

A Guide to Purchasing

Test Lab Management Software



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Introduction

It is no secret that the success of a project often depends upon having the right tools for the job. While some companies are managing their test labs manually or with home-grown spreadsheets, several test automation products exist in the market. Companies have used these tools to streamline operations, manage test requests and personnel, and to gain insight from their data.

However, not all software suites are created equal. If you neglect due diligence, you run the risk of getting stuck with an ill-fitted solution or revert to the status quo.

We've interviewed several stakeholders from small labs to large enterprises. Using the gathered input, we've compiled this guide to help you decide whether test lab management software will deliver a good return on the investment for your business.

Below, we break down the common decision process successful companies follow, identify questions you might ask throughout your buying experience, and help you understand how you can guide your peer group in the purchasing journey.



Step 1:

Determine Organizational Readiness

Timeline: 1-2 weeks

Stakeholders: Group Engineers, Engineering Group Management

Resources: *Readiness Score Card*

Before you set out on your search, it is important to understand where your organization stands today. The goal is to set up a baseline against which the success of the test lab software implementation will be measured and decide if this is something that will bring value to your organization.

Work through our *Readiness Score Card* to gain a clear picture of the current lay of the land. This score card will help you understand:

- Performance of the current system
- Reporting cadence and accuracy
- Costs associated with testing in the current system

It is important to have an in-depth discussion on this topic among the end users who will be working directly with the new system. They will provide honest feedback, identify pain points, and come up with creative ideas to increase efficiency of your test lab. Make sure the lab manager is aware of these conversations. There is no need to provide detailed business case yet (you will build that in the later steps). However, transparency is critical to the successful work relationships. You do not want to catch anyone off guard or create a perception of going rogue with an idea without management approval. Your manager will also identify any immediate roadblocks that could prevent you from carrying out this initiative.

3 questions to ask in this step:

- What capabilities do we have today?
- Could we measure and define our inefficiencies?
- What other initiatives are going on in my organization that could take priority OR what initiatives this could align with?

Step 2:

Determine Unique Requirements and Identify Relevant Stakeholders

Timeline: 1 week

Stakeholders: Group Engineers, Engineering Group Management

Resources: *Requirements List Template*

Agreeing on the requirements of your test lab will help you build your business case and clarify the technical criteria that you will use to evaluate the potential solutions.

You should already have some information on this topic from the conversations you've held in step one. To streamline further discussions, we've put together a *Requirements List Template* as your starting point. Treat this draft as a wish list and rank the requirements in their order of importance to your organization. When budgets are allocated, this will allow you to prioritize investment in critical capability and identify opportunity for future expansion.

Be sure to involve other team members in the journey where appropriate. Collaborating with IT, management, and peers will give a voice to all stakeholders in setting the priorities and evaluation criteria. We suggest creating a comprehensive list of all individuals who will be affected or involved in making an investment in a test lab software solution.

Organizations that overlook this step run an increased risk of encountering internal resistance later in the process.

3 questions to ask in this step:

- What we do now that we wish could do better in the future?
- What we cannot do now that we wish we could do in the future?
- What capabilities are most important for our lab and what can be added later?

Step 3:

Conduct Vendor Research

Timeline: 2-3 weeks

Resources: *Vendor Comparison Template*

This is the part that will take some time. But it is important to be thorough and not rush the process. There are four main parts to this step:

- Conduct initial vendor research
- Create a shortlist of options
- Request vendor consultations, presentations, and demos
- Conduct a deep dive comparison of top 2-3 options

Conduct Initial Research and Create a Shortlist of Options

Use the requirements check list you created in step two to quickly identify vendors that offer what you need. We recommend that you narrow down your options to three or fewer choices.

Be careful not to make assumptions at this point. We have interviewed several clients who admitted that they fell into a trap of choosing the wrong vendor based on their presentation. They spent a lot of money on software only to find out that the company was investing in marketing more than they were investing in product development.

Your needs will evolve over time and your supplier will need to be there to help your lab management solution evolve to meet the new requirements. This is not a one-time purchase, so place appropriate weight on each vendor's approach to on-going support and to their long-term viability. Engage your IT department in assessing your organization's specific requirements for continuing support.

