A Data-Driven Framework for Software Selection in the Oil and Gas Industry: A Systematic Approach to Solution Evaluations

Abstract – This research paper offers a clear framework for assessing and selecting a fit for purpose software. The study focuses specifically on the role of a data-driven approach to the decision process, with application to the operational software systems in the oil and gas industry. The proposed framework integrates the expert judgment and quantitative methods in two phases: pre-proposal evaluation, which comprises requirement identification and evaluation criteria development, and post-proposal assessment, which entails set vendor evaluation and scoring. This methodology uses robust evaluation criteria, and a structured communication strategy so that multiple decision makers can participate in scoring and ranking, while removing the bias through normalization and the use of ranking for tiebreakers. It is shown that this systematic way of evaluation leads to a decrease in the time spent on the selection process, an increase in the stakeholders' confidence and better correspondence of the chosen solutions to the organization's needs. Thus, the present work can be considered as a contribution to the field by offering a replicable and scalable approach to selection that can be applied across many different operational settings in the oil and gas industry.

Disclosure: Any mention of the software systems in this paper is purely for illustrative purposes and does not constitute an endorsement or promotion of the entities mentioned. We operate independently of the companies referenced and the systems selected, maintaining impartiality in all aspects of our operations.

Keywords: Solution Selection, Software Evaluation, Oil and Gas Industry, Data-Driven Decision Making, RFP Process, Systematic Evaluation Framework

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1. Introduction

The software industry is growing rapidly, and companies are creating and deploying products to help them accomplish everyday activities and strategic goals. There is a constant need to evaluate the “buy verses build” to support optimal operational performance. This is crucial for the oil and gas sector, the choice of the right fit for purpose software serves as a key decision point amid these organizations.

Another analysis of current industry trends (Carr, England, Hardin, & Mittal, 2024) suggest that mounting pressure on oil and gas companies to maintain capital discipline with continuous innovating means that selecting the right solutions is becoming even more important to retaining competitive advantage.

However, in the oil and gas sector, most organizations still rely on ad-hoc or subjective techniques to assess potential solutions. Each of these software solutions has its own advantages and disadvantages, and the final choice is affected by multiple aspects such as cost, organizational goals, the learning curve and satisfaction of users as to the application, whether the application meets the requirements of business processes, cultural fit, and technical environment to mention a few.

When you analyze your data and have enormous qualitative information, the software evaluation process requires you to consider lots of different things, and this, by nature, is inherently complex and can lead to a subjective decision. When there are many decision-makers with different roles in the organization, it can be challenging to prioritize the criteria, analyze different proposals, and so on.

Such data is very subjective in nature whereby the way it is presented, and the opinion of an individual can influence their selection for a particular task, which may not always be the best fit. Stakeholders often have different priorities and requirements that need to be met, and ensuring all critical voices are heard but do not overrun each other is often lost and highly dependent on the people involved at that point in time.

Our research, (Jadhav & Sonar, 2009) (Rani, Mishra, & Omerovic, 2024) shows a significant gap in the industry: there is limited structured framework for analysis explicitly designed for the oil and gas industry and the specific requirements most organizations require. Closing this gap is vital, as incorrect software choices can lead to significant operational disruptions, cost overruns, and prevent the achievement of strategic goals.

In this study, we outline the protocols and methodology to overcome these problems and show a structured framework by providing a more systematic, transparent, and efficient approach for decision-makers in the process of selecting the right solution. It is based on a comprehensive framework starting with a discovery stage that reviews current processes and data sources to determine software needs.

Through a tactical Project Management approach, we identify key stakeholders who need to be engaged and form a project committee; objectives, roles, responsibilities, and timelines are clearly documented and communicated. The process then continues to unfold across a series of structured phases: defining evaluation criteria; creating and issuing RFI Packages; Q&A sessions; executing evaluations based on standardized demonstrations; debrief sessions; and finally, issuing an informed decision based on quantitative and qualitative inputs.

This systematic approach provides organizations with the capability to choose solutions that truly match their strategic ambitions without the risk of selection bias and failure in implementation. The industry has no standardized common ground for how to approach software evaluation currently, and this framework offers a repeatable, data-driven methodology for application.

