# Upgrading systems?

Why you should buy, not build

certinia

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# Introduction:
# The case for change

Certinia recently undertook some research concerning trends and issues within the professional services industry, the results of which can be found **here**. One area of particular interest concerned the industry adoption of commercial technology.

Most functional departments within organizations have high adoption of purpose-built solutions for their needs—everything from CRM applications to ERP. But professional services teams are laggards when it comes to deploying off-the-shelf solutions tailored precisely to their requirements.

Despite the well-documented impacts that Professional Services Automation (PSA) applications have on efficiency, profitability, workload balancing, and employee and customer satisfaction, less than 50% of services organizations leverage a commercial PSA solution.

**Which begs the question, 'Why?'**

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The prime reason is the way in which legacy self built solutions have been developed to address immediate tactical company needs.

The leader of a specific business unit, practice, or geography may have a particular problem that they are looking to overcome. In response, a homegrown solution is built by current internal resources, often relying extensively on spreadsheets.

Other departments, observing the apparent capabilities that the solution provides, decide to adopt the system as well, and the process of scope creep begins. What started as a short-term 'point solution' soon becomes the de facto company standard.

However, this often ignores the magnitude of the task ahead in supporting, maintaining, and continuing to develop the applications, as the business grows and becomes increasingly more diverse and complex.

In this eBook, you'll discover the factors that need to be taken into account when deciding whether to choose a purpose-built, off-the-shelf PSA solution, or to deploy existing internal resources to build something specifically for your business.

These include:

01 Six key risks and long-term hidden costs of adopting an in-house, homegrown solution

02 How improving the user experience facilitates faster and easier companywide system adoption

03 Five critical solution capabilities that will help your growing business keep pace in an evolving market

**"** The pervasiveness of spreadsheets, disparate collaboration tools, and homegrown solutions to manage professional services delivery work in a disconnected manner is at the root of many of the challenges professional services teams face.

**John Ragsdale**

Distinguished Researcher,

Vice President of Technology Ecosystems

Technology Services Industry Association (TSIA)

# Think of the costs,
## all of the costs

The obvious starting point when considering whether to buy or to build a new application, is to evaluate the costs of the different options.

However, this is not as simple as it might seem.

You might think that asking your resident IT team to 'knock something up for us' would be the cheapest option, but you would probably be wrong for a number of reasons...

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## True total cost of ownership

In order to produce an accurate cost comparison, it is important to ensure that you include all of the costs of both options, some of which can be very well hidden.

It is not as straightforward as looking at the initial purchase price of a commercial package and comparing it with the costs of your internal IT team—there are many more areas to consider.

You need to evaluate the total cost of designing, building, testing, training, running, maintaining, and developing the applications over a period of many years.

For example, bespoke solutions will typically require interfaces and integrations to be built, whereas these may not be required if a commercial package is adopted. The initial cost of developing these integrations can be very expensive, and they also require further maintenance and integration testing every time your systems are upgraded. This can rapidly increase costs.

## Non-functional requirements

Commercial applications provide many capabilities 'out of the box'. For a homegrown solution these would need to be developed from scratch.

This would include workflows, reports and analytics, personalized role-based dashboards with built-in alerts and notifications, implementation toolkits, and training materials to name but a few.

The costs of this work are frequently missed when doing a comparison exercise.

## Consider security

As PSA solutions typically need to interoperate closely with other core business solutions such as ERP and CRM, security and privacy considerations are key concerns.

For an application that is developed in-house, the associated costs and business risks are often understated.

## Ongoing development

Off-the-shelf solutions like Certinia Professional Services (PS) Cloud have multiple release cycles over the course of a year. These provide new functionality that has been developed with other customers.

This ensures that value continues to be unlocked by the business, as the solution continues to grow and evolve to meet the changing needs of the business.

For an application that is built in-house, it is important to take the ongoing cost of keeping pace with new business requirements into account.

## Best use of internal resources

Utilizing valuable in-house IT resources to work on internal systems diverts them from other customer-facing activities that may add more value to the business. As a result, there is an opportunity cost to take into account.

In-house solutions that have to scale across a growing global organization can place a large and unexpected support burden on the business.

## Time-to-value

With an out-of-the-box solution, the duration of the implementation project can be minimized. This is because so much of the design and build work has already been done.

As a result, the time to value will be less, and business benefits will be realized much earlier.

For an in-house solution, the opposite is true.

# Think about
## the users

To ensure that the right solution is adopted by the business, it is vital to consider user experience.

If the solution is simple, easy to use, and helps people do their jobs more effectively, then your employees are much more likely to comply with agreed processes—which, in turn, improves user engagement within your organization.

A commercial PSA solution offers a number of distinct benefits in comparison to a bespoke solution...

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## Industry insight

If you build your own applications in-house from scratch, the starting point is a clean sheet of paper, and your design will be constrained by your existing skills and knowledge.

However, an off-the-shelf PSA application will be delivered with industry-leading practices already embedded. Not only will this provide a quick start to the project, but it also offers the opportunity to revisit your existing business processes and to take advantage of the experiences of other organizations similar to your own.

These practices and insights are very hard to replicate and maintain with in-house teams.

## "It looks just like Salesforce"

Leveraging a consistent user interface with a 'look and feel' that's similar to your other applications drives user adoption, attracts talent, and aids employee retention.

At Certinia, we pride ourselves on users not knowing where Salesforce and Certinia start and stop. This allows for seamless teamwork across the entire front office.

Your employees experience everything that they need to be successful, contained within one solution, presented with ease of use in mind, and complemented by a common security model.

