AgencyAnalytics Build vs Buy Model for Developers Owner's Manual

**The 6-Step Build vs. Buy
Framework
A Guide to Choosing Your Agency's
Client Reporting Solution**

Contents

Introduction

Good marketing agencies consistently deliver high performing work that meets client expectations.
Great marketing agencies leverage data to understand the trends, patterns, and market insights that led to the exceptional results they've delivered, allowing them to replicate and enhance those results for future campaigns.
In this sense, your client reporting solution has the power to make or break your future success–especially as your agency scales beyond your first 50-100 clients.
You may have been able to get away with an ad hoc or manual solution in the past, but as the agency grows and reporting demands increase, you'll want something more reliable, secure, and automated to eliminate bottlenecks and keep up momentum.
At this stage, it's very likely you'll start to entertain the question: should we build or buy a reporting platform?
It's a question that merits consideration as there are benefits and drawbacks to each side of the argument. While building your own platform entails substantial costs—including financial, time, and opportunity costs—it can be a worthwhile investment if your resources allow, offering complete control over your reporting solution.

Buying, on the other hand, grants you access to a no-maintenance solution that can be deployed immediately, but that may not offer every bit of customization you've added to your wishlist.

In this eBook, we'll explore a 6-step framework to help you decide whether building or buying is the right choice for your agency.

A 6-Step Build vs. Buy DecisionMaking Framework for Agencies

As you begin examining your options for a custom client reporting platform, we recommend using the following six questions as a framework to guide your decision.

	YES	NO
1. Is building a custom reporting platform required to achieve your agency's mission?		
2. Will building a client reporting platform create a competitive advantage for your agency?		
3. Will building help your agency create client reports faster?		
4. Does your agency have the in-house competency to build the solution you need?		
5. Which is the quickest and easiest solution for your team?	BUILD	BUY
	BUILD COST	BUY COST
6. What's the true cost of building a marketing reporting solution?	$	$

STEP 1
Is building a custom client reporting platform required to achieve your agency's mission?

- Is your agency's primary focus data science or campaign performance?
- How complex is your client data?
- Is a custom build necessary to fully communicate your numbers to internal team members and clients?

DIVERSION OF RESOURCES FROM CORE BUSINESS FOCUS
Will building an in-house system help you achieve your mission, or distract you from it? How might other critical tasks like client acquisition, campaign management, and client retention suffer with such extensive resources flowing into reporting capacity?

If your agency's primary focus is not explicitly dependent on a complex or unique reporting method or formula, the long-term drain of building a custom solution (on the team and your budget) has the potential to zap energy from places where it would be better spent.

❝ Unless you have a lot of budget and time, don't custom code your own reporting software. We've been there and done that. It just becomes an expense and a worry. Let AgencyAnalytics take these problems away so you can focus on client results and other tasks."

Andrew Thomas
Technical Director, HookedOn Media

STEP 2
Will building a client reporting platform create a competitive advantage for your agency?

- Will a custom solution compel clients to switch to, or remain with your agency?
- How much of an improvement would an in-house platform be, versus white labeling an existing solution?
- Is the difference between the two substantial enough that your clients will even notice?

CREATING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE WITH FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITY
To set your agency apart, your custom reporting platform needs to offer a variety of impressive features that can't be accessed via other third party providers.
According to Conway's Law, when an organization designs a system, that system will always be a copy of the organization's own internal processes and structure. This means its functionality is designed to meet the needs identified by a limited number of perspectives from a small group of stakeholders.
Valuable features are often missed, simply because you can't add what you don't know you need.
Denver-based agency Native Rank considered building its own in-house solution but landed on working with AgencyAnalytics instead.

66 Third-party reporting tools like AgencyAnalytics often offer more advanced features and functionality than a custom reporting solution, which helps agencies deliver more value to their clients and stay competitive in the marketplace."

Daniel Dye
President, Native Rank

STEP 3
Which is the quickest and easiest solution for your team?