The paper begins with the literature review, followed by detailed explanation of the framework used to build the evaluation library and the methodology. Finally, the insights about the approach from the industry partner are discussed before concluding with the future scope and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

The software selection decision, particularly in enterprise settings, has been widely studied in academic literature, especially as it relates to implementation success.

Research indicates that poor software selection is among the leading causes of implementation failures. According to the latest industry trends (Garcia, 2022), more than 70% of software implementation projects go in vain and lead to losses of millions of dollars for organizations every year. The failure rate remains high despite the availability of plenty of resources and methodologies for improving project management in the organizations.

To ensure a fair and objective selection process, industry experts (Gabor, 2024) stress the need for transparent evaluation methodologies and standardized assessment criteria. This correlates to an increased understanding that subjective evaluation practices typically result in poor selection choices.

However, considering the understanding we have of such selection challenges, few if any standard foundation methodologies exist for the oil and gas sector to access. Due to the unique operational requirements, regulatory environment, and technical complexities of this sector, software vendor selection must follow a specific approach. The limited skillset within an organization or lack of resources often results in low competency when it comes to execution. This gap emphasizes the importance of a structured framework which can mitigate the existing challenges faced by organizations in the oil and gas industry during their software selection process. This research is grounded in theoretical and generalized frameworks about decision-making and informed by questions that specifically arise in the given industry context. Our framework is built on both classical multi-criteria decision-making theories as well as recent data-driven evaluation methods, resulting in a hybrid method that is designed to address the unique challenges and rapid pace faced by oil and gas industry.

This section describes the research done from the reviewed literature around evaluating and selecting software. Section 2.1 provides the framework used for vendor analysis and selection and discusses the need for the enhanced framework.

2.1. Framework for Evaluating Vendors

Various methodological approaches have been employed to develop vendor evaluation frameworks, each with its strengths and limitations.

Van Den Berk et al. (Berk, Jansen, & Luinenburg, 2010) held the SECO Strategy Assessment Model, offering a structured framework for the identification of common strategies in software ecosystems and the assessment of implications of adopting a specific strategic approach. This model highlights the inter-dependency of software solutions and their effects across organizational ecosystems, it does not discuss its practical usage. Researchers Verville et al. (Verville & Halingten, 2003) also suggested a comprehensive six-step process for the selection of ERP software, focusing on the inclusion of both functional and technical criteria in the vendor selection process. This model, while excellent for a structured approach to software selection, lacks coverage for any corporate governance structure and decision guide that are ubiquitous in today's enterprise setting.

One of the most popular frameworks for software selection, especially for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Enterprise Resource Planning(ERP) systems, is Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). AHP proves to be an efficient method which can combine quantitative and qualitative criteria into an integrated framework for decision-making (Akhtar & Ahmad, 2022). But in the case of multiple decision-

makers with different priorities, a major drawback of AHP comes to light. The rigid hierarchy prescribed in the framework can falter with contradictory perspectives and with uncertainty during consensus-building processes.

2.1.1. Limitations of Current Frameworks

Current evaluation frameworks exhibit several common limitations:

- Insufficient consideration of corporate governance structures
- Limited guidance for resolving conflicts among multiple decision-makers
- Lack of flexibility in accommodating industry-specific requirements
- Inadequate mechanisms for handling uncertainty in evaluation criteria
- Absence of standardized scoring methodologies

2.1.2. Need for Enhanced Framework

To address these limitations, there is a clear need for an established evaluation methodology that:

- Provides systematic and unbiased evaluation processes
- Incorporates mechanisms for resolving conflicts among stakeholders
- Accommodates both quantitative and qualitative assessment criteria
- Offers flexibility to adapt to specific industry requirements
- Includes standardized scoring methods to ensure consistency

The proposed framework in this study addresses these gaps by introducing a comprehensive approach that combines structured evaluation methodologies with flexible decision-making processes. This framework particularly focuses on removing inconsistencies in the evaluation process while maintaining adaptability to specific organizational needs in the oil and gas industry.

