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# How To Buy Software That Is Futureproof

Security, Technology / 1 Comment

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For most of us, software just needs to be secure, reliable, easy to use, and suitable for the foreseeable future – especially for business-related purposes. But how can we ensure that when we need to buy software that it's futureproof?

Without knowing what to look for, buying software can be a tricky business.

But, for various reasons we often find ourselves in need of new software to help us get more done, work faster, and ensure our security.

So, to help you along I'll share with you some advice that will keep

you on track.

To sum it up you should:

- Be sure about the specific requirements you have for the software
- Make sure it is user-friendly and adaptable
- Ensure it matches your company's needs and habits
- Be aware of compatibility problems with different types of devices and operating systems
- Make sure the software doesn't require frequent fixes, but support is provided reliably, if needed
- Choose software that fits your data privacy/security requirements
- Inform yourself about the product's price stability

The world of technology is evolving at a faster rate than ever before. Therefore, it is important to choose software that can keep up with that pace and the current standards.

To help you narrowing it down to a few options, there are a few simple questions and criteria, so you can find the futureproof software you're looking for.

## Define Your Specific Requirements For The Software



First of all, let's start with your needs:

- What do you absolutely want the software to be able to do?
- What kind of functionality do you need from the software in order to carry out the task?
- Extra functionality beyond that – the bells and whistles as they're sometimes known, are nice to have, but they're not essential when you buy software.
- And what do you anticipate will be your needs in the foreseeable future – say 3 – 5 years from now?

This should be your absolute bottom line which your choice of software must be able to meet.

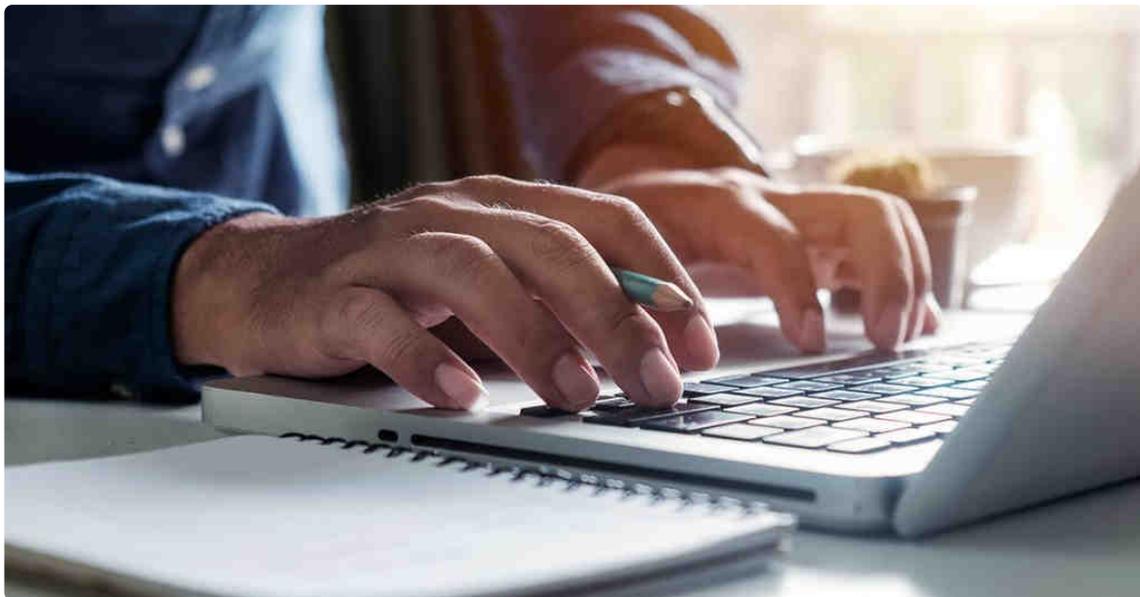
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Speak with everyone who may potentially use the software too – to make sure you don't miss out any important criteria.

Stakeholders will have big influence on whether your final choice is accepted anyway – so it's best to include them early in the process. It's an essential part of [making sure your proposal is accepted](#) [\[/approval-for-a-proposal/\]](#).

## Prioritize Software That's Easy To Use



Next up, you should consider how user-friendly the software is.

If the application is too cumbersome, complex, or just downright user-unfriendly, then it may not be worth bothering with.

This comes down to good user interface design. In the past, application software tended not to be very user-friendly. Software design with the user in mind came second to the functionality.

