

# Build *vs.* Buy

*Choosing the Optimal Path to a Collaborative Organization*



2008



The Leader in Workplace Software for SharePoint®

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Choosing the Optimal Path to a Collaborative Organization

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SEVEN BARRIERS TO SUCCESS WITH MICROSOFT® SHAREPOINT®  
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## Contents

<b>The Promise of Collaboration</b> .....	1
<b>Build or Buy?</b> .....	1
<b>A Third Alternative</b> .....	2
<b>The Business Benefits of Choosing CorasWorks</b> .....	3
<b>The Momentum of the CorasWorks Approach</b> .....	3
<b>Significantly Reduce Development Costs</b> .....	3
<b>Accelerate Time to Solution</b> .....	3
<b>Rely on the Experts</b> .....	3
<b>Focus on Your Business, not on Development</b> .....	4
<b>Market Knowledge</b> .....	4
<b>Reduce Institutional Risk</b> .....	4
<b>Reduce the Risk from “Brain Drain”</b> .....	4
<b>Same Set of Components – Many Different Solutions</b> .....	4
<b>Broader Functional Set – Greater Flexibility</b> .....	4
<b>The Technical Benefits of Choosing CorasWorks</b> .....	5
<b>Software Requirements Analysis</b> .....	5
<b>Software and Application Design</b> .....	5
<b>Code Development and Testing</b> .....	5
<b>System Integration and Testing</b> .....	5
<b>Training</b> .....	5
<b>Ongoing Code Support, Maintenance, and Upgrades</b> .....	5
<b>Ongoing System Maintenance</b> .....	5
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	6

## The Promise of Collaboration

Organizations around the world are finding measurable benefit in becoming a truly collaborative organization, improving internal and external business relationships, and helping employees, partners, and clients access the latest information at any time and from anywhere.

“IT managers are looking for insight about the total cost of ownership of collaboration platforms, which vendors should be on their short list, and where is the market heading overall,” according to Erica Rugullies, a senior analyst at Forrester Research Inc., a Cambridge, Mass., market research firm. “They are choosing a platform and asking everyone [in their organization] to use that platform. It’s expensive to maintain point products, and a platform can reduce operating costs.”

The key challenge is not “What,” but “How?” How do you deploy real business solutions to help your organization transition into becoming a truly collaborative organization? And how do you do it quickly, easily, and without a massive investment in custom technology? This white paper will explore the opportunities for rapidly and cost-effectively creating and deploying the collaborative solutions you need to make the transition from “islands of information” to a truly collaborative organization.

## Build or Buy?

Organizations typically spend a great deal of time determining requirements for the software applications they will deploy to support their employees. Then they spend additional time researching and analyzing a variety of products they might choose to buy, and discussing the possibility of building the product themselves (or outsourcing the development to a third party systems integration firm). Unfortunately, a wrong decision will often result in cost over-runs, project delays, or a solution that does not grow to meet your evolving business needs.

Because software such as Microsoft SharePoint provides a general purpose platform for collaborative applications, organizations find that they need to extend the platform to build solutions that meet their particular business needs and challenges. Perhaps the most critical decision relating to extending platforms such as SharePoint is whether to do it in house, use an outside consultant, or use commercially available software products. This decision process is frequently known as the “build vs. buy decision.”

Some IT organizations believe that they (or their preferred services provider) can build everything they need, and that no off-the-shelf solution will adequately fit their needs. Others are inclined to believe that an off-the-shelf package will be much cheaper and will be “good enough.” Unfortunately, both of these approaches will often lead to disappointment.

***“...deploy real business solutions to help your organization transition into becoming a truly collaborative organization ... quickly, easily, and without a massive investment in custom technology”***

Organizations often consider building their own solution “from scratch” because they feel this will provide them with the exact solution that they need. While this alternative may enable the organization to ensure that all of its requirements are met, the time, resources,

and cost of these projects can sometimes be astronomical. A “needs assessment” could last months, if not years, and cost the company millions of dollars. Additionally, the success rate of such projects has historically been low, often leading to missed business opportunity due to the delay in deploying the solution. In addition, the company is responsible for all future maintenance and support of that custom code (remember Y2K?).

