



# OFF THE SHELF VS. CUSTOM SOFTWARE

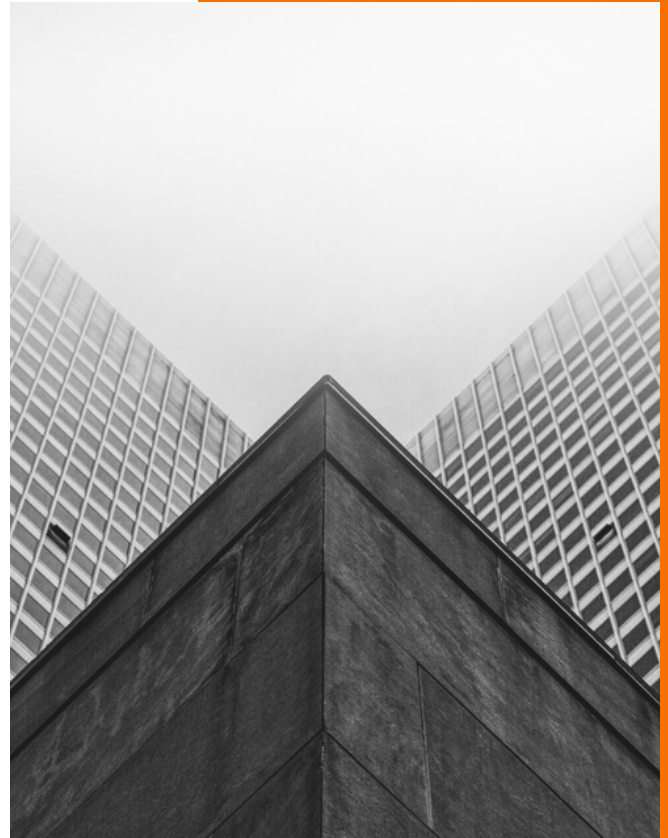
*When Custom Development  
Makes Sense*

**Your Company** got to where it is today by innovating. It's an organization unlike any other—so it's no wonder you have trouble finding a one-size-fits-all solution for your software needs.

These days, it's not difficult to find pre-built software that addresses common business challenges. But if you're reading this, you've probably struggled to find an exact match for your use case that is also cost-appropriate.

### **ON THE OTHER HAND...**

Maybe you've seen an off-the-shelf solution that does address most of the common challenges you face. You're just not sure you're ready to commit to a product your team has little-to-no control over.



### **SO HOW DO YOU CHOOSE?**

Sometimes, off-the-shelf software is the perfect fit. On the other hand, a one-time investment in custom software may be all you need to wow your end user and blow the competition out of the water.

***At Restless Labs, we value honesty and transparency. We give you an honest assessment of what's best for your business, whether that's custom development or not.***

Our team has put together this guide to assessing your business needs and determining the right fit. And if the question is still keeping you up at night, you can always reach out to Restless Labs for more...

## CAN YOU AFFORD TO MAKE CONCESSIONS?

With an estimated 26 million software developers in the world and counting (Evans Data), there's a good chance that somebody has built software that fulfills at least part of your current business needs.

If this is the case, you'll need to ask some additional questions to get to a clearer answer:

- Does the off-the-shelf product completely solve your business challenge? Some businesses settle for software that only meets a portion of their requirements. You'll have to weigh the cost of this sacrifice against the cost of a long-term solution over time.
- Does it integrate with your existing in-house systems? You've invested years of funds, training, and data into your existing software systems. Custom software systems are built to your specifications and can easily integrate with your setup, but not all ready-made solutions carry the connection points you need
- Can it continue to meet your business needs into the future? Today, you might be willing to settle for something without a customizable user interface or a specific feature. But in a few years, as your organization grows, you may find you need to update anyway. The cost of moving off the existing platform and onto a different one may be significant, time-consuming, and painful for the business.
- Will you be sacrificing good design or user experience in choosing this product? The most important factor for many businesses is that software works the way it's supposed to. But poor design can destroy customer experience in client-facing interfaces, and hurt productivity with internal software.

If you feel confident that it will meet your business needs now and in the future, great! But read ahead to learn why some companies choose to go custom.



## HOW MUCH CONTROL DO YOU NEED?



With a pre-built software solution, you are held to whatever features the commercial developer deems most important or necessary.

These solutions may include a certain amount of user control--configurations that let you tailor the product to your business needs, at least to an extent.

Where configurations aren't available, however, you will have to...

