

What To Do When Off-the-Shelf Software No Longer Meets Your Company's Needs

~ or ~

How Custom Software Can Save Money and Time
as well as Create a Scalable Corporate Asset

A Case Study



Down-to-earth people. Out-of-this-world programming.

By late 2007, SAFEbuilt, Inc. was paying \$100,000 a year to license software that served as the backbone of its operations—yet for the growing company’s unique needs, the costly software was a poor fit.

SAFEbuilt is a private company that provides contract building department services to municipalities across the United States, and they were using an off-the-shelf software package used by many cities and states to manage a myriad of government services.

However, SAFEbuilt was using just a fraction of the software’s functionality. Moreover, the portion they were using—the permitting module—was clunky and inefficient for their particular needs.

“SAFEbuilt serves hundreds of cities in states across the country,” said Cari Funk, Business Systems Project Manager. “We’re adding new cities every month. Each city has unique permitting requirements, and we need to be able to quickly create a customized permitting process for each of them.

“So the software we as a company rely on—and that our customers in turn rely on—needs to be affordable, reliable, nimble, and user-friendly. For our needs, the software we were using was none of those things.”

Enter Rocket Jones

Which is why, in December of 2007, SAFEbuilt turned to Rocket Jones to discuss custom software development.

“The SAFEbuilt team that came to us understood their business very well,” said Rocket Jones President Jeff Bristol. “To create software that dovetailed well with their business model, we had to understand it too. So we began with a number of discovery meetings in which we learned about SAFEbuilt and they showed us what was working—and what wasn’t—with their existing software.”

Together SAFEbuilt and Rocket Jones determined that Rocket could create a custom, cloud-based application perfectly tailored to SAFEbuilt’s needs at a one-time cost much lower than the licensing fees the company was paying for their old software per year.

“When you’re in the box, you ask, ‘What can this software do?’” said Bristol. “‘How can we change our business to match the software?’ But when you create a custom application, your business processes and model drive the software, not the other way around.”

The New Portal

Rocket began development of SAFEbuilt's custom "Permitting Portal" in January, 2008. It was field-tested with the first customer in March, implemented in five more locations in April, and rolled out company-wide in the following months.

Efficiency gains have been dramatic.

For example, SAFEbuilt was able to launch a new client, Castle Pines North, on the Portal in 24 hours, including a couple of hours of user training. By contrast, a client in Florida that insisted on using the old software took six weeks to get up and running, with intensive ongoing training and support long after that.

Now, each inspector's daily schedule is ready and waiting for him at 8 a.m., increasing efficiency by a third. Under the old system, the typical SAFEbuilt inspector's morning routine included two-and-a-half hours of down time as he waited for his daily schedule to be created.

SAFEbuilt inspector Mike Valenzuela used the old software for two years before the custom Portal came online. He said,

"The old system was down a lot and we had to do handwritten inspection tickets. The new Portal is much more reliable. It's never down."

Tracking plan review, monitoring and reallocating staff workload, and providing client communities with transparent, real-time reporting have also been made possible by the custom Portal.

"We were lucky we found Rocket Jones," said Funk. "They were able to understand what we do and then build software that suits us perfectly."

"The new Portal is a productivity-enhancing tool," said SAFEbuilt President Mike McCurdie. "Because it was developed around our business, it really works. It's almost a software version of our culture."

McCurdie pointed out that their custom Portal also makes SAFEbuilt stand out from the crowd. "It has been a competitive advantage for us in the selling process," he said. "Our competitors don't have anything like it. When we meet with prospective clients, it turns heads."

What the old solution cost
SAFEbuilt each year:

\$100,000

What the custom solution
cost to build and launch:

\$45,000

What it costs to support
the new software, per year:

\$10,000*

Who owns the new software:

SAFEbuilt

** not including software
enhancements and upgrades,
which are implemented as
SAFEbuilt requires*

What's next?

Rocket Jones continues to work closely with SAFEbuilt to develop and enhance the software Portal with new features planned for online permitting, mobile data entry, and instant notification of inspection results. Because a custom-developed application is scalable and lives in the cloud, it's available anywhere SAFEbuilt expands next.

“You don't generally hear people saying they love a piece of software,” said McCurdie. “But everyone loves this one.”

Is It Time to Consider Custom Software?

Is your intranet giving you fits? Is your software draining your team's energy? Is your off-the-shelf solution driving your business model instead of the other way around?

If your software and systems are critical to how you make money, yet any of the following are true...

- ★ You hate your software. Your IT guys hate your software. Your front line folks hate your software.
- ★ Software licensing fees are sucking up too much of your operating budget.
- ★ It takes months to train new employees to use it.
- ★ The IT guy is the only one who can really run the darned thing.
- ★ Your business could grow faster and be more profitable with better software.

...it's time to talk to Rocket. We would love to sit down with you and learn more about your business.

What You Get

When Rocket Jones develops custom software for you, we always provide:

- ★ cloud-based solutions
- ★ industry-standard code
- ★ product testing
- ★ full ownership of the software (you own what you pay for)

About Rocket Jones

Founded in 2001 by Jeff Bristol, Rocket Jones Interactive specializes in all things web—from web sites to custom business and online applications. Our team is made up of 14 dedicated people who not only deliver technical prowess and elegant interfaces, but also strong communication, timely turnarounds, and met deadlines. Rocket Jones is located in Old Town Fort Collins, Colorado.

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