

## Does It Really Matter?

Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor  
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I've heard tales of woe from a number of maintenance professionals about the tremendous effort required to install enterprise-wide software. They have had to thoroughly examine their work processes (some for the first time) to see how they can adapt them to the business model presented by the software. The lucky ones had an opportunity to help select the software, so they supposedly got a running start on the changes that would be required. None of them, it seems, was able to fully anticipate the drain the project would have on maintenance resources.

Consultants and practitioners alike have written articles about workflow, data, information, and software, and how they must be congruent. Wherever software and work processes don't agree, one or the other must be adjusted or the project will fall short of expectations. Considerable analysis and planning is always required. One of the biggest stresses comes from having to assign some of the best people to the project while trying to keep daily operations current.

As I listened to the stories and edited the articles, I could sympathize with the writers, but I couldn't feel their pain—until now, but just a pinprick compared to their heart attack pain. I'm facing a microscopic desktop version of the choice between installing enterprise resources planning (ERP) software or a best of breed computerized maintenance management system (CMMS). I'm trying to decide whether to use Microsoft's Outlook 98 (the ERP) or to upgrade my contact management software (the CMMS) so it can link with other best of breed software.

With Outlook, I get an outstanding integration of a variety of functions, but at a substantial

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investment of time learning the software and customizing it. With the contact manager, I get some slick features that can really speed some of my work, but I have to supplement it with other software. As I try to decide between the new and powerful and the familiar and speedy, I toy with a third option—using the application development wizards in my database manager to build my own custom solution. But first I have to look at my current job and separate the must do and should do tasks from what I used to do and what would be nice to do.

Perhaps it really doesn't matter, for me personally or for most maintenance organizations. From what I hear, few if any maintenance departments use anywhere near the full potential of their current maintenance information software. I know my contact manager has a lot more to offer than I'm using.

Unless you have the discipline to use the software, it's not going to do much for you. On the other hand, if you have the discipline, the software becomes less important. **MT**