Request Consultations and Demos

Would you buy a car without a test drive? Probably not. Nor should you commit to a lab management software without seeing a demo first.

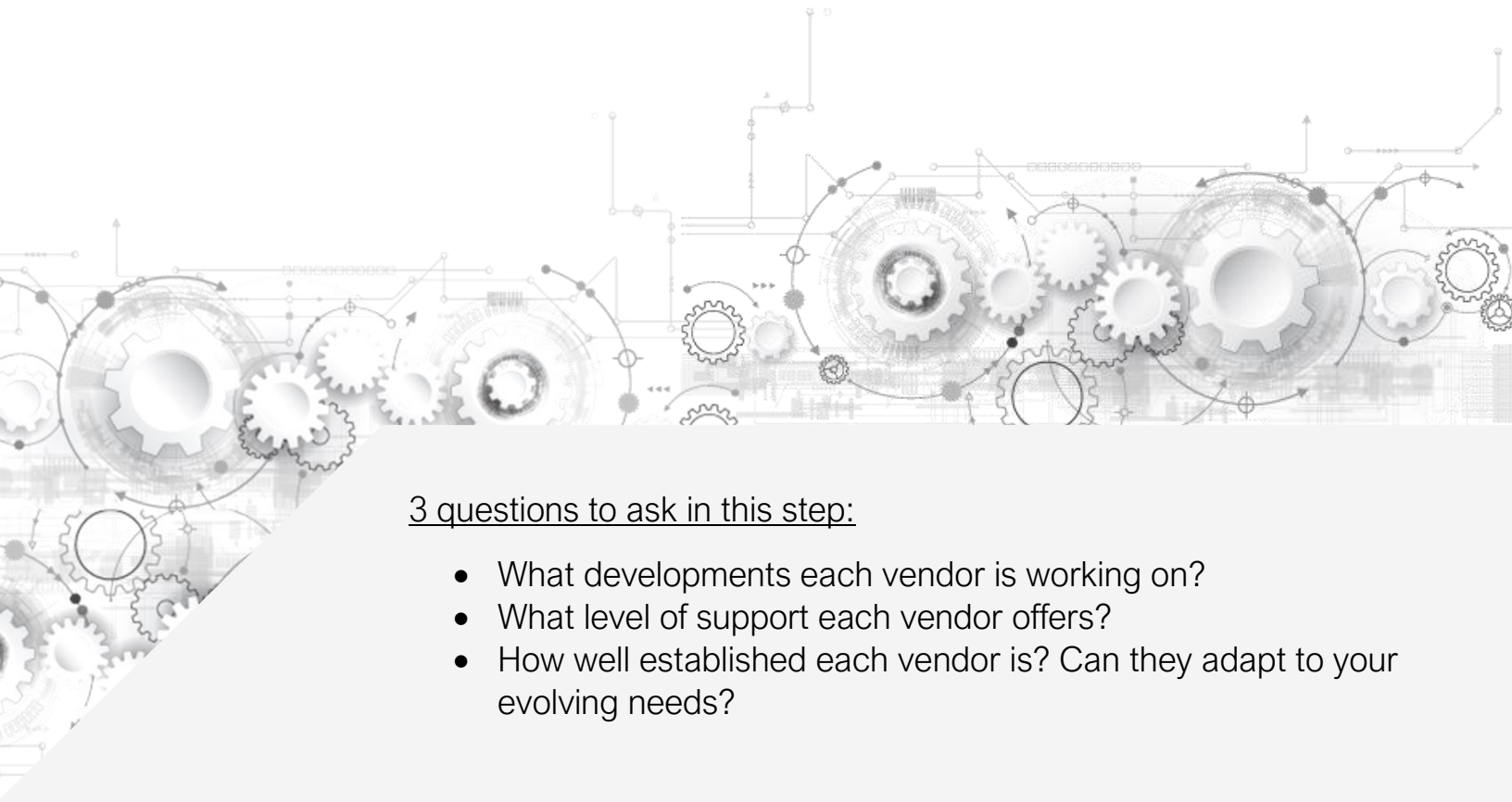
Ask not only about the software's current capabilities, but also about the on-going development and future functionality on a vendor's roadmap. If the vendor doesn't have much to share here, they might not be able to provide necessary scalability or improve performance.