Alternately, organizations can choose to purchase an “off-the-shelf” point solution that meets some percentage of their requirements. Typically, the purchase decision for software solutions is based on various factors such as development cost, timeframes, training, maintenance costs, code support costs, and licensing costs. Companies assess the short and long term costs of developing their own solutions, in contrast to the short and long term costs of purchasing commercial software that meets a subset of their requirements.

This option can be a more cost-effective alternative than custom development, since the third-party vendor is selling a fairly generic product to a mass-market. However, a packaged point solution will typically not meet all of an organization’s requirements, forcing them to compromise. The organization is also tied to the development cycles of the vendor for enhancements, and is responsible for integrating the various

point solutions they have purchased from different vendors. Tying multiple applications together to support a simple business process is often anything but simple.

A variation of the “purchase an off-the-shelf” alternative that has received a great deal of publicity in recent years is “software as a service”, where you essentially rent the use of an application that is hosted by the vendor. This option is not only more costly over time than purchasing your software directly, but leaves you dependent on the vendor not only for functionality, but on the availability of the vendor’s servers upon which your applications are running.

The fundamental problem with all these approaches is that they tend to force organizations to narrowly focus their requirements, in order to meet constraints. Essentially, they create a “funnel effect”, where the requirements are constrained by a bottleneck comprised of either resources (time and money, in the case of building a custom solution) or of features (in the case of settling for a packaged point solution). Either way, organizations end up having to compromise their requirements and settle for a solution that is just “good enough.”

## A Third Alternative

Is there some way out of this overly constrained decision process? Isn’t there a way to deploy a collaborative workplace, with the solutions and functionality you need, at a price you can justify? Isn’t there a way to deploy software that can be extended as your needs evolve, without costly custom development?

The good news is that when it comes to “Build vs. Buy”, there is a third alternative – the modular application development approach of CorasWorks. CorasWorks is a global software company, and a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, that is changing the way you can design, build and deploy applications on SharePoint.

CorasWorks software provides the fastest, lowest cost, and most maintainable approach to developing applications on the Microsoft® SharePoint® platform.

Our all-modular architecture makes it easy to design, build, and manage an integrated workplace of collaborative business applications, without the time and expense of custom development. Your web-based workplace, powered by CorasWorks, becomes an integrated environment that allows you to optimize the productivity of your workforce by providing users with applications that meet their specific requirements, and which, are integrated to provide a seamless experience -all without the time and expense of custom development.

CorasWorks provides a modular application suite and pre-built enterprise-wide business applications on the SharePoint platform. CorasWorks helps organizations to “snap together” collaborative business solutions, which can then be “snapped” together to create a fully integrated, web-based collaborative workplace. With the addition of new applications and information, the entire workplace dynamically updates. Employees, customers, and suppliers can work together, share information, and do their work from anywhere, at any time.

With CorasWorks, you get the advantages of custom business solutions, at a cost even lower than that of packaged “point solutions.” And with CorasWorks, you can deploy business applications that can easily and cost-effectively evolve over time, so as you need more, you get more. CorasWorks provides you with the software and applications you need to create your own workplace, giving you the flexibility to ensure that your business problems drive the scope of your solutions, instead

***“CorasWorks software provides the fastest, lowest cost, and most maintainable approach to a continuously evolving collaborative workplace, on the Microsoft® SharePoint® platform”***

of them being artificially constrained by product limitations or development costs.

The modular, configurable components that make up the CorasWorks modular application development system allow you to create a multitude of different, customizable solutions. The system includes everything you need to have powerful and flexible solutions up and running in a matter of days. The solutions and workplace foundation elements can be used “out of the box” or customized to meet your particular business needs.

