

## **SAMPLE SOFTWARE/TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

Following are suggested guidelines for evaluating and proposing the purchase of new or upgraded software or other technology systems. The guideline has two purposes: first, to serve as a framework as you gather and analyze information about the products being evaluated, and second, to provide a template for a written proposal that supports your conclusions and recommendation.

The guideline was designed to apply to a variety of projects. Some project proposals require more analysis and detail than others, depending on various factors including overall cost, ongoing support needs, level of dependence on the system or software, and the size of the population affected by the change.

Technical implementation, training, and ongoing support are important components of any software project, so coordination and communication throughout the process will help make your project a success. Please contact the IT Department manager to request assistance from the IT Department. In most cases, you should include a member of the IT Department in software demonstrations and other meetings with the vendor.

Following is information about the purpose and use of each section of the guideline.

### **I. Summary**

Use this section to summarize key information about the project for a reader who needs to understand the proposed change and be able to explain it to others. That reader might be your manager's manager, or the managing partner who uses the information to inform other partners, or a manager who wants to inform department staff.

### **II. Detailed Background**

This section is for explaining in more detail why the change is being proposed, what circumstances it is improving or solving, and who is affected. It is also to provide a summary of the evaluation process and the "homework" that went into the recommendation.

### **III. Detailed Implementation Plan**

Use this section as an outline for your own research and evaluation, as well as to thoroughly inform a reader of the project details. Note that items J and K cover subjects that often get overlooked in the excitement of contemplating what a new system will be able to do. It is helpful to write down the workflow and procedures for working with the new product; it calls attention to gaps or drawbacks that may not have been considered or to process changes that might not have contemplated.

### **IV. Contract Review**

Summarize the key provisions of the purchase and maintenance contracts and indicate who has reviewed the contracts. Also use this section to indicate whether negotiations have led to concessions in terms or price.

## V. Software and Cost Overview Worksheet

This worksheet is for your use in summarizing basic information about the software and its cost, along with costs associated with implementation.

## VI. Technical Specifications

This worksheet is for recording the technical requirements of the project. You will most likely want IT assistance with this, but the vendor should also be able to complete relevant portions of the section for you.

## VII. Product Evaluation/Comparison Worksheet

Use this worksheet to compare the features and functions of the products being evaluated. List the features and functions we require or prefer in the left column. (Some examples: features we sought in a voice mail system included the ability to activate an out-of-office greeting without losing the standard greeting and the ability to have voice messages delivered to Outlook. Features we require in a document management system include the ability to create multiple versions of a document and the ability to search by full text as well as profile fields.) For each product, indicate whether the product has the function and/or rate how well the function is implemented in the product. Note that the list will probably develop over the evaluation period. When you begin the project, you may not be aware of what you can and should expect from available products.

## VIII. References

Sample reference questions are offered in the guideline, but you will probably add your own list of questions specific to the products being considered.

# **EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

## I. Summary

- A. Brief description of software/system proposed for purchase or upgrade.
  1. Project goal: problem being solved/improvement made
  2. Current process
  3. Who is requesting?
- B. Scope: what population benefits, and how?
- C. Overall cost (from worksheet in Section V)
- D. Cost and/or labor savings anticipated
- E. Staff resources and departments involved in the project

F. Timing of purchase and implementation

## II. Detailed Background

A. What practice or administrative function does the product support, and how does it improve our firm's business?

B. Do we currently have a product that performs a similar function? If so, how is the proposed product an improvement? If not, how is the function currently performed?

C. What other products are available and which did we consider? Why did we choose this one? Describe the evaluation process. Summarize reference feedback (see sample reference questions below). Attach evaluation matrix (see sample below).

D. If cost and/or labor savings are anticipated, provide details.

## III. Detailed Implementation Plan

A. Data conversion requirements

B. Consulting requirements. What configuration and implementation decisions will need to be made? Who will participate in making them? Will there be a focus group or a pilot group?

C. What services does the vendor propose providing with the software or system? What services will be provided by a third party? Is the third party certified by the vendor?

D. Will the system or software need to integrate with other systems or software? Does it connect to other databases? How will the integration and/or data feeds be created?

E. Training requirements and process.

F. Staff resources required for implementation.

G. How will other systems be affected? (*E.g.*, a change in word processing system would require a change in macro system.)