3. Building the Evaluation Criteria Library

The evaluation criteria library is at the core of the framework as it reflects the evolving trends, technologies, and specific business demands within the oil and gas sector. The whole idea behind building this framework lies in helping decision makers take data driven decisions confidently. Thus, it was important to take a multi-faceted approach and to ensure that the library covered both breadth and depth of various factors that would have an impact on the decision.

The core of the library is a single, structured, and all-inclusive master database (Figure 1) built in a hierarchical manner. This list is built following a top-down approach, starting by identifying the most common and essential business units and software categories within the oil and gas industry.

Business Unit	Software	API	English	French	24/7 Online Support	Browser	IOS- Safari	Windows	Android-Chrome	Mobile App	Mobile web	Free Trial	Category
Asset Integrity	A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Absence Management
Asset Integrity	A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Absence Management
Asset Integrity	A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Absence Management
Asset Integrity	A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Absence Management
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Asset Integrity	A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Absence Management
Asset Integrity	A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Absence Management
Asset Integrity	A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Absence Management

Figure 1: Master list database

To begin, software aggregation platforms like Capterra (Capterra, 2025) and SourceForge (SourceForge, 2025) were referred to gain a comprehensive understanding of leading products, user feedback, and prevailing market trends. This initial market scan provided a valuable foundation for identifying leading solutions in the market across various business units. Extensive research from online sources, existing practices, and specific business requirements narrowed down hundreds of potential evaluation criteria (Figure 2) for these systems, ranging from the type of operating system (iOS/Android, etc.) and regulatory compliance to API and Connectors. These criteria were further categorized based on the specific functionalities they addressed, making it a comprehensive library.

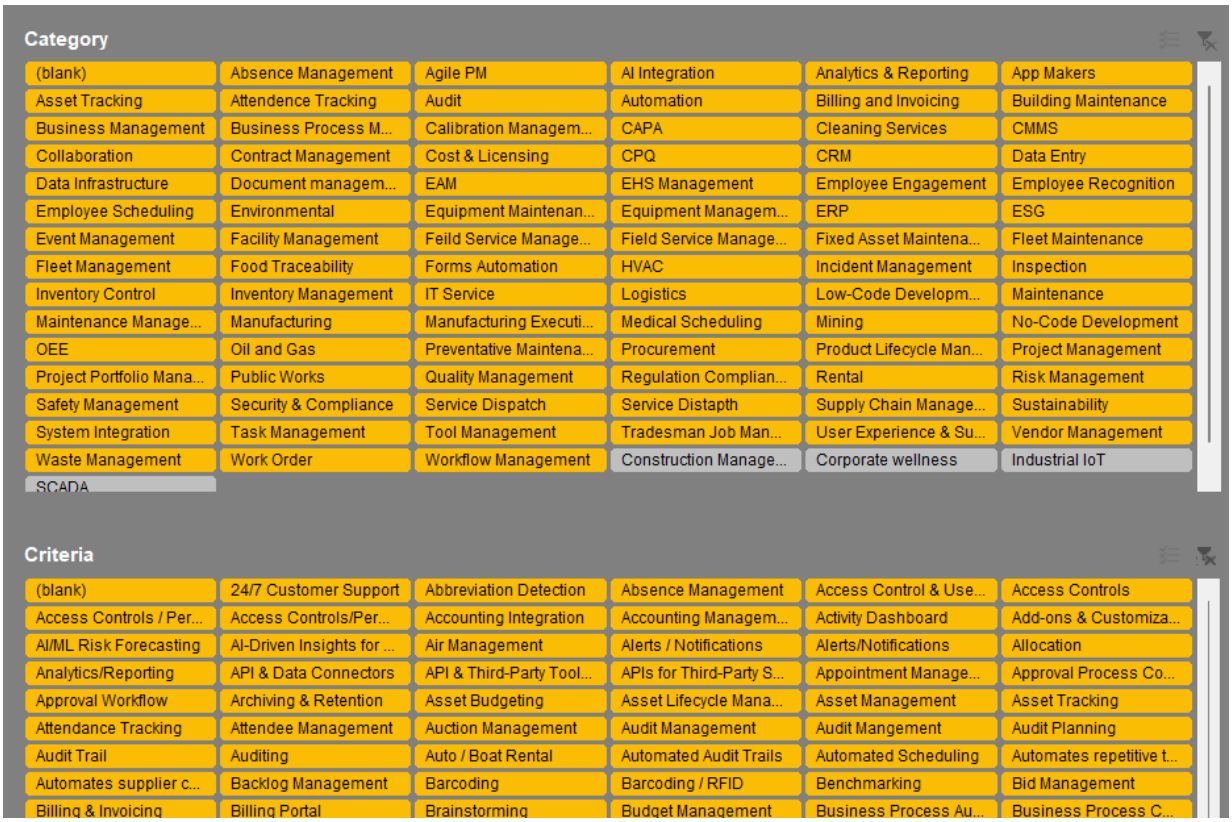
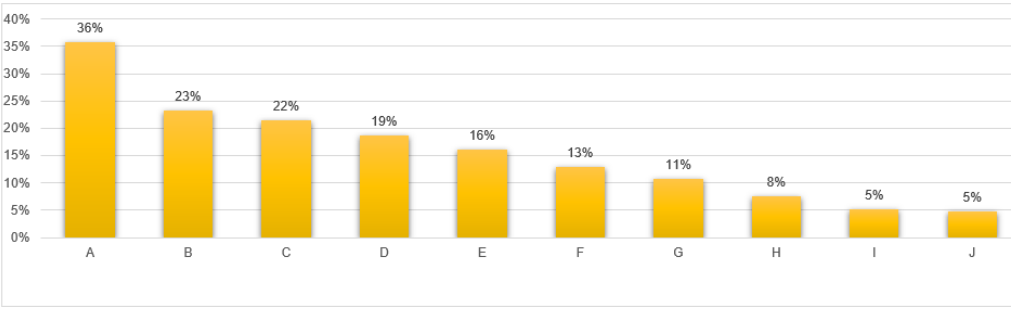