## The Business Benefits of Choosing CorasWorks

This modular and configurable approach to developing applications provides a strong justification for using CorasWorks software when creating and deploying your intergrated workplace on the SharePoint platform.

Below are a number of the special benefits of working with CorasWorks:

- The Suite includes a wide range of advanced web parts (components) and dozens of pre-built business solutions, as well as full documentation.
- CorasWorks ships a major new product release twice each year – allowing you to get additional capabilities and solutions without the long wait of most software vendors. And upgrades are available at no additional cost to customers who choose our affordable Premier Annual Support & Maintenance plan. CorasWorks products are fully supported through our all Annual Maintenance Plans, so you never have to worry about upgrades or changes to the underlying platform – conserving your investment and providing an even greater ROI.

CorasWorks also provides a range of training options for our customers, should you wish to receive formal instruction in how to take advantage of your CorasWorks investment.

## The Momentum of the CorasWorks Approach

Since the release of SharePoint in October of 2003, CorasWorks has served more than 1,000 customers and 1 million deployed users. These customers include enterprise corporations, government agencies, academic institutions, and small-and mid-sized businesses which represent virtually every industry in more than 23 countries worldwide.

The ability of CorasWorks to steadily increase our customer base is largely due to the success of our customers, who have chosen to buy an off-the-shelf solution for SharePoint rather than build a custom solution. Perhaps more surprising is the number of high-profile partners whose business usually relies on custom development but have adopted the use of CorasWorks. The CorasWorks Partner Program now has more than 70 partners certified to assist customers in implementing, designing, and building workplace solutions.

## Significantly Reduce Development Costs

The CorasWorks modular application development system virtually eliminates the need for custom code development, allowing you to save development dollars or focus those dollars on other aspects of the solution or technology infrastructure, such as design, integration with other internal data sources, and internal training. In addition, because the development is done by CorasWorks, a commercial software development company, development costs are spread across many customers, giving CorasWorks tremendous economies of scale and providing you with significant cost savings.

In contrast, the typical custom development costs for a modest SharePoint-based application can quickly exceed \$100,000. And internal development costs do not include the costs for training, education, testing, documentation, and ongoing support if the development is performed internally. In fact, the cost to develop just one web part with the features and functionality of a CorasWorks advanced web part would most likely exceed the cost of the complete CorasWorks Suite.

In addition, custom development costs are typically for a single solution, so the costs increase with each new solution developed and deployed. In contrast, in a CorasWorks environment, there is a one-time software license cost plus the cost of time spent learning how to design solutions using the CorasWorks System. Once these costs are absorbed, there is almost no incremental cost for additional solutions. You can use and re-use the CorasWorks components to accelerate the development of a wide range of SharePoint applications and solutions. You can quickly “snap together” the pieces you need to create solutions in your workplace, and then add to it as your needs evolve over time.

## Accelerate Time to Solution

The CorasWorks modular application development system is ready to work “out of the box,” delivering a true plug-and-play technology. Organizations can significantly accelerate their time to solution using CorasWorks software. Using our components and pre-built solutions, organizations can be up and running with a variety of customized, business-specific solutions in a matter of weeks, rather than the many months typical of custom development projects. And rapid deployment is often the difference between the success or failure of a program or mission.

## Rely on the Experts

Building software components and solutions for SharePoint is CorasWorks’ core competency, and we have built a highly successful software business by adding value to SharePoint.

As such, we are intimately familiar with the specifications, methodologies, and standards associated with the Microsoft SharePoint platform. CorasWorks actively participates in the Microsoft Partner Advisory Council, the Technology Adoption Program and other Microsoft programs that ensure we always have the most up-to-date information and software pre-releases, that we understand their product roadmap, and that we consider their roadmap when developing our own. In addition, simply having and serving hundreds of like customers and 100's of thousands of users, gives us special insights into new features, application requirements, different design approaches, and new ways of working that are translated into our products and support.

