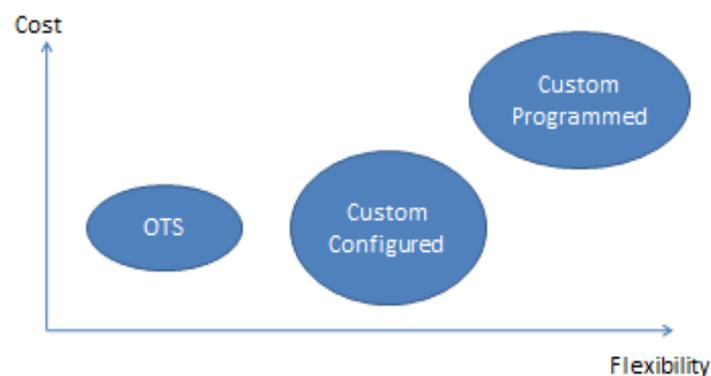Translation Management System: Buy It or Build It?

AtCETRA Language Solutions we tried it both ways. First, wepurchased an off-the-shelf product for managing the translation process, but it soon became clear that we would have toadapt our processes to work with the software, rather than the other way around. Instead, we decided to build our own system for managing the translation process. The presentation will discuss the pros and cons of using an off-the-shelf product versus building a new one.

A proprietary solution can be done in two ways: custom-programmed (starting from scratch) and custom-configured (using an existing platform such as SharePoint). The graph below shows the relationship of the cost versus flexibility for each solution, including off-the-shelf (OTS) products.

Cost

Custom Programmed

OTS

Custom Configured

Flexibility

Off-the-shelf products:

- Minimal domain expertise in the application is required
- Solution is predefined by the software company
- Configuration options limited to the applications flexibility
- Requires some participation with the buyer of the software
- No programmingis needed, resulting in fast deployment
- Moderate-to-extensive level of configuration
- Low overhead to maintain system
- Annual maintenance fee is usually 18% to 22% of software cost
- Evolution of application is designed to meet business goals of the software company
- Usually dominated by the needs of their larger clients
- Solution will continue to evolve allowing for an upgrade path to the new releases of the software
- Usually included in the annual maintenance
- Per-user license fees on top of the platform license fees

Custom programmed products:

- Aperson with extensive domain expertise in the software language and the application is needed to develop the design requirements
- All aspects of the application need to be designed

- Extensive participation with the buyer of the software
- Extensive amount of programming resulting in a long deployment cycle
- High overhead to maintain system
- High cost to evolve as application requirements evolve to meet business requirements
- Platform or software language obsolescence is always a risk
- Per user license fees based on the platform
- Design can meet most any requirement

Custom configured products:

- A person with extensive domain expertise in the application is needed to develop the design requirements
- Only the application needs to be optimized for configuration
- Some participation with the buyer of the software is required
- Minimal amount of programming is required, resulting in relatively fastdeployment time
- Some level of configuration is needed
- Low overhead to maintain system
- Low to moderate cost to evolve as application requirements evolve to meet business requirements
- Platform will continue to evolve allowing for an upgrade path to meet evolving business requirements
- Per user license fees based on the platform
- Configuration can meet most any requirement as long as the selected platform (e.g., SharePoint) supports application requirements
- Platforms are usually optimized for either business process workflow or business transactions, but not both

CETRAport, an application we custom-configured using a SharePoint platform, will serve as a case study, comparing the cost of buying an off-the-shelf product versus developing a proprietarysystem, and providing specific examples of issues encountered in either scenario.