

Change My Property Control Software? I would love to!

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Almost every property manager that I have ever talked with would like to change something about the software that makes up the heart of their Property Control. How about you? Some want to make tweaks (adjustments). Some would like to take certain features from their current software and graft them onto a different software package. Many would like to replace the entire system. Assuming that you want to make changes, how do you determine what features you want in your new or revised software? Attached is a questionnaire that may help you determine what you want in your new software.

Not too long ago, I was tasked to look at the best software for a Government Property Control System for a company that had grown from a small company (less than 500 employees) to a mid-size company (more than 5,000 employees) in a very short period of time through a series of acquisitions. There were several legacy accounting systems as well as several legacy property control software systems. (Most of the property control software systems were home-grown in Excel or Access.) One “new” Sector had no less than four accounting systems!

The types and locations of the government property were diverse. The types of environments where the property existed included office, SCIF, manufacturing, warehouse, small fleet of vehicles, an airplane, a government-owned facility, a biology/chemistry laboratory, subcontractor sites, and even explosives. How to find the best system for such a mix?

A committee was formed from several different parts of the new company comprised of all the people who knew about “property” (and there weren’t many of those) and a few others who had knowledge that might be of value. The goal was to make it as broad as possible. All told there were about a dozen individuals involved.

The first thing the committee did was poll property



professionals in other companies and within the government. What were their “Picks and Pans” and why? The NPMA contacts (particularly the NOVA Chapter and in Washington State) were very helpful in this regard. One property manager had spent two years looking at different systems. She was very eager to share her results with a fellow NPMA member.

After polling our contacts, the next step was to decide what features we wanted in our system. What were hard requirements and what would be nice to have? A list of features was put together, but how could we evaluate the various software on the market? One of the inputs we received from an NPMA member was a questionnaire. (Thanks especially to

Patricia Holden and Valerie Nelson.) My team and I modified the original questionnaire (a copy of the final questionnaire follows this article – the attached questionnaire is broken down into the 17 functional areas recognized by the NPMA).

This questionnaire was then sent to several vendors. Most were impressed with the depth of our questions. Most of the vendors were not aware that the property control system had to touch on so many functional areas. The responses that we received back told us a great deal about the vendor’s knowledge of government property. Many were products that were primarily aimed at company-owned assets or were small, project-size software.

Our conclusion? There is nothing on the market that will meet all of the needs. No current software had satisfactory answers for all the questions that we posed. There will have to be customization. The amount of customization varies by software and by the amount of complexity in the amount/types of government property.

It is hoped that the following questionnaire may be of value to others in their efforts to evaluate the various software packages that are available.

Life Cycle of Property Property Control Systems Software QUESTIONNAIRE

The life cycle of property (both government and company owned) is normally considered to have 17 functions from cradle to grave. We are in the process of evaluating your _____ software for use as our Government Property Control System. How does your software perform these 17 functions?

The questionnaire below is broken down by each of these functional areas and then there are specific questions under each function. (Obviously some of the questions can apply in more than one functional area.)

Thank you for taking the time to provide this data for us.

Planning

- How are Material and Property differentiated in the system and what is different in the handling of these two? (For example: property is accounted for item by item on a DD 1662 but material is only summed and the total value is entered.)
- How does the software deal with special or carve-out contracts?
- Will the system track by Task Orders? Or just by Contract?
- If it tracks by Task Orders can these be summed by Contract for some customers and not for others? (For example- DCMA cannot handle reports by Task Order but PMT can and requires it.)
- Can transactions be handled in a batch or must they be done one at a time? (Frequently property is moved or transferred in a batch of several items at a time and not one item at a time.)

Acquisition

- How does the software deal with single line items on Purchase Orders that have multiple serial numbers? (E.g. One line item on Purchase Order for 10 CPUs, each one of which must be tracked by serial number.)
- How does the system handle Government Property that was not purchased via a Purchase Order? (DD 1149, attachment to a contract, memo, etc.) (Many items are received that were not purchased by us.)