## Focus on Your Business, not on Development

Rather than investing critical resources in reinventing components and solutions that already exist in the marketplace, CorasWorks modular application development system allows you to focus your time and budget on the areas that are unique to your organization. SharePoint and CorasWorks provide the core capabilities, allowing you to focus on the content and process flows that are specific to your project or solution.

## Market Knowledge

We also have a significant breadth of knowledge across the global market, giving us greater visibility into the various needs of the marketplace. Since we work with a large number of companies that are implementing collaborative solutions on SharePoint, we are able to anticipate your organization's requirements. This translates into extensive experience and intellectual capital and a robust CorasWorks product roadmap, both of which provide you with benefits that far exceed the licensing cost of our software.

## Reduce Institutional Risk

In today's complex environment, government and large enterprise organizations are looking more toward commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software to meet their needs. This eliminates the risk of cost over-runs and delays due to custom development, and the tendency to be saddled with multiple "stove-pipe" solutions, which are typically costly and difficult to support. The CorasWorks system is deployed and in use by more than 1,000 companies and government organizations and is being used each day by more than 1 million users. Using the quality-tested and market-proven CorasWorks modular application development system is much less risky than deploying an unproven custom-developed code base for a mission critical application.

## Reduce the Risk from "Brain Drain"

In today's competitive technology landscape, organizations are at risk from turnover among developers, consultants, and business analysts. This manifests itself in the lack of institutional knowledge relating to existing solutions, systems, and software, including limited or no documentation. Organizations can easily remove the risk presented by continual "brain drain" by buying a documented, thoroughly tested, and supported solution, such as CorasWorks.

## Same Set of Components – Many Different Solutions

CorasWorks provides modular components that can be used to build many different solutions, instead of purchasing or building a single narrowly focused solution. In most cases, customers find that a thorough analysis of requirements proves that deploying a CorasWorks-based set of solutions will address multiple issues across an organization, rather than internally developing specific technologies for each custom-developed solution.

## Broader Functional Set – Greater Flexibility

The configurability of the CorasWorks modular application development system and the rapid release cycle of new functionality by CorasWorks provide customers with a broad and continually expanding range

*"...customers can easily deploy additional functionality or new solutions within their SharePoint and CorasWorks environment ... and maintain the option of integrating components and solutions from other vendors"*

of functionality. Many customers initially assume that a “build decision” is justified on the basis of meeting today’s narrowly defined business requirements. However, the range of functionality provided by the CorasWorks system provides the benefits of a modular architecture. Over time, customers can easily deploy additional functionality or new solutions within their SharePoint and CorasWorks environment, while maintaining the option of integrating custom components, or components and solutions from other vendors.

## The Technical Benefits of Choosing CorasWorks

The core areas of cost for a basic buy vs. build decision reflect the stages of the typical software development life cycle. The majority of these costs are completely avoided through a CorasWorks “buy” decision. The stages and associated costs that must be considered include:

- Software requirements analysis
- Software and application design
- Code development and testing
- System integration and testing
- Training
- Ongoing code support, maintenance, and upgrades
- Ongoing system maintenance.

### Software Requirements Analysis

The requirements definition phase of any project can typically be very long and tedious, requiring interviews, multiple drafts, and multiple revisions. With CorasWorks, organizations can shorten the requirements phase significantly because of the numerous prototypes we make available in the form of pre-built business solution accelerators and design patterns. Since these serve as prototypes or examples, the risk and cost of requirements gathering are significantly reduced, in contrast to starting from scratch in an open-ended, hypothetical situation.

### Software and Application Design

The amount of time required to design a solution is significantly reduced when using CorasWorks products. Instead of creating design documents and prototyping solutions, customers can use our extensive design guides, documentation, and business solution accelerators to select the designs and functionality they need and require. Also, as part of the design process, developers would typically need to learn about the specific standards and methodologies required to develop the code. Since all of CorasWorks’ components are pre-built to those specific standards, that process is avoided.