H. How will the product be tested in our environment? If applicable, will we evaluate a trial version of the software or request that the vendor demonstrate the product using our firm's data?

I. Timeline for implementation, including installation, testing, pilot period, and training. How will other projects or functions be affected if the timeline is not met?

J. Describe the workflow and procedures involved in working with the product.

K. How will practice or administrative functions need to change to accommodate the product? What policy or procedure changes will be necessary? Will orientation processes need revision?

#### IV. Contract Review

- A. Summarize key elements of purchase/maintenance contracts.
- B. Have contracts been reviewed by an attorney and/or the CIO if appropriate?
- C. What negotiations have taken place over terms or price?

## Software and Cost Overview Worksheet

Software Name	
Version	
Manufacturer	
Software Description	
How long has it been available?	
Upgrade to software we currently use?	
Requestor	
Department / Practice	
For a specific client or matter? Billable?	
In the budget?	
Software cost	
Implementation services cost (e.g., data conversion, consulting, system configuration, integration, installation, training)	
Hardware/equipment cost (e.g., server, scanner, printer)	
Cost for cabling or other infrastructure modifications	
Ongoing cost (e.g., maintenance and support)	
If feasible, is a trial version available?	

## V. Technical Specifications Worksheet

Desktop/Client Requirements	Requirement Specification	Changes required to meet specifications
Operating System		
Compatible with our version of Office?		
Windows or Web client?		
Browser requirements		
ActiveX required?		
PC requirements (processor, RAM, disk space)		
Citrix compatible? Citrix licensing requirements?		

<b>Back End Requirements</b>	<b>Required Specifications</b>	<b>Changes required to meet specifications</b>
Server component? Dedicated server or potentially share?		
Server RAM		
Server disk space (for software and data)		
Server CPU		
Server Operating System		
Web server		
SQL? If so, what versions is it certified for?		
Data storage requirements		
Other compatibility issues?		

<b>Licensing Structure</b>	Indicate which apply
By individual user	
By individual PC	
Concurrent Users	
Enterprise	
Is there a server license required in addition to client licenses?	
Other (describe)	

<b>Security</b>	
Does it use Active Directory/network authentication?	
How is data or session secured?	
Require separate user IDs or passwords ?	

<b>Application Information/ Components</b>	
Does product integrate with other applications or databases? Indicate which, and describe integration.	
Reports, forms, macros, templates: Are built-in options satisfactory? Will we need to build any custom reports, forms, templates, or macros? What tools are available for customizing?	

<b>Maintenance, Upgrades &amp; Support</b>	
Maintenance costs	
What is included in maintenance? Patches, updates, all new releases?	
Manufacturer upgrade/patch cycle?	
Tech support provided how/when?	
End-user support to be provided how?	

<b>Usability</b>	
Built-in help files	
Manuals	
Training recommendations (e.g., length of training sessions, hands-on or lecture/demo, provided by vendor or firm)	

## VI. Product Evaluation/Comparison Worksheet

List the required features/functions. For each product evaluated, indicate yes/no and/or rating of product's implementation of the feature. Note that a full list of specifications will develop and evolve during the evaluation process.			
	Product 1	Product 2	Product 3
Specification 1			
Specification 2			
Specification 3			
Specification 4			
Specification 5			

## VII. References.

### A. List references:

- Firm name
- Location
- Name and position of the person you spoke with
- Numbers of attorneys and total users
- Responses to reference questions.

### B. Sample reference questions:

- How long have you used the product?
- Does it do what it is represented to do?
- Are you satisfied with the product?
- Are you satisfied with the vendor?
- Are you satisfied with support?
- What problems have you encountered with the product?
- How satisfied are the users of the product?
- How well does the vendor respond to requests for enhancements?
- How did the implementation go? What problems did you encounter?
- Why did you choose this product instead of a competing product?
- Would you buy the product again?
- Other comments?

Note that it may be worthwhile to speak with more than one person from a reference site, if the scope of the product is large and we need administrative, end-user, and technical feedback. Also, it is often valuable to ask ILTA members about the product. Most legal software is used by other ILTA members, who can often provide valuable information about the product being considered.

C. List other reference sources, such as published reviews, articles, blogs, and conversations with other prospective purchasers.