Answering the age-old question: Build or buy?

Companies of all sizes struggle with establishing a cohesive way to **organize** and **share information**.

Many companies are tempted to build their own knowledge management solution because they don't think the right product or tool exists in the market to solve their unique problems.

We've listed a few things to consider when wrestling with the age-old debate of building vs. buying new tools to help you make an informed decision and ultimately, **solve your problems faster**.

Your knowledge management system can take many shapes. Some companies rely on a simple wiki that can be edited by anyone within the company, while others rely on cloud-based platforms that provide functionality including searchability, versioning, structured hierarchies, and integrations with other software tools. Some companies—especially if you already have a strong development culture—might opt to build a more robust knowledge management tool in-house, with similar functionality to cloud-based tools.

What makes the most sense for your organization? Ask yourself these questions about building a tool vs. buying an existing solution.

Do we have the resources to invest in building our ideal solution?

When you have a team of talented developers at hand, you have the potential to build a solution that's ideally suited to your organization's needs. However, it's also likely that your technical teams have more pressing priorities based on your product roadmap—**can your team justify taking time away from planned development cycles to focus on an internal initiative like your knowledge management system**? And what's the cost in real-world dollars of the time they'll spend to build a tool?

Choosing an out-of-the-box solution means that there's no need to take your development team away from existing product development cycles to focus on a proprietary tool. **If you can't spare development team members for the numerous sprint sessions it may take to create a new tool, it may make sense to choose an existing solution.**

Can we support ongoing maintenance?

Beyond the initial development cycle, it will be important to ensure that your **knowledge base tool's codebase is consistently maintained over time**, and that **new integrations are added as needed**. While a cloud-based solution will include regular maintenance in its service level agreement, you'll **need to ensure that your development team will be able to build in ongoing maintenance time for the product**, regardless of what other projects they're working on simultaneously, if you opt for an in-house build.

How will we establish and promote best practices for using the tool?

Once the tool has been built, it's **important to ensure that it has a high adoption rate and that everyone within the organization knows how to use it**. Will you be able to appoint a stakeholder to provide an in-depth training session to your entire team to help them understand your tool's capabilities and features? Beyond that, will you be able to build in documentation for the tool itself to illustrate different use cases? As new employees come to the organization, it will be important for them to gain a strong understanding of the tool's functionality too, so you'll likely want to **build in an onboarding process for each new hire**.

In contrast, if you **choose an existing tool**, the solution will **include its own guides, tutorials, and customer support team to help your organization make the most out of the tool**. They'll be able to benchmark your company's adoption rate and activities against other companies who use the platform, so that they can offer detailed recommendations and analyses of how to optimize your use of the tool.

Finding the right solution for your brand

If you decide to use an existing solution, there may be a temptation to hack together a workable knowledge base from other tools you're already using for other purposes, such as internal discussion boards or chat tools. However, you'll likely find that if you're using tools for purposes other than what they were intended for, you'll add confusion to the process and likely find it difficult to navigate to the information you need at any given time. It's also possible that these tools may not prioritize data privacy, which is a crucial element for a tool that will be used for sharing proprietary knowledge.

If you come to the conclusion that it makes sense to purchase a knowledge management tool, focus on finding **a solution that will make it simple for your team to share and access knowledge across departments, ensuring team collaboration and increasing development cycle velocity**. Because your development team is likely already using our public site, Stack Overflow for Teams can be a natural transition for an internal knowledge base.

Our solution has multiple hosting options and provides a seamless environment where employees can ask and answer questions; add context to previous answers; add tags to categorize information; and search for keywords within existing questions. Stack Overflow for Teams also provides dedicated customer support, and support with technical implementation for on-premises hosting.

Get in touch to learn whether **Stack Overflow for Teams** is the right fit for your organization's knowledge management needs.