- A. Deal with the software as-is;
- B. Speak to the software's development team and hope they make time to prioritize your request over (likely) hundreds of others and the existing product roadmap; or,
- C. Hire a developer to build a separate custom solution that works with your existing off-the-shelf product.

In other words, there may be a time you have to hire a software development company anyway, to create a customization or new software that fits your requirements for control.

Thus begins the long process of transitioning to new software or a new platform after investing months or even years into the previous one.

Why not start off with a custom software build and have the control you'll want in the future?

## ARE YOU WILLING TO PUT USER EXPERIENCE IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HANDS?

User experience is another consideration when looking at off-the-shelf software and a common reason companies choose custom development instead.

Unfortunately, with an off-the-shelf product, your team doesn't usually have any control over user experience.

Consider the different implications for both client-facing and internal software before making your selection.



### CUSTOMER-FACING

With customer-facing apps, a frustrating user experience can drive bad reviews, poor customer relationships, and, ultimately, lost business.

### INTERNAL

Cumbersome or confusing UX can lead to lost productivity, which has major implications for the business.

## DOES THAT CUSTOM SOLUTION REALLY COST MORE?

Many people assume that custom software development will cost more than buying off the shelf. In reality, that's just the initial cost. Most off-the-shelf products, whether cloud-based or on-prem, have a long-term fee structure that adds up over time. A custom solution that you own is a one-time investment (with minimal maintenance costs).



## THE REAL COST OF OFF-THE-SHELF

- Monthly subscription fees
- Plug-ins and customizations
- Integration services
- Paying for features you don't even use
- Paying for additional seats as your company grows



With custom software, there are no ongoing costs outside of bug fixes or modifications. Adding a new feature later carries a one-time cost for the additional effort, but when that occurs is up to you.

## HERE'S THE BOTTOM LINE.

### *Is custom software the right choice for you?*

It depends.

Check out our handy checklist for signs custom development is a good fit.

#### **Signs custom software is a better fit**

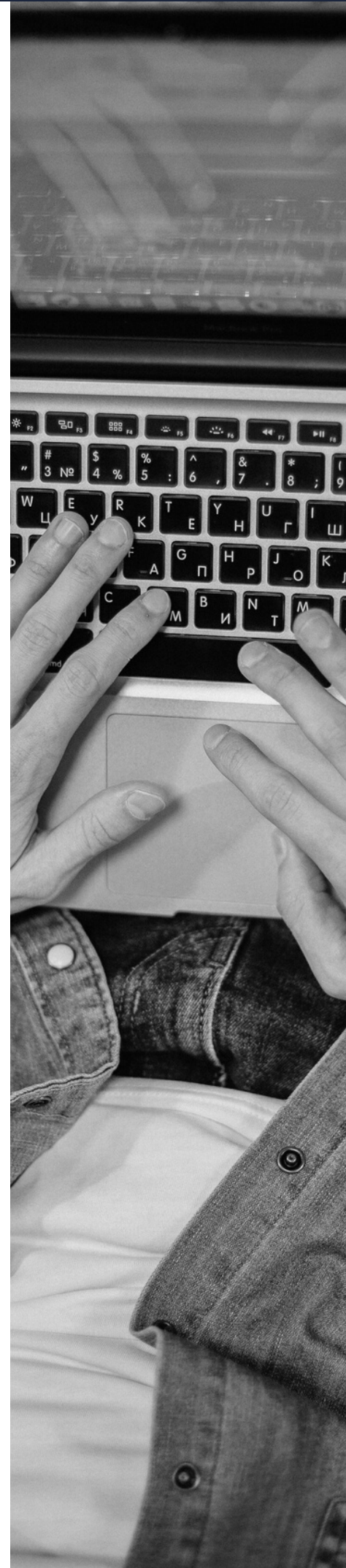
- Available off-the-shelf products don't meet all of your needs.
- You can foresee needing additional features in the long-term.
- You want advanced control over the design, client experience, or internal user experience.
- You want ownership over the final product.
- Cost over time is important to you.

#### **Vs. Signs off-the-shelf is better**

- You need to launch ASAP or run the software for a short period of time.
- You struggle to get sign-off/agreement on what custom requirements you'll need.
- An established piece of software already offers the user experience, features, and integrations you need.
- The up-front cost to build is a greater impact than the long-term investment

Believe it or not, the best source to help you determine whether an off-the-shelf product or custom solution is a better fit is a team of developers.

A commercial software salesperson is trained to sell you a product, no matter what. A developer is on a mission to help you find solutions, whether that's an off-the-shelf product, a custom-built solution, or something else.







# DREAM **BIG** REST **EASY**

*Let's build something awesome.*