### Code Development and Testing

Code development and testing are probably the two most important, time-consuming, and costly aspects of the product life cycle. When using CorasWorks software, there is no code development or testing required. You completely bypass this specific stage because all the work has been done for you. The software components and solutions are all tested and ready to be “snapped together” and deployed.

### System Integration and Testing

Once the code is designed, tested, and approved, it must be integrated into the overall system and tested again to make sure all connections and interfaces are functioning correctly. All CorasWorks products have been extensively tested with the SharePoint platform, which significantly reduces the effort required for you to perform this type of testing. And CorasWorks software is built to the specifications and standards of the Microsoft platform, again significantly reducing the time required for systems testing.

### Training

With custom-developed systems, administrative and end-user training is timely and expensive because most of the functionality is unique to the application. Because CorasWorks is a modular and configurable system, once the users learn the basic functionality for one application, it is easy for them to use other applications. This applies to both administrators and users.

### Ongoing Code Support, Maintenance, and Upgrades

As with any custom-developed system, there is the need for ongoing code support, maintenance, and upgrades. With CorasWorks, all of this becomes a part of our Premier Annual Support and Maintenance (PASM) plan. Through this plan, all customers get email and telephone support, all bug fixes or code updates, and service packs. In addition, CorasWorks has a very ambitious upgrade cycle and is continually innovating and improving its software.

### Ongoing System Maintenance

Most developers that work with SharePoint have expertise in Microsoft’s .Net technologies. The result is that most custom built implementations use a combination of various techniques that result in extensive maintenance of hard-wired links and procedural coding. This results in ongoing site maintenance costs and code support to allow changes in the environment. CorasWorks is a completely dynamic environment, so that as information and business requirements change, the entire

system will change as necessary. For instance, as new sites are added, renamed, or deleted, an environment using CorasWorks will automatically update to reflect the changes, significantly reducing your ongoing maintenance costs.

## Conclusion

Solutions built on top of the Microsoft SharePoint platform can help your organization make the transition from islands of information to a truly collaborative organization. The challenge for you is how to make this transition rapidly and cost-effectively, controlling both the time it takes to deploy your solutions and the total ongoing cost of creating and maintaining these solutions.

The SharePoint platform provides an open framework for developing collaborative business solutions. As such, organizations that choose to customize and extend SharePoint to meet their particular business needs and challenges must address the buy vs. build decision, assessing the short and long term costs of developing their own solutions, in contrast to the short and long term costs of purchasing commercial software that meets their requirements.

In the past, business applications were separate -in their own silos. Organizations would have to buy an application that works a certain way, or build one from scratch. And these stand-alone applications had to be integrated on site, by the customer. With CorasWorks, organizations can build a business workplace that meets their unique needs, that looks how they want it to look, that has the applications they want, and that integrates all of these applications into a single workplace environment. And the pieces literally just snap together. The result is that organizations get what they need, can change things as new needs arise, and can do this quickly and easily and without the costs of custom development, maintenance, and systems integration.

CorasWorks helps you gain tremendous productivity and efficiency benefits, while controlling short and long term development and maintenance costs. Selecting CorasWorks will not only reduce your costs for deploying solutions on SharePoint, but also significantly reduce the time it takes to deploy those solutions. As our hundreds of customers and partners have already found, CorasWorks helps you reduce institutional risk by purchasing from a market leader, freeing your IT staff's valuable (and expensive) time to focus on other projects that will further improve your bottom line.

For more information on CorasWorks, please visit our website at <http://www.corasworks.net> or email us at [info@corasworks.net](mailto:info@corasworks.net).

## About CorasWorks

*With 1,000 customers and more than 1 million users worldwide, CorasWorks is a leading provider of modular application development software for Microsoft SharePoint. Customers use our products to build web-based solutions such as project- and process-oriented solutions and line of business applications. Our modular architecture makes it easy to design, build, and manage an integrated workplace of collaborative business applications, without the time and expense of custom development. For more information and online demos, please visit [www.corasworks.net](http://www.corasworks.net).*