- How heavy is the lift to build your own reporting solution versus customizing an existing one?
- Are you willing to invest 6 months+ to create something that comes close to what you could have up and

  running within a few days?

LENGTH OF BUILD PERIOD
It's reasonable to expect a timeline between 6 months to a year, depending on the complexity of your build. But when you take into consideration the ongoing addition of new features and integrations, it's easy for the finish line to keep getting pushed.
By contrast, buying a third party platform places the solution in your hands today, and theoretically, reports into your clients' hands in a matter of hours. Factoring in time-to-value gives you a fuller understanding of how quickly you'll be able to utilize your solution.

66 Not to sound cliché, but time is money. When we look at the effectiveness of our team members, time management and focus are the key components in measuring that success. We needed to spend less billable time on a reporting platform in order to grow our clients' businesses."

Jessica Weiss
Director of Marketing and Strategic Partnerships, One Firefly

STEP 4
Will building help your agency create client reports faster?

- Will an in-house platform speed up monthly reporting more than using an existing solution?
- How will continual updates, bug fixes, and maintenance influence reporting time?

IMPACT ON WORKFLOW EFFICIENCY

Streamlining your reporting workflow should be a primary goal when buying or building a platform.

Envision the future with your custom-built solution. Will your platform realistically deliver the functionality necessary to speed up reporting as compared to the well-oiled machine of a third party solution?

Here is an excellent time to consider the maintenance aspect of the equation, as frequent system downtimes can create significant bottlenecks. With an in-house build, you should expect to receive support requests from internal stakeholders and clients, and delegate resources to address them.

More than 30% of marketing agencies say time pressures, stress, and cash flow are the top challenges facing their agency today.

AgencyAnalytics
2023 Benchmarks Report

STEP 5

Does your agency have the in-house competency to build the solution you need?

- Which team members can be deployed to build your in-house reporting platform?
- Do they have the skills required?

AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND LABOR INTENSITY

Building your own platform essentially involves starting and managing a new reporting and data analytics company alongside your existing operations. You'll need to hire specialists in data analytics, reporting, and visualization, including developers, UI/UX experts, and other specialized roles.

If kept in-house, consider the cost of diverting your team members' attention from existing client work to produce the build, and the ongoing attention needed to fix bugs and conduct updates. Even if you outsource the build to a third party, keep in mind the expense will need to be extended over the longterm to handle ongoing maintenance and regular updates.

" An in-house solution can never replicate that richness of feature set and experience. Those go stale in a few years at least, almost always."

Jason Lemkin
Founder, SaaStr

STEP 6

What's the true cost of building a marketing reporting solution?

- Taking into consideration build, launch, and maintenance, how much money would a build cost?
- What opportunities will your agency miss out on when you're focusing time and effort building a platform to collate and report data?

THE PRICE OF INTEGRATION MAINTENANCE

If you go the build route, be prepared to bring in 1-2 developers just to focus on building and maintaining your integrations alone. API updates are needed continually, as connections change often. As you onboard new clients, time will need to be assigned to integrating new platforms, creating new features, and adjusting to new metrics. Once you start down this road, you can't stop maintaining your integrations…or else the data stops.

" The average marketing agency uses at least 14 different data integrations for their client reporting, according to our customer base of more than 6,000."
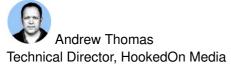
Daniella Ingrao
Product Marketing Manager, AgencyAnalytics

Conversely, buying a solution that has an ongoing commitment to integration development ensures this work is completed behind-the-scenes, without your team members lifting a finger. It delivers seamless integrations that meet your specific needs and promptly addresses any changes or issues that may arise, guaranteeing uninterrupted functionality for both you and your clients.

AgencyAnalytics offers over **80 platform integrations**—a list that continues to grow as new integrations are released on a regular basis.

" We were using a custom-made reporting software, but when an API changed, it would require more time and expense to re-code. We also didn't have all the features available that AgencyAnalytics provides."