- How does authority to purchase an item get passed on and annotated in the audit trail (Purchase Request [PR]/PO/ Receipt)?
- How would I know if the purchase met the contract's ADPE restrictions?

Receiving

- How are serial numbers verified?
- Can serial numbers be changed after the initial entry?
- How are Returns to Manufacture Authorization (RMA) handled when there is a problem with the item?
- Are there automatic "edits" or validations built into the system? Or can there be? (For example can it be set up so that DoD contract numbers can only be entered in this format: 123456-94-C-1234 and not in 12345694C1234 format?)
- When an internal item is upgraded (e.g. more RAM) how is the cost of the total item adjusted and how is that handled?

Identification

- How are classified items handled or identified?
- Is there a field for National Supply system numbers (used to be Federal Supply System number)?
- How are National Supply system numbers handled?
- Will the system support bar code technology? If so, how?
- What happens when an asset tag has become separated from an item and needs to be replaced? How is that handled in this software?

Records

- What is the transaction history for a particular item?
- How are transaction histories handled in this software?
- What are the security features of this software? Both organizational and external.

Movement

- How is movement from one room to another handled?
- How is a DD 1149 (or commercial shipping/packing slip if allowable) generated?
- What additional steps are required to decrement the inventory after an item has been shipped out?

Storage

- How does the system reflect Government Property at a distant site or a subcontractor's location?

Inventory

- How is a physical inventory done in this software?
- Are there provisions for staggered inventories? (Last time moved, last time maintained, etc.) Not just for annual inventories. (Transaction based inventory.)
- What are the procedures for reconciling an inventory to what is in the database?
- Can the system print inventory listings by Contract, Task Order, location and not just a summary?

Reports

- How does one do an annual DD 1662 (DoD Property in the Custody of Contractors)? (And/or an annual NASA 1018, or DoT or DoE equivalents.) (Note: the data on these forms is similar in nature but is not an exact match.)
- Does the annual DD 1662 (or similar form) carry forward the numbers from the previous year?
- How does one do a completion of contract (or "Final") DD 1662 (or similar form)?
- Can the DD 1662 (or similar form) be filed electronically? If so, how is this done?
- How is a SF 1428 (Inventory Schedule) done?
- How do I find out who (name and address) a specific contract is administered by? Can this data be pulled into the reports?
- Will the system tell what type of contract it is? (CPFF, FFP, IDIQ, etc.) Where is this data stored?

Risk/Liability

- How are Loss, Damage and Destruction (LDD) of items handled? What reports can be generated?

Consumption

- How does the system track work orders and the use of material/consumables in a manufacturing environment?
- Are additional modules required to handle material?
- How deep will it track Bills of Material (BOM) (to locate internal cards, etc.)?
- Will the system print a DD 250 (Material and Inspection Receiving Report) form (or equivalent form)? If so, how does this affect the inventory (material mostly)?

Utilization

- Will the system accept inputs from a network monitoring software such as "SMS" or Tangram's "Asset Insight" or similar programs?

Maintenance

- How is maintenance for Government Property handled? (Not from the point of view that maintenance is needed or scheduled but from an accountability issue while the item is in maintenance.)
- Will the system track warranty information?

Subcontract Control

- How are specific contract provisions affecting Government Property noted in the database?

Disposition

- How do I transfer data elements to DoD's PCARSS system to speed up the disposal process? Can this be done electronically? (DoE is expected to have a similar system up shortly if they don't have it already.)
- Will the system allow one to generate lists that can be sent to civilian disposal companies for bids on recycling?
- When a deliverable item is delivered to the client, how is this handled? What steps are necessary to decrement the inventory when this happens?
- Are there any hazardous materials restrictions on the storage or disposal of an item? How is that handled?
- How are disposal classification codes handled?

Close-out

- How does it handle transactions where the Government Property is rolled from one contract to another at the end of the contract?
- How does the software handle transactions where title is held by the Government during the contract but reverts back to the contractor upon completion of the Fixed Price type contract?

Analysis

- What metrics are available?
- Does the Government Property manager need to develop his/her own metrics? ◆

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