Figure 2: Evaluation Criteria and tagging

Furthermore, tagging system (Figure 2) was implemented to streamline the evaluation process and minimize redundant data entry. This system allowed users to quickly identify and filter criteria that were most relevant to their specific needs, providing a consistent and efficient means of comparing software solutions. By having tags to correspond with business function considerations, it ensured that each software solution is evaluated based on the same factors, which are directly relevant to the business requirements. This approach guaranteed that the final comparison was grounded in the practical realities of business goals (Figure 3).



Criteria	36% A	23% B	22% C	19% D	16% E	13% F	11% G	8% H	5% I	5% J
(blank)					●					
24/7 Customer Support		●								●
Abbreviation Detection				●						
Absence Management			●							
Access Control & User Permissions		●								●
Access Controls	●		●							

Figure 3: Comparison based on different criteria

To validate this database, an agile approach was implemented. This iterative process allowed a continuous refinement and validation of the data based on the input from the subject matter experts and the emerging industry insights. This helped in maintaining the reliability and accuracy of the library. The insights from the subject matter experts were helpful in narrowing down the criteria that aligned with business objectives. The development process of the evaluation criteria library specifically:

- Focused on the needs of each business unit to identify software priorities.
- Ignored sponsored content and relied on feedback- and rating-based content.
- Organized evaluation criteria into structured categories, prioritizing critical components relevant to the oil and gas industry while also considering less urgent but context-specific factors.

Surveys, forums, and interviews were conducted to mitigate the biases and understand the business's key requirements. This not only helped to pick the key criteria for each solution under evaluation but also enabled decision makers to confidently prioritize the success criteria and clearly understand the functionalities the business wanted in the new system.