Fortunately, things are now changing as more and more software providers employ professional “User Experience” or UX designers to ensure this aspect of usability is given proper attention.

Usability in turn also affects how long the learning curve [<http://tynerblain.com/blog/2007/03/12/software-usability-learning-curves/>] will be for new users.

All new software takes at least a little time to master and get used to. The question to ask is: how long is the learning curve? Training takes time and can be expensive. So the shorter the learning curve the better.

## Find Out If The Software Is An Industry Standard





This can be a very important point when you buy software.

Is the software an industry standard? A software package which is an established industry standard is always worth considering when you are looking for futureproof software.

Evidence can range from the number of product users, to industry rankings, and press mentions.

It shows people have confidence in the software. And it means there are people out there who are already familiar with the software and know how to use it.

This makes it easier to find staff who know the software, and means less need for time and money to be spent on training.

## Make Sure It Meets Collaborative Needs





You should also ask yourself, if you need software for collaborative tasks: Will the software be used by a team – for example colleagues, your clients, other contractors, partner companies, or other departments?

For example, your choice of financial accounting software can also depend on what your accountants already use.

Personally, I chose my financial accounting software according to the cloud-based system used by my accountants.

This makes it easier for them to manage my accounts and tax affairs. If I chose a different system to theirs, then my financial data would have to be converted into a different format every time for the accountants to be able to access.

Check That It's Compatible With Different Devices And OS's



You also have to be aware of the compatibility between the software and different types of devices and operating systems.

Why is this important you ask? Just imagine you were a windows user who collaboratively needed to work with a customer of yours who's operating system is iOS.

If your new software solution does not support one of these systems, either you or your customer would have to somehow get a system that's compatible. And before that happens it's more than likely that your customer is just going to do business with someone else.

Now as you might be aware of, there's countless operating systems out there. So be sure to check, to which of those the software needs to be compatible.

## Find Out How Regularly The Software Is Updated

No software product can ever afford to stand still. Software which is no longer under further development is a dead-end and usually not a good choice.

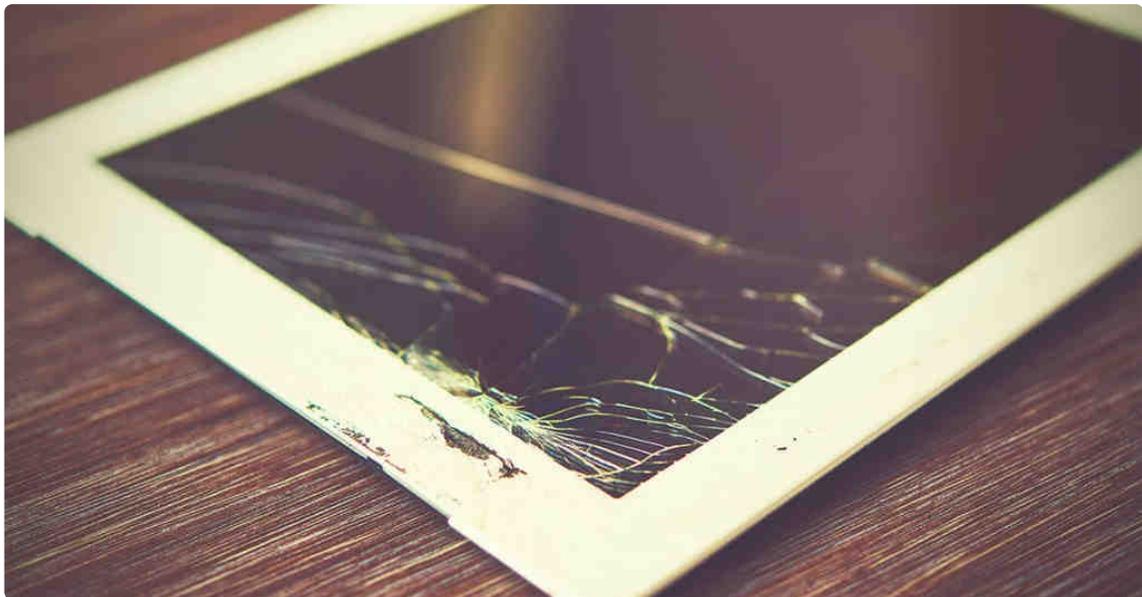
Ongoing further development shows that developers/vendors are invested in the product and that the software has a future.

It means new versions will be in the pipeline which will bring enhanced functionality. It also means bugs are more likely to be fixed.

