



Solve the Problem Before You Buy the Technology

Technology should support your strategy—not define it.

A problem becomes frustrating. A possible solution appears. The demonstration begins—and suddenly the conversation is being shaped by what the technology can do rather than what the business needs it to do.

This is an easy sequence to fall into, especially when a new press, workflow platform, MIS or AI tool promises greater speed, visibility or efficiency. The capabilities may be impressive. The problem is that features can quickly become a substitute for diagnosis.

The most important technology decision happens before the demonstration begins.

DIAGNOSE BEFORE YOU SHOP

Begin with the business problem—not the proposed solution.

“We need more automation” is not a diagnosis. Neither is “our system is outdated” or “we need AI.” Those statements may point toward an opportunity, but they do not explain where work is breaking down or why.

A useful problem statement is specific and observable:

- Estimators are rekeying information already provided by customers.
- Jobs are regularly delayed because specifications are incomplete.
- Recurring work is treated as a new transaction each time because no system captures the pattern.
- Operators lose production time waiting for approvals or materials.
- Leaders cannot see reliable job-costing information soon enough to act.

Once the problem is visible, look for the constraint. Is it rooted in technology—or in unclear responsibilities, inconsistent processes, missing information, insufficient capacity or lack of training?

Technology can remove friction. It can also make a broken process move faster without making it better.

CONSIDER THE ORGANIZATION AROUND THE PURCHASE

The purchase price is rarely the full cost of a technology decision. Implementation may require data cleanup, process redesign, integration, training, documentation and ongoing administration. It may also require employees to work differently.

That creates a second set of questions. Who will own the implementation? Who must use the solution every day? What existing practices will need to change? Who will maintain the system after the consultant or vendor leaves?

A company can buy capability without developing the capacity to use it.

This is where promising investments often underperform. The technology may work exactly as designed, but the organization surrounding it is not prepared to change. Old workarounds remain. Data stays unreliable. Employees create parallel processes. The new system becomes one more layer of complexity instead of a source of improvement.

Readiness does not mean everything must be perfect before moving forward. It means leaders understand what the investment will demand—and have a credible plan to support it.

DEFINE SUCCESS BEFORE SEEING THE FEATURES

Before evaluating options, decide what should meaningfully improve.

Should turnaround time decrease? Should estimating become more consistent? Should a manual handoff disappear? Should leaders gain better visibility into capacity, cost or performance?

Make the expected improvement measurable. Then ask what can be tested before committing at full scale. A pilot, workflow simulation, limited implementation or structured conversation with a peer already using the technology may reveal more than another polished demonstration.

The goal is not to avoid technology. It is to invest with greater clarity.

The right solution should address a defined business constraint, fit the way the organization needs to work, and produce an outcome worth measuring. If those conditions are not yet clear, the next step may not be a purchase.

It may be a better question.

Signs You're Solving the Wrong Problem

We need automation.

Our software is old.

We need AI.

Better Questions

Where is work breaking down?

What causes delays?

What gets entered twice?

What can't we currently measure?

*Don't shop for solutions until
you understand the problem
you're trying to solve.*

BEYOND THE PAGE: TECHNOLOGY DECISION BRIEF

Before comparing platforms, equipment or features, use the Technology Decision Brief to define the problem, identify dependencies, consider total cost and risk, and establish how success will be measured.



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