Make sure you understand the pricing models. It won't always be possible to make an "apples-to-apples" comparison, but you should at least be able to map the provided options to your top requirements.

Finally, do not forget to ask about implementation timeline. What are the steps necessary to integrate this solution into your organization? If you are moving away from another platform, ask how the new vendor will help you make a smooth transition.

Conduct a Deep-Dive Comparison of Top Vendors

Use the *Vendor Comparison Template* we've provided to create a visual contrast between your top selections. The best option might not jump out at you immediately. Your finalists might offer very similar capabilities. To help you make the right decision, look at their company, not just the product. Are they large and established enough to rely on for the long haul? Are they agile enough to adapt their product to your company's needs? Are they "close enough" geographically to provide on-site support, if necessary? Do they make it easy to do business and can you trust the account team assigned to your organization?



3 questions to ask in this step:

- What developments each vendor is working on?
- What level of support each vendor offers?
- How well established each vendor is? Can they adapt to your evolving needs?

Step 4:

Build Your Business Case

Timeline: 1-2 weeks

Stakeholders: List of individuals identified in Step 2

Resources: *Business Case Template*

You've spent many weeks collecting data. Now is the time to present.

Whether you end up making a presentation in a meeting or having one on one conversations with individual team members, writing out the business case for this investment is a must. Since you have spent months on your research you already have a comprehensive understanding of how this solution will solve organizational problems and improve performance. But your peers and other stakeholders may not have that understanding. Your selected vendor will help you outline your business case or even write it for you. We have provided a *Business Case Template* for you to get started.

Do not forget to outline why you set out on this search to begin with. Each stakeholder will have somewhat different priorities and evaluation criteria. If you have executed step two properly, you should be able to navigate these differences.

3 questions to ask in this step:

- Why did I decide to search for this solution?
- What return on the investment we should expect?
- What my key stakeholders care about?

Step 5:

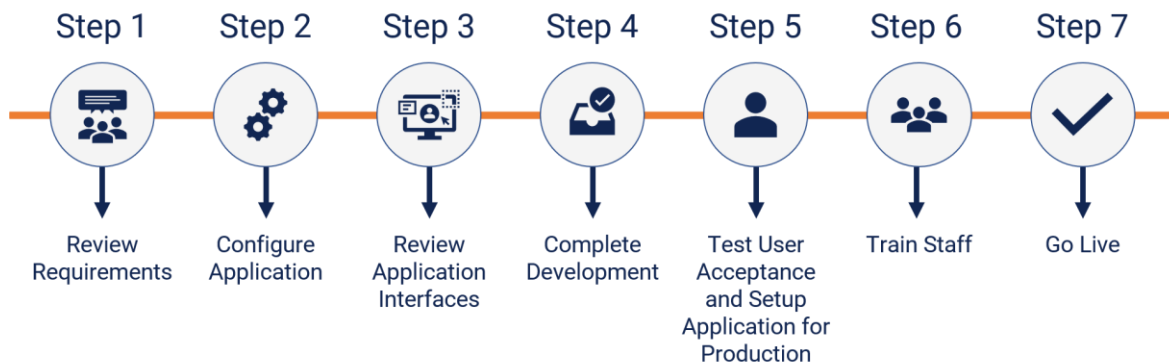
Set Up Implementation Timeline

Timeline: 1 week

Stakeholders: List of individuals identified in Step 2

Resources: *Implementation Timeline Template*

Implementation of your new platform could take several months as you work with the vendor to customize, configure, and deploy your new system. Your implementation process should look something like this:



We have provided you an *Implementation Timeline Template* with estimates for how long each step should take. Your dedicated support specialist will work with you on this process and help train your team.

Congratulations! You've made a significant time investment in the process, but the efficiencies and productivity gains from a well-fitted test management software will deliver a strong return for your efforts!

About Konrad Technologies

Konrad Technologies enables companies to accelerate the development of their critical hardware components by providing services to automate and deliver turnkey solutions that increase throughput while increasing profitability. TestValet empowers our clients to optimize their operations with workflow automation, RPA, and data mining capabilities. Konrad has over 220 global employees and is privately held.

Visit www.testvalet.com to learn more.

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Interested in discussing your buyer's journey with an expert? Please check out our website or email our sales team.

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