

Selecting Spa Software Using R²ISC



By **Linda Haines**, Director of Marketing, Milano Software

Buying software for your spa can be a difficult task. Most consumers today use email and the computer almost daily but the task of software selection can be overwhelming.

So the question is where to start? Business consultant Nathan Hollander recommends using a formula called R²ISC. R²ISC is an acronym for the five key criteria you need to analyze to quickly determine if a software package will meet your needs: Requirements Current, Requirements Future, Implementability, Sustainability and Cost.

The complete version of Hollander's "A Guide to Software Evaluation and Selection" is available at Amazon. Below is a very simplified version of his theory adapted specifically to the spa and medi industries.

Begin by listing all the your "**Requirements Current**" or features that you need NOW!

Your list might include; appointment book, automated reminders, wait list, inventory management, ability to create purchase orders, low inventory notification, customizable barcode labels, electronic data interchange (EDI), automated

THE TASK OF SOFTWARE SELECTION CAN BE OVERWHELMING

reordering, staff goal setting, wages, commissions, retail and service goal setting, ability to export reports to Excel and text files, ability to run reports based on different criteria, security levels for staff, client relationship management (CRM), track client's sales and service history, maintain client record cards, track no-shows, track client loyalty and membership, automated marketing and targeted marketing.

Then create a second list of
“Requirements Future”

This list may include: credit and debit card integration, accounting bridge, online booking, automatic back-up, eConfirm and multi-location data sharing.

Hollander recommends weighing each of the requirements but for simplicity, you may simply want to use the requirements as a checklist when comparing two or three software companies. Create a simple spreadsheet with all the items of both lists in the far left hand column. Then write the names of three possible software providers across the top. Go down the list and check each item “yes” or “no”. Complete your research by visiting the provider's websites and by taking part in a demo.

The third step is to research is
“Implementability”

Implementability means how hard or easy software is to set-up. Have you ever heard the saying, “Garbage in, garbage out?” In reference to software, this means that if you upload Excel files that have

typos, wrong phone numbers and inaccurate email addresses then when you output client reports you're going to get inaccurate information and bounced back email. If you take short-cuts entering inventory; you're going to have problems tracking it. You need to input accurate, clear information.

A good software company will offer you data set-up training and provide you with several resources; set-up guides, online information, call center. If you're upgrading from one software provider to another, ask if the new software company offers data conversion and what the cost is.

Another thing to consider in this phase is the experience and reputation of the software provider. You'll want to choose a provider that has been in the business for several years. You don't want to invest in software and suddenly have that company disappear or be absorbed by a competitor. You also need to find out how often a company does updates and for how long or what conditions there are to you receiving the updates. If a company hasn't released a new version in the past three years, it's an indication that they're not progressive.

Supportability is how easy it will be to support the software on an ongoing basis.

Supportability refers to the education, customer support, newsletters, business tips and client manuals that you will receive. Ask if the software suppliers provide on-going training through classroom, WEBinars or remote. Many of the most prominent supplier offers advanced business management training seminars on weekends.

SO THE QUESTION IS: WHERE TO START?

Some have beneficial partnerships with business coaches, hardware providers, industry leaders and web companies and hosts. These relationships speak volumes about a company's influence in the beauty industry and can directly benefit you.

Ask the supplier what their client retention is, what hours they provide customer support and what options there are for support; hourly, monthly or annually. At this step, you also need to confirm the platform and configuration of the software and if it is compatible with your operating system. A good software provider will also be able to provide hardware equipment upgrades if you require them.

Cost is the total purchase and implementation costs plus all associated costs that will be incurred over the next five years (five years is considered the life of a software package before it needs major enhancements) plus the economic benefits.

Software payment options include one-time purchase costs, payment over a period of time and monthly rental. Other soft costs include education, training and support fees. Ask if the supplier's support fees include up-grades. Some suppliers include up-grades if you are receiving support and others do not.

You may also need or choose to invest in new hardware; computer, receipt printer, scanner, monitor. Some suppliers have relationships with hardware suppliers that help you get a better price!

The economic benefits of purchasing software include increased efficiency, more productive staff

and higher retail sales. Spas that have implemented software report an increase in staff productivity as staff have an easy method of tracking their own performance and retail goals.

Owners and managers can conveniently track the activities of the staff and determine which products and services are most popular. EDI means that SKUs from a product supplier can be quickly transferred. Spas who have implemented Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) report an increase of 30% in their retail sales. Automated and targeted marketing keeps the spa "top-of-mind" for clients and increases the number of visits per year. More visits equals more revenue!

By using this simple process R³ISC, you'll find the best software solution for your spa or medi-spa.

About Milano: Milano has been providing comprehensive software based management solutions for the retail market, with a focus on the beauty industry for over 15 years. Milano has experienced tremendous growth in the salon, spa and medi spa industries as these companies begin to realize the benefits associated with a system that integrates POS, inventory control, salon management and business management tools in one complete system.

For more information, visit:

www.milanosoftware.com