling; plus true multi-channel delivery.

Lowest Maintenance Costs

Unlike many software vendors, we don’t base our revenue on customising products you’ve already bought, forcing you to upgrade, or on expensive service packages. Instead, ActiveDocs reverses the License to Services ratio so that organisations realise return on investment faster.

Highly Usable

Non-technical employees with just one day of training can develop and maintain document templates using ActiveDocs Opus Content Manager and ActiveDocs Opus Design Tools - an intuitive Graphical User Interface that appears as a tool bar in Microsoft Word. This slashes training costs and means your expensive IT developers can concentrate on core tasks and put document development back where it should be - in the hands of the business.