

# Getting Your Systems Online

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## Why Put Your Systems Online?

### Benefits

You can open up access to a system that may have only been available to staff in one office so you and your staff can work on it on from home, on the road or from a different office.

You remove the restriction on having the software installed on all the machines – all that is required is a web browser.

Usually upgrading to an online system includes moving to a more powerful and resilient database – with improvements in speed and reliability.

An online system can email out when a change has been made (for example a customer logs an issue on your system) and can give your customers access to their information (if you want).

### Disadvantages

It can be expensive to develop an online system so you need to know what you want. If your current systems are using a database and you are happy with the functionality, moving to an online system should be relatively easy. However, if the system is based on spreadsheet you may need some design work to convert this to a database and this will increase the cost.

You can lose some system flexibility - If you are frequently changing your spreadsheet you need to be sure you are happy to lose that capability (although in return for many other features).

If you are still developing your systems or method of working then it can be expensive to change midway through a project to go online. In this case you would often be better at getting the system right offline first.

There will usually be an ongoing cost to hosting the system on a server, although this can be quite low.

## Which Options?

The 'best option' for an online system is one that is completely bespoke for you, written from the top down for you. However, this is also the most costly so you should look at the other choices and balance your budget and requirements. Fortunately as technology has progressed there are now several ways to get online at a lower cost.

### **Completely Bespoke System**

The most expensive but will do exactly what you want. An example of why you might want this is where your data structure is complex as are your reporting requirements. An example would be an integrated Sales Order / Stock / Despatch system.

**Prices : £5,000+**

#### *Mobile*

You can have this system accessible from mobile devices such as smart phones (e.g. iPhones, Android and Blackberries) or tablets (e.g. iPads). You can also have your own mobile applications developed.

### **Semi-Bespoke System**

Using building blocks software you can have a system that will do most of what is required. As much of this is already developed 'out of the box' the development costs are less. However some aspects are not as flexible as a result. An example would be a sales order system that was not integrated with a stock system.

**Prices : £2,000+**

#### *Mobile*

The same as for the completely bespoke system but there is less flexibility so you may not have an as satisfactory mobile solution.

### **SharePoint System**

Using the free version of SharePoint you can have it customised quickly and cost-effectively to put your data online. The downside to this approach is that it's the least flexible - but SharePoint has enough power to be worthwhile looking at for some applications. An example application would be a customer issue tracker or customer contact recording.

**Prices : £500+**

#### *Mobile*

It can be done, but not really very flexible or easy to develop.

### **MS Access Online**

If your system is based on MS Access then it can be moved onto the web relatively easily. You can still use the existing screens to access the data from anywhere as well as create new online forms (usually simpler) for user who do not have MS Access installed.

**Prices : £500+**

## **Which is best for me?**

To make that decision you will need to work out;

- How settled your processes are
- How easily the system needs grow with your business



## Getting Your Systems Online

- What the advantages are to you of moving a system online
- What the disadvantages are
- What your priorities for the system are (out of office access or flexibility)
- How interlinked your system are
- What your budget is

We can help you make this decision. If you would like more advice, please contact [info@fruitfulgroup.com](mailto:info@fruitfulgroup.com) or call Tim on 0207 036 3721.