



# Ten Reasons Why Your Company Shouldn't Develop In-House Operations Management Software

In the process industries, some companies decide to build their own operations management software, often using limited database, spreadsheet, word processor and notes software as the foundation.

Initially this may seem like a low-cost method of creating bespoke applications quickly, but over time various problems commonly appear, making these homegrown applications a hindrance rather than a help.

**Here are ten reasons why your company shouldn't develop in-house operations management software.**

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## 1. Not Built by Specialists

In-house applications are usually not built by consultants or programmers with operations management software experience. In larger companies, these consultants or programmers usually jump from project to project and never specialise in one area for years. They certainly will never have the experience of a specialist who fully focuses on operations management software and gets constant feedback from a wide variety of process industry customers.

## 2. Poor Processes Reinforced

In-house applications tend to wrap around existing processes, which sometimes reinforce the poor parts of these. They do not provide a fresh outlook and framework for improved best practices. This is often due to time constraints which encourage developers to copy the existing processes instead of using the project as an opportunity for vast improvement.

## 3. No Industry Support Network

If operations management software is built in-house by non-specialists there is less opportunity to gain best practice and functionality from other process industry companies across the world. Companies who fully focus on operations management software get feedback from process industry customers every day, leading to continuous improvement and a global support network.

## 4. Code and Programmer Succession

Software developers are highly skilled, and their work is often difficult to change or improve if key personnel leave the company, especially if they have been heavily involved in short-term project work and haven't comprehensively documented it. Complex code is generally difficult to configure or manipulate, which makes it costly, time-consuming and unreactive. The time wasted getting

new developers up-to-speed with abandoned operations management software can be substantial.

## 5. Unnecessary Costs

Having an in-house IT team to maintain and improve bespoke operations management software can be difficult and costly, especially if they get pulled into other unrelated projects across the organisation. A readily available support team must also be established to keep the software stable and the end users happy.

## 6. Lack of Continuous Improvement

Evolving and developing in-house operations management software can be very difficult. In the modern IT world, keeping up with the latest technology is getting more and more difficult with the increased speed of innovation. Adding another specialist software project to the IT team's portfolio makes this even more of a challenge. Bespoke applications are not likely to be kept up-to-date and often become another burdensome legacy software that nobody wants to deal with.

## 7. No Mobile Application Development

A lot of data recorded from various parts of industrial plants needs to be shared with the control room and field operations staff easily. Due to their limited architecture, in-house operations management applications are traditionally desktop-based, and mobile versions of the applications are either too difficult to develop or not considered at all.

## 8. No Connection to Key Industrial Software

In-house operations management applications can have limited capacity to link in information from the DCS, Data Historians, SCADA, the CMMS and other software. The powerful combination of human procedures with real-time data — which is possible with specialist solutions by operations management software vendors — is missed, and the potential of having a singular connected operations management platform is not fulfilled.

## 9. Disorderly yet Rigid Forms

As the plant and process evolves, there are many changes to the structure of information that is collected as well as the associated workflows. In-house operations management software forms based on basic databases, notes applications, spreadsheets and word processor documents are not dynamic and scalable when changes are required. The safe management of these changes is not easy to control, and in-house forms can multiply rapidly across different departments creating a management nightmare.

## 10. Configuration Causing Downtime

Configuration tools are often clunky or non-existent, because the focus is usually on end user functionality which provides short-term gain but long-term pain. Over the life of an industrial plant, there are many process changes. Data entry methods must adjust, and new forms are added. These changes often result in system shutdowns and delays that disrupt the many active users.

In addition to these, in-house operations management software leads to various other business-wide problems:

**Disconnected Applications:** applications are disconnected and the information is not easily shared between teams.

**Detached Applications:** important real-time and process data are detached.

**Singular Applications:** the in-house IT team develops singular applications that paper over the cracks.

**Costly Configuration:** the in-house IT team makes short-term software that is difficult to configure, adding costs.

**Enterprise Inconsistencies:** operations and safety use different software, missing out on crucial overlapping data.

**Strenuous Scalability:** scaling to other departments and sites is a laborious task.

## About Hexagon

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Hexagon's PPM division empowers its clients to transform unstructured information into a smart digital asset to visualize, build and manage structures and facilities of all complexities, ensuring safe and efficient operation throughout the entire lifecycle.

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