

Chapter 1

Getting Started

The Packaged Software Dilemma

Whether it is called shrink-wrapped software or given an acronym like COTS (commercial off the shelf), there is no doubt that the use of packaged software is an important part of most information technology (IT) departments' application development strategy. Companies have embraced the concept of vendor-supplied software, promising senior management that a COTS solution will prevent the problems frequently associated with custom development and give them a better product cheaper and faster.

Companies enter into the project with high expectations, and in many cases those expectations are met — at least partially. In other cases, the projects are such spectacular failures that careers are destroyed and a company's credibility is reduced. The purpose of this book is to help guide the IT department through the selection and implementation of packaged software, pointing out potential pitfalls and ways to avoid them. Although there is no way to guarantee successful implementation, following proven procedures will increase the probability of success.

Expectations

It is important to understand why companies embark on packaged software implementation projects. Although there may be ancillary reasons, the primary expectations are normally the following: