

# Improving Your Technology Stack

By Randolph P. Johnston, M.C.S

**A**s technology evolves rapidly, are you wisely helping your business choose the best option? Are you able to stay up with the choices in the market? And how do you know you aren't falling for a professional sales pitch?

In this article, you will learn about approaches to discover new cost-effective solutions in the market.

## What is a Stack?

To begin, let us define "stack." Your stack is the collective choice of technologies you have made to run your business or home. You might use the Microsoft Windows, Apple or Google ecosystems as your starting point. From there, you have probably chosen productivity applications; for example, [Microsoft 365](#), [Google Workspace](#) or [Zoho One](#).

After that, you have chosen line-of-business or accounting software to meet your needs. For example, if you decided on [Sage Intacct](#) for accounting, you may have added [BILL](#) for accounts payable, [Workforce Go!](#) [HCM™](#) for payroll, and [MISys](#) for manufacturing. Sage Intacct, BILL, Workforce Go! and MISys would be your "stack" for accounting.

You can build stacks for various platforms, such as [QuickBooks Online](#),

[Xero](#), [Acumatica](#) and other accounting systems. Likewise, CPA firms will almost certainly have to create stacks even if they choose the suite approach with [Wolters Kluwer](#) or [Thomson Reuters](#) for most line-of-business applications. Many organizations are running on outdated stacks, costing time efficiency, excess money and decreasing effectiveness. What is the optimal stack for your business?

## Can You Name All the Tools in Your Stack?

You probably manage budgets for your technology expenses. You have recurring costs and discretionary spending for technology. What is suitable for your discretionary projects and what recurring fees can you optimize?

First, consider an inventory of all applications and look to reduce and eliminate unneeded subscriptions, which may have expanded through COVID-19 and remained. Why have subscriptions to [Zoom](#), [Teams](#) and [GoTo](#) (the new brand of Meetings, Connect, Webinar and other tools) when one is sufficient? Why have full subscriptions to the productivity platforms if only email is needed for some employees?

Second, once you have your inventory of applications under control, consider the renewal cycle, terms

and value provided. What products are candidates for replacement or unreasonably priced where a viable alternative exists?

Third, specify the improvements you would like to see in your stack. Fourth, you are ready for the big step, reviewing options in the market, completing demonstrations, contracting for new products, planning the implementations, converting the data, training your team and deploying the latest tools in your stack. If I had counted these separately, you would have had 10 steps instead of four. But you would wind up with a better and likely lower-cost stack.

## How Do You Find the Best Stack Options?

This process will take some work, but your organization should see benefits from effectiveness, efficiency and the correct costs when you are done. So how do you discover these solutions?

While there are more options, consider these five approaches:

- Educational events, such as the [K2 Technology Conference](#) from the Texas Society of CPAs;
- Peer recommendations within your industry or association;
- Anonymous web search analyzing reviews;



- How much time do you spend answering emails or presenting financial information to others?
- Would time savings in these areas benefit you and others in your organization?

## Optimizing Your Technology Stack

Technology options are expanding more rapidly than ever. Could you remove or add tools to your stack that would benefit everyone? What can you do to eliminate unnecessary work and optimize work for everyone?

If you follow the steps above, you can identify opportunities to improve your organization's operation and potentially benefit your home also. My mission for decades has been to help as many people as possible use

- Vendor conferences for your primary applications assuming that you'll find sponsors and other users to discuss solutions; and
- Consulting with partner recommendations.

You'll have an application-rich environment to spot new stack options at the [Technology Conference on May 4-5](#), with sessions like Tech Update, CPA Firm Update, Now is the Time to Automate!, Collaboration – Portals, Payments and Signatures, Accounting Solutions and Add-Ons for Small Businesses, Accounting Solutions: Mid-Market, and Simplifying and Economizing Your Tech Stack.

Upgrading your technology stack involves more than maintaining the status quo and updating hardware, communication lines and versions of applications. The discovery process above will help you make both evolutionary and revolutionary changes to the technology your business uses.

## Leveraging the Technology You Already Own

All organizations should invest in training on the technology they own and anything newly acquired. Initial acquisition and recurring fees are only a portion of the costs to your organization. Consider the fees of

external contracting and consulting for training. Further, consider the costs of learning new techniques and change management.

Likewise, consider the cost of not knowing and lack of learning in your organization. The Pareto principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, doesn't apply well to technology.

The maximum benefit might occur from the 20% you didn't know or implement. If you have 80% of a system in use, you are still doing other work manually or supported with technology like Excel spreadsheets, which are error-prone and time-consuming.

You can eliminate repetitive and boring processes by getting more automated reporting and using the new no-code or low-code products. If you are interested in an ROI on your technology, you must invest the time and effort in training. These questions may help with assessing your organization:

- How much formal training have you had in word processing, email, spreadsheets and presentations?
- Do you have the preparation highly automated?

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technology in the way that benefits them the most. If you optimize your technology stack, you will get notable benefits quickly.

### About the Author:

Randy Johnston is one of the shareholders of K2 Enterprises. At K2, he focuses on product reviews and developing technology strategies for K2 events. In addition, he is a consultant and advisor for technology companies and businesses, including CPA firms. You may reach him at [randy@k2e.com](mailto:randy@k2e.com). Learn more about K2 Enterprises at [www.k2e.com](http://www.k2e.com).