Andrew Thomas
Technical Director, HookedOn Media

The Pros and Cons of Buying vs. Building

BUYING PROS	BUYING CONS
Rapid Deployment + Ease-of-Setup Buying a reporting tool means you can use it that very same day. No waiting, no delays–just dive right in. The AgencyAnalytics one-click integration feature builds a dashboard with your client data in seconds.	**Less Customization** Although many third-party providers take feature requests from customers into account, the platform won't be 100% customized to your needs. Ask yourself how specific your needs are, and whether 100% customization is even necessary.
New Features & Ongoing Maintenance Access all new features without putting in any work or cost yourself. Further, customer requests power new features and integration developments. If the tool is lacking something pertinent, submit a request and it will be considered.	**Lack of Control** Since third-party platforms are run by separate and distinct companies, you won't have complete control over the new features added or deleted as the platform evolves.
Customer Support Troubleshooting can be one of the biggest issues with in-house built software. AgencyAnalytics' top-notch customer support team is there to help 24/5. It's a priceless backup safety net if you or your clients need help or training related to the tool.	

" The only regret we have about switching to AgencyAnalytics is not doing it sooner. It has saved us an incredible amount of time and makes us look polished and professional."

Kim Walker
Co-owner, Shop Marketing Pros

BUILDING PROS	BUILDING CONS
Greater Customization Building an analytics reporting tool means customization of features, functionality, and integrations. If your team has a particular need, you can plan it into the development calendar (along with the time, energy, and cost of doing so).	**Overhead Costs** Integrating with data sources is expensive. Expect to hire developers to connect with the API and maintain that connection as it continually changes. This is not a one-time investment.
Based on Current Initiatives Development is based on current initiatives and is adapted to meet immediate needs and opportunities.	**Staff Expertise** You'll also need to hire knowledgeable staff members that specialize in data science, data visualization, and analytics. Be prepared to bring in 1-2 people to focus on growing and maintaining integrations.
Total Control You develop the features you and your clients need. You grow your platform to fit the exact needs of your business.	**Limited Flexibility** Have you considered your engineering department might still have a separate need for a business intelligence tool that affords visualization capabilities? How much flexibility and control you think you'll have and how much you can actually manage often turn out to be as different as night and day.

Bottom Line

Now that you have an idea of some of the challenges, resource expectations, and pros and cons of building a reporting platform in-house, you're ready to accurately determine the value it will bring to your company.

If your reporting needs are extremely complex or unique, core to your business ethos, and instrumental to gaining a competitive edge, you may consider the immense time and expense of building to be worth it.

If you're seeking a reporting solution that's effortlessly maintained, immediately deployable, cost effective, responsive to both support and feature requests, and white labeled to meet your brand standards, buying and customizing a third party platform is your best bet.

" Between ease of use, user interface, configuration, and customer support, AgencyAnalytics is the industry gold standard in reporting software. We'll be customers for life!"

Dan Delmain
Owner, :Delmain
B&S Media Internetmarketing saved 380+ hours and $7.9K each month by automating its most time-consuming tasks.

380+ Hours Saved Each Month	$94K Saved Annually	10,000+ Keywords Tracked

Read the Case Study
Blackhawk Digital Marketing uses AgencyAnalytics as a tool to maintain transparency with its clients and close more deals.

126 Active Client Accounts	100 Hours Saved Each Month	$54K+ Saved Annually

Read the Case Study

Documents / Resources

The 6-Step Build vs. Buy Framework — A Guide to Choosing Your Agency's Client Reporting Solution	**AgencyAnalytics Build vs Buy Model for Developers** [pdf] Owner's Manual Build vs Buy Model for Developers, vs Buy Model for Developers, Buy Model for Developers, Model for Developers, for Developers, Developers

References

- **Automated Client Reporting for Marketing Agencies | AgencyAnalytics**
- **User Manual**