4. Methodology

This section describes the methodology we have been using to evaluate different software solutions for the oil and gas industry. The figure below shows the different steps organizations take when selecting software. There are two main parts of this process (Figure 4):

1. Phase 1 (Pre-Demo: Discovery and Strategic Foundations)

- Requirements gathering and pain point analysis
- Request for Information (RFI) development based on discovered requirements
- Evaluation criteria design covering functional and technical aspects
- Development of demo scenarios for structured solution assessment

2. Phase 2(Demo and Evaluation: Data Collection for Decision Enablement)

- Systematic proposal review by decision-makers
- Structured Q&A sessions with software providers
- Demo sessions with standardized scenarios
- Quantitative scoring and normalization
- Analytics-based final evaluation

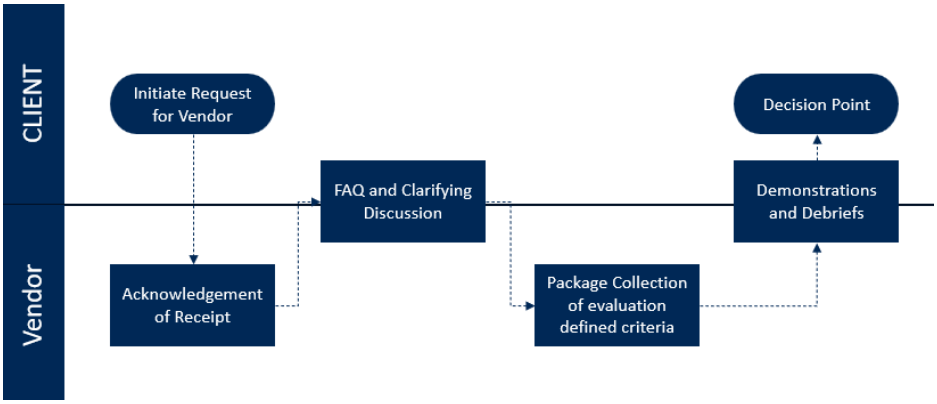


Figure 4: RFI Process

In Phase 1 the emphasis is placed on gathering business requirements, pinpointing user challenges, and evaluating the need for a new system (Hassan, Jabar, Sidi, Abdullah, & Jusoh, 2018). The information gathered in discovery and properly documented helps mitigate oversight risks throughout the rest of the process. A Request for Information (RFI) is crafted based on the software specifications identified during this exploration phase. Well-known software aggregators such as Capterra (Capterra, 2025) and SourceForge (SourceForge, 2025) and market research studies help to gather information about different software solutions. Moreover, using the iterative feedback approach with frequent input from the relevant stakeholders and subject matter experts ensures that the procedures are not overly rigid, and the criteria list is not outdated. This gives rise to assessment criteria covering all functional and technical requirements needed to evaluate different solutions.

Then the RFI responses are evaluated according to these pre-established benchmarks. A checklist outlining the technical requirements and demo scenarios is shared with the shortlisted participants to ensure transparency and allow vendors to demonstrate their capabilities based on the specifications mentioned in the RFI. Checklists help quantify accuracy and compliance to rule out any vendors that do not meet the essential requirements. Use cases are communicated to participants for their preparation before the demo, and consistency is maintained throughout the evaluation process. The development and distribution of standardized documentation to all the participants is a critical aspect of this methodology. This standardization serves multiple purposes: it ensures transparency in the evaluation process, allows software providers to demonstrate their capabilities based on consistent specifications mentioned in the

RFI, and establishes clear expectations from the outset. By providing use cases to the participants before demonstrations, the consistency is maintained across the evaluation process while giving them adequate time to prepare comprehensive responses.

After collecting RFI submissions, decision-makers conduct a thorough review followed by Q&A sessions with each participant to clarify questions about processes, evaluation criteria, or methodologies. Subsequently, demo sessions are scheduled between the software providers and the decision-makers. Rather than allowing traditional sales presentations that might emphasize flashy features over practical functionality, solution providers are required to demonstrate specific scenarios that were shared in advance. This strategic approach serves two crucial purposes: it forces participants to showcase their actual capabilities in addressing real-world use cases rather than delivering polished sales pitches, and it enables stakeholders to make direct comparisons across the participants who are all demonstrating the same scenarios. These scenarios are specifically designed to meet all selected evaluation criteria, enabling decision-makers to assign ratings according to a defined scoring rubric.

