

5 Tips for Choosing the Right Informatics Solution

Choosing an informatics solution for your laboratory can be daunting. They are expensive solutions that if chosen improperly can become unused and actually create more inefficiencies in your laboratory.

Below are five tips for making an informed choice for the informatics solutions in your laboratory. The information presented will provide further detail on how to make this important decision.

01 Generate Complete Requirements

The first tip is to generate all of your business needs and user requirements at the beginning of your project.

- Needs and Requirements are the first set of documents that detail what you need your informatics solution to do and support. Having your needs and requirements documented to refer to during your solution selection process will prevent you from being distracted by the latest and greatest bells and whistles. Keeping on track and ensuring that the chosen solution truly meets your needs is critical to your informatics project success.
- Documenting needs and requirements prevents scope creep and, if you prioritize them, they will help you in determining your solution and even what needs to go into the phases of your implementation effort.
- Requirements may lead to multiple systems being selected (LIMS and ELN) and/or help your company create robust processes and procedures.

Note: Include all stakeholders in the requirements gathering process or there could be gaps in your solution.

03 Might be Time for a Change

The next tip is to be open-minded about changing your current lab processes so they are more easily supported by the informatics solution rather than forcing the system to meet your current processes.

- Informatics systems have changed dramatically over time. Laboratory processes may have been developed to suit your existing workflows with the limitations of the informatics systems implemented at that time in the past. Times have changed, management has changed and the abilities of informatics systems progressed. When implementing a system consider new processes rather than leveraging your existing practices.
- Implement with new functionality that can help your laboratory. This will create new processes for your laboratory that will create efficiencies. The efficiencies of a new system can ultimately save your company money (e.g., replacing a paper process with an electronic one).

02 Consider all Possible Solutions

The second tip is to consider all possible systems and vendors when contemplating an upgrade and not limit yourself to just upgrading your current informatics system.

- It may seem that the easiest path forward is to upgrade the existing informatics system you already have, however, this system may be saddled with compromises that were made in the past. Since the time of the original implementation your company has changed, the regulations have changed and the departmental structure has changed. The implementation of the existing system's upgrade may lead down the path of compromise again.
- It may appear to be the cheapest but the hidden cost of compromise, inefficiencies, customizations, and limited functions, if present in your current system, may not be the best choice.
- Newer systems from different vendors may have additional functionality that will aid your business.

04 An Inexpensive Choice isn't Always the Best

The fourth tip is to remember you will get what you pay for. The most inexpensive solution may cost more in the long run with hidden fees, or customizations in order to work in your environment.

- The most inexpensive system may force your company to make too many compromises on functionality, making it difficult to use.
- Adding customizations to compensate for the lack of function can escalate the costs and affect long term supportability.
- With added customizations the system may become inefficient, slowing down your turnaround time.
- User acceptance of the system may be low due to the decreased functionality of the low cost solution which will require extensive customization to fit your needs.

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05 Formalize the Selection Process

The last tip is to follow a documented process for solution selection which will help make your decision and provide clearer justifications for the project.

- When evaluating informatics solutions and vendors it is best to control each step to assure the right solution is selected.
- Use your complete, documented list of requirements for the new system during the evaluation and selection process.
- A formalized selection process will put all competing solutions on an even playing field and remove any non-fact based selection criteria.
- Securing funding for your project will be facilitated by having a clearly controlled and documented selection process.

Need more information?

Contact us to speak with a Strategic Expert to help meet your specific needs.

www.csolsinc.com/lets-talk

Selecting a new informatics system can be overwhelming and can create upheaval in the laboratory and overall organization. Making the right choice of solution can limit and even eliminate the pain. Collecting all the proper information and then leveraging it during the selection process allows companies to make the best solution choice.

If your company doesn't have experts in house that can assist as subject matter on these systems, there's always the option to commission unbiased expert consultants to assist in these processes and assessments.