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## Make Sure Its Reliable



To clarify that for your specific situation, you should check the following points:

- Is the software mature? Or is it buggy and does it crash often?
- Are there compatibility problems with other applications, network connectivity problems, or known specific hardware issues?

- Does the software require a lot of support? If so, then this can be a big mark against it. No software is perfect, but good software should not be plagued with endless bugs or require continual intensive support.
- Also – will you yourself need to rely on internal support staff in order to use and maintain the software? This could mean additional overhead for your IT coworkers.
- And will you have to spend much time on learning to use the software, visiting user forums, or online support? These are great resources to further extend your knowledge and capabilities – but you should be able to get going without them.

## Check That The Software Has Great Customer Support

All software requires at least some user support.

Generally, if you are paying for software, then you should receive a professional standard of support from the vendor.

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Open source software on the other hand, does not usually come

with an obligation to provide any support at all. In which case you have to rely on voluntary assistance from the user community.

Also, you need to take a look at the vendor itself.

Application software companies often tend to have short lives as a result of takeovers or mergers, among other reasons. Some software developers are small startups which can go out of business very suddenly.

### Different Kinds Of Support

Support can be vendor-based – or it can be voluntary or user-based. Or both.

Check how the support is provided. Is it by phone hotline or a text-chat service? A “self-service” online user forum? Is support prompt and reliable – and is it competent? Is the support also available out of hours? Is there a time zone issue involved?

Is the support provided directly by the company – or is it outsourced? Outsourced support can work well, but in some cases it can turn out to be a nightmare.

Quality of support offered by vendors can vary from excellent to abysmal. The popularity of a software package can stand or fall on the issue of the quality of its user support.

### Find Out What Existing Users Think Of The Software





Do existing users like using the application? Is there a strong user community – and what do they think of it?

In particular, what are the experiences of existing customers with the support?

Check the user forums, or visit impartial review sites and gauge the general opinion and sentiment about the software.

## Check How The Software Is Delivered To You

Traditionally, software was sold “shrink-wrapped” on a CD or DVD. Nowadays it’s more likely to be directly downloadable from the vendor.

But there’s now another alternative for software delivery which is seeing enormous growth in popularity.

Cloud-based software – often known as “Software as a Service [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software\\_as\\_a\\_service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_as_a_service)]” or SaaS

is becoming more and more popular for many applications.

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The reasons are easy to see: You can access the software from any device – as well as from any location.

Cloud-based software is easy to install, easy to access, low maintenance and low overhead.

If there's one way to futureproof your choice of software, cloud-based software is definitely the way to go for many and there are even more promising potential benefits you might be interested in. [<https://www.salesforce.com/uk/blog/2015/11/why-move-to-the-cloud-10-benefits-of-cloud-computing.html>]

## Look Into Data Privacy And Security





With ever increasing instances of cyber criminality, there's now much more awareness of the need for data security when you buy software.

Therefore, it can be important to check whether the software has adequate protection against intruders and theft of data.

You'll want to be as certain as possible that your data is going to be secure – not only from interception and hacking, but also from data loss.

And what about data privacy requirements? These vary from country to country, as well as business sector.

## Get A Clear Understanding Of The Costs

Finally, the big question: How much is it?

Is the software affordable for your budget? Are prices stable or likely to rise?

And how do you pay? Is it a one-off payment, or is it billed via a monthly, quarterly, or yearly fee?

What do you get for the price? What's included and what's excluded?

And is support included? How much support do you get for the

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price? Sometimes there's an additional fee for a higher level of service.

If you're responsible for the software budget, don't forget the "Total Cost of Ownership" or TCO. The TCO refers to the sum total of the entire outlay incurred over the full life cycle of using the software.

TCO includes the cost of the hardware, the OS platform, the purchase modality e.g.: licensing/open source, any training and support overhead, ease of use & reliability of software = total cost of ownership TCO.

If you work out the TCO for the software, you might be pleasantly – or unpleasantly – surprised.

## Key Takeaways

When looking for futureproof software, to sum it up you should:

- Be sure about the specific requirements you have towards the software
- Choose user-friendly and easy to adapt software that should

match your company's needs and habits

- Be aware of compatibility problems with different types of devices and operating systems
  - Make sure the software doesn't require frequent fixes, but support is provided reliably, if needed
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**Alain**

October 26, 2016 at 6:16 am

... and, if possible, develop your software yourself (at least own the code and pay to ensure maintainability).

Reply

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