

Warehousing and Transportation IS Life Cycle

Everybody who goes through the process of selection of a warehouse or transportation management solution, considers many questions: from the purchase price to specific functionalities and the investment return rate. But how can you be sure the selected system will not only last out to meet its investment return point but be in service even in the next years and bring the expected benefits and competitive advantage? I've experienced situations when companies, after long months (years) of preparation, tenders and analyses, hard times of implementation and successful start-up of the system, start another round of search for a new product soon after. As an architect of system solutions supplied by HighJump Software, I am forced to persuade disappointed potential buyers that a WMS (Warehouse Management System) can be a long-term solution without the necessity to downgrade your claims.

Origin

Not only the capabilities of the actual information system are important, but also the capabilities of the company standing behind it. However good the system may be, it will not outlive the company that has developed it and provided support to it. That is why long-term existence of the

supplier, its stability and experience are critical for the future of their products. For example a WMS supported by a strong company that has been setting a trend in the industry for years certainly offers better prospects than a WMS module created only as a (probably temporarily offered and supported) supplement to the portfolio of a company primarily specialised in a different area (economic management, accounting, etc.).

Good Start

to replace one of the systems, so why should you be forced to replace both of them?

Create room for growth for your IS at the time when it is cheap – in the configuration and implementation phase. If you buy limited versions or sim-

it can become too small for you. An overwhelming majority of our customers has modified apart of the system as early as in the first two years after implementation on account of changes in their assortment or new customer requirements.

Flexibility

Make sure the product and its supplier are able to adapt quickly. If you start to get round your IS by Excel sheets only because the system is not able to do what you need from it, you are well on the way to replacing it completely.

Maintenance and Upgrading

Just like cars, every system needs regular maintenance. Paying a maintenance fee or a higher technical support level seems to be useless at the beginning, when everything works without a problem, but in the process databases get filled by data that need to be archived, some algorithms may turn to be less effective, system response times get longer and its serviceability decreases. Regular maintenance and support can keep your IS in perfect condition constantly.

People

Information systems are not implemented and maintained by companies, but by people. A quality product from a strong supplier does not always mean guaranteed success. An excellent marketing and business company image can sometimes successfully disguise a lack of expertise and experience of an implementation team. Try to initiate a meeting with future implementation team representatives as early as during the tender procedure. A few targeted expert questions will tell you more than piles of promotional materials and lines of the quotation.

A high-quality WMS or TMS from a reliable supplier can work successfully for many years without the necessity of overall replacement of the system. The condition is the system's ability to keep up with the company all the time, to be able to adapt to changing conditions and requirements, be properly set at the beginning and maintained and supported subsequently and attended by a reliable partner. ■



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Independence

Too much interconnection with other products can be risky as well. From a long-term perspective a TMS (Transportation Management System) functioning independently using universal data interfaces is a better choice than a TMS developed directly for a concrete economical system. There is a certain probability that one day you will need

ple products, you can save considerable amounts at the beginning, and you may even cover your current needs, but don't forget you will need an extension or a change once. If the system is not ready for changes

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