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Tips for CAMA System Acquisition (The ~~Ten~~ Eleven Commandments)

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I am sometimes asked to make recommendations for CAMA systems. I have seen packages come, go and evolve over time.

Selecting the best package for your needs is a complex undertaking.

Based on many years of experience, here are eleven of my most significant considerations.

10 – DON'T EXPECT INNOVATION



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Cutting edge innovation is antithetical to a packaged solution that is designed to work for multiple clients.

Understand how your innovative functions or needs be will accommodated.



9 – SHOW – DON'T TELL



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If a vendor says they can do a thing, ask them to show you.

The thing that you want may only be available as an expensive customization.





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8 – NO ONE “BEST” SOLUTION

Every package has strengths and weaknesses. There are none that are unilaterally better than all of the others.

Understand your needs and find a package that meets them.



7 – SPATIAL ATTRIBUTES



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Four types of variables:

Intrinsic

Location

Time

Spatial

If you plan on using spatial attributes in your valuation process, look for a package that has a strong GIS component imbedded.



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6 – PRICE PER PARCEL

Don't fall for "per parcel" pricing. Databases store records. Functionality should work the same for 10,000, 100,000 or 500,000 records.

The number of parcels or records should not be a factor.

Price should be based on the functionality that is required.

5 – ATTRIBUTES AT TIME OF SALE



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To be IAAO compliant for ratio studies, you must be able to capture property attributes at the time of sale, and differentiate them from current attributes or attributes at time of valuation.

4 – SUPPORT FOR YOUR VALUATION PROCESS



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Make sure that the valuation process you want to use is supported. Most commercial CAMA systems are designed to support the modified cost approach.

Some support rudimentary regression modeling or a sales comparison approach.

Some will support a GRM approach for income.

If you want to use a method other than cost, understand how the values will be calculated and integrated into the system.

Modified
Cost

Sales
Comparison

Regression

Income

Trending

3 – CAPTURING YOUR UNIQUENESS



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Your market is unique. Make sure that the essence of what makes *you* unique can be captured in the system in a functional way.

If you use engineered features, make sure that they can be integrated into the *functionality* of the package – not just stored as text strings in the database.





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2 – WRITE A GOOD RFP

Take the time and effort to write a good comprehensive RFP. You will save a lot of time and money and are more likely to find a system that meets your needs.

A vendor will have to factor “unknown unknowns” into the quote. Make sure you are asking for everything that you want.



1 – IT'S YOUR BUSINESS PROCESS



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Don't change your essential business process(es) to accommodate the software.

Document all of your business processes and workflows.

Identify those that you don't want to change; those that you want to change and those that are open to change.



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BONUS – TRUE MASS APPRAISAL

A criticism of older CAMA packages was that they did Mass Appraisal - one account at a time.

They were organized around the property record card paradigm and were every powerful in working with individual parcels.

They lacked the ability to logically link related parcels and provide grouped analysis or editing that promotes consistency and improves uniformity.

THAT'S (NOT) ALL FOLKS!

These are my top eleven considerations.

There are others, but this is a good place to start.



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THANK YOU!



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