

10 Criteria Every Small and Midsize Business Should Use to Evaluate an “On Demand” Business Solution

Get the best small and medium business financial and collaboration solution, without breaking the bank.

Why is it that small and midsize businesses seem to recognize the benefits of automating their businesses, yet still rely primarily on Rolodexes, spreadsheets, and very basic software systems to manage their business? For a small or midsize company, technology implementation, integration, training, and ongoing TCO may seem like a big burden.

Scaled-down versions of large enterprise solutions aren't very attractive either. They may offer lots of functionality, but often lack the means to integrate to critical business processes with which the solution must work. As such, why would a small or midsize business go to the expense and effort of adopting a solution that delivers high-end functionality but can't fully integrate these activities back into the business, supply chain, or product development activities? It just doesn't make sense.

This is why NextCorp has developed specific solutions for small and medium business. Based on the Microsoft Dynamics GP and CRM solutions, we've made it easy for small and medium businesses to have just the right solution to do the job - with no limits on growth or integration. It's the best of all worlds, specifically designed for the unique needs for small and medium business.

The NextCorp SMB Controller and Collaborator provide ready-to-run financial and collaboration capabilities which are easily integrated into any of your business. Additionally, implementation is fast and easy, yet the capabilities bring benefits similar to what large enterprise software packages deliver. The capabilities and benefits are served up via a portal, which presents users — from entry-level employees on up to senior management — with an intuitive, consistent interface so access to functionality is always easy.

A quick and easy implementation, a compelling set of features, and an inviting user interface are important criteria for small and midsize businesses to consider when evaluating any solutions. Rolodexes, spreadsheets, and rudimentary software can take you only so far. Businesses that choose to stick with the most basic tools are losing considerable ground to competitors who have adopted small and medium business solutions.

What other criteria should be exercised by small and midsize businesses when selecting a business solution? When evaluating on-demand business solutions, we suggest no less than 10 criteria be examined:

1. How easy and intuitive is the user interface? Solutions based on portal technology are the best way to go. A portal offers users the ability to tailor the way they interact with the application and functionality, much like they would customize a Yahoo site to fit their specific interests.
2. How quickly and easily can the solution be implemented? Does the solution offer an accelerated implementation approach to minimize demands on your resources? Rapid implementation techniques can reduce costs by more than 50 percent.
3. How easily can the solution integrate with your supply chain, product development, and business processes? Remember, any system doesn't operate in a vacuum, and it delivers the most value when embedded in the business!

4. Can the solution easily scale as your business grows? Take into account not only number of users, but also specific roles and functions and the need to support end-to-end business processes, which are constantly changing.
5. Is the solution available as a subscription? You can't always anticipate the future. Keeping cash is important. On-demand business solutions must be available on a subscription basis, virtually eliminating the traditional up-front investments. The solution should offer you flexible 12, 24, or 36 month subscription options - allowing you to keep your cash working while you get the benefits of the newest business technology solutions.
6. Does the solution offer you company-wide visibility into your business processes? The right solution can help you gain a competitive advantage through increased visibility into critical business functions, superior reporting, integrated processes, and even increased customer loyalty/retention, more in-depth customer insights, and an accelerated product time to market.
7. Are there ample resources to assist you with your implementation and ongoing support? Look for business partners with both long-term business experience and support services, as well as expertise with cross-functional, strategic technology and software solutions.
8. Is industry-specific expertise built into the product? The best business solutions are not plain vanilla. Each solution needs to address industry-specific needs, and support roles and functions unique to vertical markets.
9. Does it provide you with any analytics? That is, does it provide the means to analyze collected data and generate reports that help your analysts and management to better understand your customers and then turn that knowledge into action? You should be able to measure performance, predict trends, plan for business success, and make the most of customer relationships.
10. Can it operate on the Web? On-demand systems need to work across the company as well as with your business partners. Look for a business solution that has the flexibility and open access to accommodate future change in business and technology.

In the past, small and midsize businesses couldn't afford to adopt enterprise-strength financial and collaboration solutions. Today, you can't afford not to. Competitive pressures leave you little choice in the matter. To lower business cost, increase market response times, reduce business risk, and increase customer loyalty and retention, you need an on-demand business solution. You need NextCorp SMB Controller and Collaborator.

As you move forward and examine your business technology strategy, be mindful of these evaluation criteria. Don't settle for anything less. As a small or midsize business, you face the same challenges as large businesses in terms of meeting customer needs, managing inventory and your financials, growing customer satisfaction, and lowering the cost of doing business.

For the same reasons that big businesses for years have relied on business solutions to improve their operating efficiency, enhance sales and partner opportunities, and improve customer relationships, small and medium businesses, just like yours, can now do the same.

For further information on the NextCorp SMB Controller and Collaborator visit: www.getsmb.com.