## User-centric design

Commercial applications, like those from Certinia, come with role-based dashboards designed specifically with the user in mind. They offer everything that is needed and provide full visibility through 'one pane of glass'.
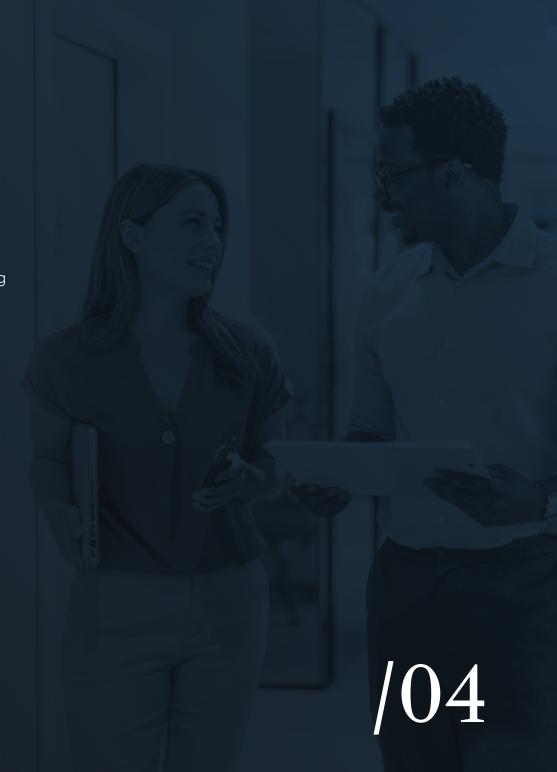
These dashboards can be personalized with additional features, such as configurable alerts and notifications, as well as embedded reports.

# Think about
## the future

While it can be relatively easy at the start of a journey to map out the current requirements for an in-house solution, a thriving company never stands still. Your business will evolve over time, getting bigger, embracing new business models, new customer demands, or even new geographies.

The pace of innovation will continue to increase; consider the impact that AI has had over the past two years to understand the potential opportunities that could be realized or missed. A system that you have built yourself is unlikely to be flexible enough to easily accommodate such changes.

For your solution to continue to support the business as it moves forward, it needs to deliver a number of capabilities...

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## Scalable performance

As your organization grows in size, it becomes increasingly important for your systems to be able to perform at scale.

Typically, in-house-built solutions can readily support a smaller organization, but they encounter problems with larger volumes and greater business complexity. Frequently this problem only manifests itself when it is too late because it is so difficult to test scalability.

Solutions such as Certinia PS Cloud support hundreds of thousands of users on a daily basis and have dedicated performance and scalability teams to assess and evolve performance capabilities constantly as new features are added. Our largest customers have tens of thousands of users and operate across multiple countries, meaning that the ability to test and operate at scale is baked into everything we do.

## Future roadmap

Due to evolving business needs, it is important to take a strategic perspective when implementing a PSA solution. Having a multi-year and multi-release roadmap is key.

Commercial Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications provide a regular cadence of upgrades and enhancements to ensure that your systems continue to keep pace with changing company needs and industry trends.

In contrast, in-house applications are often built to address an immediate tactical requirement with little regard for ongoing change. With insufficient flexibility built into the design, these systems can easily become stale. This makes them unable to adapt to meet the changing needs of the business.

## Solution breadth

Designing a commercial business application entails much more than just providing process functionality.

It requires broader considerations to be taken into account, such as geographically dependent elements including multi-currency capabilities, exchange rates, rate cards, and approval processes; deceptively complex calculations and engines for forecasting, scheduling, and utilization; or essential but hard-to-create capabilities such as workflows, reporting, mobile access, role-based user profiles, and security management.

In addition, homegrown solutions often have difficulty keeping pace with the fundamental advances in technology over time. The advent of AI is a great example of an area where established vendors like Certinia, alongside leading platforms like Salesforce, can pivot rapidly to fully take advantage of this new technology. This is much more difficult with home grown systems.

## Required resources

The resources and costs required to maintain and develop in-house systems are often widely underestimated.

As an example, Certinia provides three new releases a year, the most recent of which included over 1,000 EPICs with more than 5,500 user stories. This took into account ideas from 23 customers, involved 67 customers in product research, and had 316 customers participate in feature preview sessions. All of this was managed and developed by an R&D organization that is circa 400–people strong, which represents almost half of our entire workforce.

This type of scale is hard to achieve and maintain within a core IT organization.

## Shared experience

One additional benefit of buying a commercial business application is that you also get access to a community of like-minded customers that are all using the same applications as yourselves. You are not alone!

These organizations may be industry peers, or might operate in slightly different sectors, but they frequently experience similar business issues. The benefit of being able to share, network, and learn from the experiences of others should not be underestimated.

In addition, this collaborative community is instrumental in influencing the ongoing development of our solutions, ensuring that they continue to deliver all that is required by industry leaders.

# Summary:
## It's an important decision

High-quality business applications underpin any successful company, enabling you to thrive and achieve your strategic objectives and goals. The decision concerning how these systems are developed and deployed should not be taken lightly.

Developing in-house solutions to address current business requirements may at first appear to provide an expedient and seemingly logical choice. However, the initial costs of developing these systems is often understated, and in a growing and evolving business it can quickly become an expensive and time-consuming burden to maintain.

More importantly, systems that fail to keep pace with the changing needs of a business soon start to act as a brake on organizational effectiveness, and company performance can suffer as a result.

**Is this a risk that you are prepared to take?**

# Experience
# **Certinia**

Certinia elevates business growth through a complete platform solution spanning services delivery, finance, and customer success. Native to the leading cloud platform, Salesforce, Certinia enables organizations to run a connected business, deliver with intelligence, and achieve scalable agility.

Let's Connect ›

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