

Software decision paralysis:

The hidden condition stopping small
businesses from growing

This leaflet includes information for
business owners and managers

Introduction

Software decision paralysis (SDP) is a common condition affecting small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs).

Symptoms of software decision paralysis

Software decision paralysis affects a business's ability to choose new software.

Businesses affected by software decision paralysis will avoid committing to new software.

They may find the thought of choosing and implementing new software distressing or confusing. They may seek the comfort of old, familiar routines. This change in behaviour is known as avoidance.

Symptoms can include:

- poor or slow access to information
- difficulty planning or making decisions
- long working hours
- high staff turnover
- extreme spreadsheetism (a proliferation of spreadsheets)
- frequent mistakes
- confusion and disorientation

If you feel your business may be experiencing software decision paralysis, you should contact Middlestone on 01892 570870 so you can confirm your diagnosis and get treatment to help with the symptoms.

People working for a business affected by software decision paralysis may experience:

- sleep problems, such as insomnia
- frequent headaches (metaphorical, or otherwise)
- fatigue (lack of energy or motivation)
- irritability
- anxiety
- low mood
- malaise (a general feeling of discomfort or unease)

Causes of software decision paralysis

Software decision paralysis is often triggered by a traumatic event in the business' past.

Patients often point to a **previous failed software project** as the cause of their software decision paralysis.

Other contributing factors can include:

- analogue brain (feeling “non-technical”)
- a rational mistrust of salespeople

Diagnosing software decision paralysis

Software decision paralysis can be difficult to diagnose because it has similar symptoms to other conditions such as:

- Process inflammation (slow, painful swollen processes)
- Institutional memory loss (where a business repeatedly encounters the same problems and must re-learn the solution)
- Rapid organic growth syndrome (a condition where the business cannot keep up with its own rate of growth)

A business analyst will examine the business, asking questions about the day-to-day work of front-line staff, before confirming a diagnosis.

Contact your independent business analyst on 01892 570870 to confirm your diagnosis and create a personalised treatment plan.

Treatments for software decision paralysis

Treatment usually depends on the cause and severity of the software decision paralysis.

Many cases of software decision paralysis can be improved with careful management. Treatments include:

- defined software selection methodology (DSSM)
- a software selection service

Using a define software selection methodology

A defined software selection methodology (DSSM) is a self-help technique to guide businesses to the right software decision.

For mild cases of software decision paralysis, a defined software selection methodology may be all that is needed to effectively cure the condition.

A defined software selection methodology would usually include:

- list the business' requirements (needs)
- create a long list of potential suppliers
- compare each supplier to the business' requirements to create a shortlist
- trial each system on the shortlist
- research the suppliers
- choose the system that best fits the requirements (needs)

Using a software selection service

For severe cases of software decision paralysis a business analyst may recommend a software selection service to safely upgrade business systems in a controlled environment.

A business analyst will guide the business through a defined software selection methodology, personalised to the patient's needs. They will:

- examine the business and ask questions about the day-to-day work of front-line staff
- work with the business to identify their needs
- search the market for suitable software
- recommend a few systems that meet the business' needs
- provide detailed analysis of each recommended system
- guide the business to a good decision
- assist with implementation

If you could benefit from a software selection service, contact an independent business analyst at Middlestone on 01892 570870.

Complications of software decision paralysis

If left untreated, software decision paralysis can sometimes lead to complications.

Severe cases can cause:

- overtrading (engaging in more business than can be supported by the resources available)
- obsolescence (where the business becomes out-dated)
- insolvency (being unable to pay debts owed), or
- business cessation

It is important that treatment is given early to avoid complications. Contact your independent business analyst on 01892 570870 to confirm your diagnosis and discuss your personalised treatment plan.

Further information

To learn more about how process mapping, process improvement and software selection could help your business, visit www.middlestone.ltd.

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Suite 165, 80 Churchill Square

Kings Hill

WEST MALLING

Kent ME19 4YU

01892 570870

www.middlestone.ltd