This emphasis on transparent and standardized communication is crucial for several reasons. First, it significantly reduces the need for back-and-forth clarifications, thereby shortening the overall selection timeline. Second, it ensures all participants receive identical information and opportunities to present their solutions, maintaining fairness in the evaluation process. Third, it helps build and maintain positive relationships with the software providers, which is vital for future partnerships and negotiations. Poor reputation management during the selection process can have long-lasting implications for an organization's ability to secure favorable terms or maintain productive relationships in the future. The figure below (Figure 5) shows the communication strategy employed throughout the project to maintain clear and consistent distribution of information to minimize the need for individual side-tracking responses.

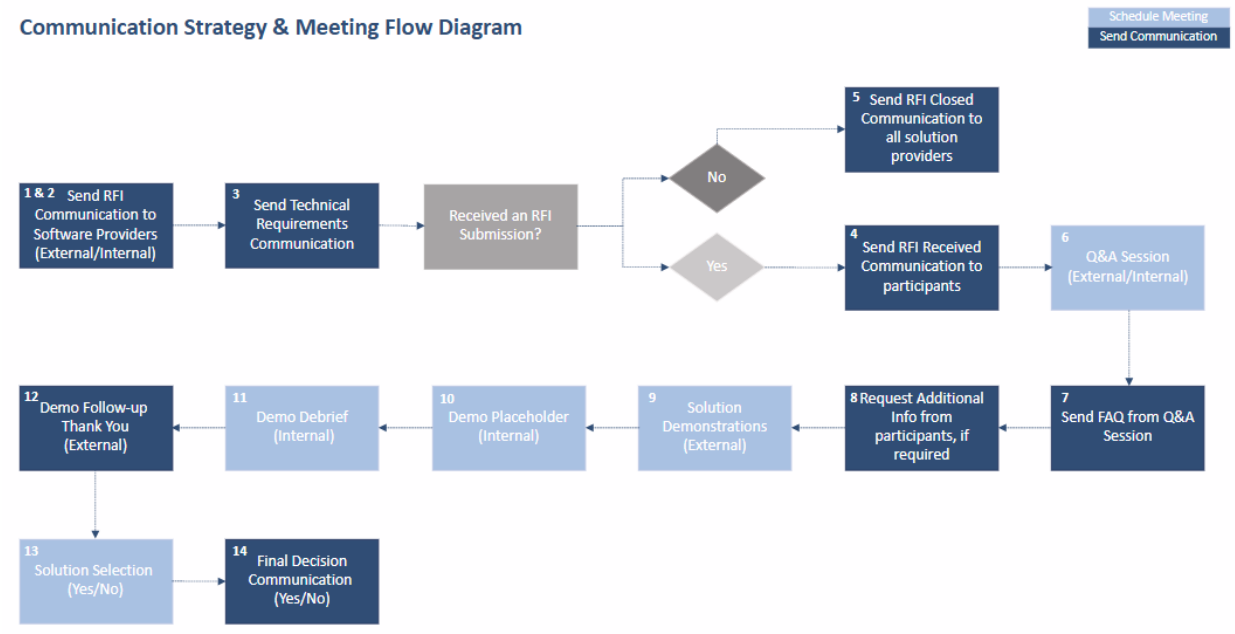


Figure 5: Communication Strategy

The evaluation process ends in a systematic scoring approach where scores assigned by each decision-maker for every software provider are averaged and normalized to derive a composite score that mitigates potential biases. In the concluding stage, analytics derived from the scoring assist key stakeholders in assessing the best solution across various categories while highlighting each software option's strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, as an additional measure to resolve ties and further minimize bias, manual rankings for each solution within every category are also factored into the final decision-making process. This structured approach facilitates objective comparison and strengthens the organization's reputation for professional and equitable treatment with software providers. Throughout the entire process, the framework maintains a delicate balance between rigorous evaluation and fair vendor treatment, recognizing that today's non-selected software provider might be tomorrow's crucial partner. This consideration shapes every aspect of the process, from initial communication to final selection, ensuring that all participants, regardless of the outcome, have positive experience with the organization's selection process.

