

Think Big, Think Again...

Biggest is not always best when it comes to business computer systems.

If you're shopping for a new IT system, it's easy to be swayed by the notion that you've got to have the sort of system that the big boys use – we won't name them here, but a couple of names will probably spring to mind. If you're a medium-sized business, you need to be looking for a system that fits your needs (not to mention your pocket). The technical specifications are not all-important; the key question is, what do you want it to do for you? If the vendor's pitch starts to confuse you, then the chances are that the system they're trying to sell you is too big, and will cause you ongoing problems. In my experience, businesses that think they must have a big system are thinking that way for the wrong reasons, says Trish Hall, CEO of Melbourne-based Greentree Partner Star Business Solutions. They're impressed by the specs, or they believe that having a big system means they must be a big business. If a competitor has a big system, they want the same because they think they need it to keep up or get ahead. Managers should also be wary of being swayed by CIOs or CFOs, who sometimes have their own agenda – they think having implemented a big system will look good on their CV, or they just want a sophisticated tool to play with. Hidden Costs But once that complex system is installed, the actual day-to-day functionality may turn into a nightmare. As well as having to pay a large implementation bill, the business owner could discover that established work practices which everyone understands have to be changed to suit the system. That's a cost they probably didn't expect. Maintenance costs may also be high, and extra people might have to be employed just to manage the system. And let's not forget the morale of confused, frustrated staff. People think they need these big systems but they probably don't, and they cost the business a lot of time, money and angst, says Trish. Some of the bigger names in business IT have been accused of making their products complicated in order to maintain a good ongoing revenue stream, or of seeking to lock customers into their software (effectively owning the company's IT strategy). Their prime interest is protecting their brand and income, not offering you the best solution at the best price. Trish recalls one well-known company in the US which had a large implementation team comprising people who each specialised in just one aspect of the system – and each of whom had to be paid. The size of that team just blew me out of the water. Greentree's partners approach their customers wanting to know what their problems are. Because Greentree is a flexible, integrated solution, it delivers just what the customer needs. If their needs change, particularly if their business grows, Greentree expands with it. New functions can be added easily, and the engine room virtually runs itself. If businesses were just to step back from the notion that thinking big equals thinking smart, they'd find that products such as Greentree actually do the job for substantially less, in terms of straight dollars and also in such things as implementation time, Trish says. About Trish Hall Trish is a Bachelor of Financial Administration and Chartered Accountant who has built a career within the Business Systems arena, as well as Business Management. She has worked for the likes of PricewaterhouseCoopers and William Buck Chartered Accountants. While Trish calls Australia home, she has travelled throughout the United States, Canada and the UK implementing systems. Trish and her family, including two small children, have lived in the US, to give them a life experience which included New Year's Eve in New York and Christmas in New Orleans. Trish is CEO of Star Business Solutions, a Greentree Partner.

Contacts

Daphne Andrews
1800 000 737
mailto: daphne.andrews@greentree.com