5. Weighing Criteria

The success of software evaluation hinges on a clear, quantifiable scoring system. Our framework uses a straightforward 0-5 scale for scoring software, where higher scores reflect stronger alignment with the specified criteria.

Each criterion receives a weight coefficient based on its importance to the organization's goals. For example, core functional requirements might carry a weight of 0.3, while nice-to-have features might be weighed at 0.1. This weighting ensures that critical features have an appropriate influence on the final selection.

To maintain objectivity, multiple evaluators independently score each solution. Their scores are then averaged to create a final score for each criterion. This approach helps eliminate individual bias and provides a more balanced assessment. The final weighted score for each solution is calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Final Score} = \Sigma\ (\text{Criterion Score} \times \text{Weight Coefficient})$$

This scoring methodology supports data-driven decisions based on quantifiable metrics while maintaining transparency in the selection process. The use of weighted criteria ensures that the final selection aligns with organizational priorities while maintaining the rigor of a quantitative evaluation process.

6. Practical Applications

SECURE Waste Infrastructure Corporation has effectively used this framework to assess various GHG Data Management Software and Incident Management solutions. In both cases, the evaluation began from shortlisting the criteria from the library. Key stakeholders from the different business units convened to outline and narrow to just over 100 essential functions spanning across 9 distinct categories in each case, forming the foundational prerequisites for each type of software. In both cases, RFI packages were sent to the shortlisted solution providers, including the checklist, technical questionnaire and the demo scenarios. These vendors were then invited to conduct the software demonstrations successfully. In the subsequent debrief meetings, the evaluation scores were tallied in each case, leading to the identification of the best-fit solution.

This structured, quantitative assessment process has helped in aligning the business, field operations, and IT organization priorities in SECURE. The framework's objective and data-driven approach presented an open and unbiased perspective of available solutions (Rudnitski, 2025). Employing surveys, weighted factors, and numerical scoring enabled a complete vendor option analysis, making sure that all the stakeholders' needs and concerns were considered.

The systematic process had a considerable influence on SECURE's internal stakeholders decision-making processes, thereby establishing trust in the outcome. This framework reduced bias, promoted transparency, and empowered the stakeholders to make informed choices based on data rather than personal opinions or inherent tendencies (Rudnitski, 2025). The management and team leaders expressed increased confidence in the decision making, thereby reducing the time to reach the outcome.

The major advantages of this approach are objectivity, cross-departmental collaboration, and transparency. With a data-oriented framework, organizations can make decisions consistent with short-term and long-term objectives, thereby enabling higher trust among stakeholders. Moreover, the framework's adaptability means that it can be fitted to different decision-making scenarios, such as product and service analysis beyond the boundaries of information technology, for example, consulting services or health and safety equipment, thereby proving its applicability across multitude of projects (Rudnitski, 2025).

7. Future Work

In the future, a continuous loop of data scraping would be required to ensure up-to-date information and content are added to the library of criteria and features. Additionally, the current framework can be enhanced by developing a standalone web application that would offer a more dynamic and user-friendly experience and automate the selection process. This would help decision-makers make informed decisions in real-time by selecting specific categories and evaluating multiple solutions in parallel.

Cross-industry adaptation represents another significant opportunity for future development. While the current framework is tailored to the oil and gas industry, its core principles could be modified to serve other industrial sectors with complex operational requirements, such as architecture, engineering and construction. This would involve identifying industry-specific evaluation criteria while maintaining the framework's fundamental structure and methodology.

8. Conclusion

This paper presented a methodical approach for selecting software's tailored to the unique requirements of the oil and gas sector. This approach equips organizations with a dependable strategy for choosing software solutions by prioritizing data-informed decision-making and unbiased assessment methods. Subsequent investigations may explore how to customize the framework for distinct sub-sectors within the industry and other industrial applications as well. The application of this framework can result in:

- Mitigated risks associated with software selection
- Better alignment with organizational goals
- Increased returns on technology investments
- Heightened user satisfaction with the chosen solutions

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