# [ Data product marketplace ]

# Build

# Buy

Developing your own platform or investing in a SaaS solution - the complete guide to making the right choice

[-]luwise

# Introduction

Choosing whether to build or buy key technology solutions, such as a data product marketplace, is a key dilemma for Chief Data Officers and other data leaders. The choice is not just about the strengths of the technology itself - it also has to take into account factors such as overall strategy, team efficiency, time-to-market, and the likelihood of the platform being adopted by the business.

At Huwise, we have extensive experience in helping organizations deliver data marketplace projects. Based on this, we believe that for most organizations, buying a SaaS solution saves time, delivers robustness, and maximizes the impact of data consumption. However, this is not always the case, and we have seen occasions where we recommend taking a Build approach, because the context, maturity or client objectives require it.

Supporting a project to increase data consumption is not about imposing a "one-size-fits-all" model. It means understanding what is at stake and taking the right decision for the specific organization.

This guide has therefore been written for data leaders who need to make the build or buy choice for their data marketplace. It offers clear benchmarks, practical advice, and full data to make better-informed and more effective decisions.

We hope you find it helpful.

# Contents

# 1 [ In-house vs SaaS ]: making the choice between in-house development and an external solution

To make a well-informed choice between building or buying your data marketplace, you should start by looking at three specific factors:

### [ 01 ] Strategic alignment

What is the ability of internal/external solutions to align with business priorities and deliver value quickly?

### [ 02 ] Technical

What level of robustness, security, and scalability does the organization require, and can this be guaranteed internally?

### [ 03 ] Organizational

What is the impact of the project on available internal resources, required skills, and costs in the short and long term?

Answering these three questions provides the necessary information to make a coherent, data-driven decision for any technology infrastructure project. It is particularly vital for data product marketplace projects, which require a combination of clear strategic planning, in-depth technical capabilities and the right human and organizational resources to drive success.

## [ 01 ] Strategic component: business alignment and time-to-market

Strategic alignment is the first pillar of decision-making. Faced with the acceleration of data usage and competitive pressure to optimize data consumption, organizations must strike a balance between implementing a completely personalized solution, and speed of execution. While time-to-market is a key factor, speed cannot be at the expense of the solution's relevance for business users. This leads to two opposing choices: build a tailor-made solution internally that is closely aligned with internal needs, or adopt a ready-to-use SaaS platform, whose speed of deployment provides an immediate advantage.

| CRITERIA | In-house solution | SaaS Solution |
|---|---|---|
| **Business alignment** | Tailor-made, perfectly adapted to internal requirements | Less customizable, more generic |
| **User experience (UX)** | UX built according to precise needs | Standardized but proven UX with AI capabilities |
| **Business scalability** | Aligned with the company's strategy | Depends on the vendor's roadmap |
| **Time-to-market** | Long (12–24 months), highly dependent on internal resource availability | Short, with a minimal viable product (MVP) in weeks or months |
| **Competitive differentiation** | Potential for differentiation if the product becomes a key asset | Risk of standardization if same product deployed for all |
| **Business adoption** | Risk of low adoption if UX is poorly designed | Adoption encouraged by standardized, market-leading best practices |
| **Initial project management** | Heavy resource need that has to be met internally | Reduced resource need, focused on change management and driving adoption |

**Analyzing these factors highlights a fundamental trade-off that needs to be made between control and speed of execution.**

The in-house model enables very close alignment with business needs, something that potentially enables long-term differentiation, but at the cost of a heavy initial investment and a long implementation time. Conversely, SaaS platforms offer rapid deployment, easier adoption and often a more successful user experience, based on the vendor's in-depth UX expertise and the feedback of hundreds of users. The choice therefore depends on the level of customization required, the strategic urgency of the project and the internal resources that are available.

## [ 02 ] Technical component: scalability, integration, technology dependency

The technical aspects of a project are central to the concerns of the IT team who will need to develop and build the solution. Data product marketplaces are complex to build from scratch. They involve fine-grained metadata management, the orchestration of distributed workflows, and advanced interoperability with existing data ecosystems. This requires specialized expertise, which few organizations are likely to entirely possess in-house.

| CRITERIA | In-house solution | SaaS Solution |
|---|---|---|
| **Scalability** | Solution has to be developed and maintained internally | Scalability is integrated into the solution, and has been proven at scale |
| **Interoperability** | Total but requires dedicated and ongoing development | Standardized connectors and APIs available |
| **Security & compliance** | Total control of flows, internal hosting possible | GDPR management, security, audit carried out by the vendor |
| **Technical scalability** | Developing new features must fit with other IT priorities | Follows vendor's ongoing roadmap |
| **Maintenance & support** | Company is 100% responsible | Outsourced, with SLAs, monitoring, updates included |
| **Technological dependence** | No vendor lock-in | Vendor dependency |
| **Initial technical risks** | Bugs, technical debt, slow ramp-up | Stable and proven solution from the start |

**This second component highlights the major technical issues that have to be understood when choosing between an in-house or a SaaS solution.**

Building a platform in-house offers total freedom: tailor-made scalability, in-depth interoperability, no vendor dependency. However, the organization must then shoulder the complexity of initially developing the solution, then maintaining it over the long-term and dealing with any technical risks.

Conversely, SaaS solutions provide immediate robustness. They are created on proven infrastructure, native connectors to standard industry tools, and have built-in support, security, and compliance guarantees. The compromise is between technical autonomy and operational simplicity.

## [ 03 ] Organizational component: resources, skills, costs, innovation

The third and final component focuses on the impact on human resources and the skills required. The scarcity of people with specific skills and experience in developing data marketplaces and the complexity of these projects can make building in-house particularly risky in terms of resources.

| CRITERIA | In-house solution | SaaS solution |
|---|---|---|
| **Internal skills development** | Strong opportunity to develop skills | Less in-house development possible |
| **Capitalizing on asset** | Opportunity to develop strategic asset and knowledge | Smaller opportunity to turn asset into differentiator |
| **Initial cost** | High (recruitment, architecture, development) | Low (subscription model) |
| **Long-term cost** | Potentially more cost-effective if deployed at large scale | Depends on the vendor's pricing model |
| **Team requirements** | High: Development, UX, Product Owner, Quality Assurance, Security | Low: teams focused on delivering and sharing data assets |
| **Capacity for innovation** | Strong if dedicated resources available | Supported by the vendor via its roadmap |

| CRITERIA | In-house solution | SaaS solution |
|---|---|---|
| **Support & documentation** | To be built internally | Included in the solution |
| **Human risks** | Scarcity of relevant skills, risk of turnover | Limited risk, as development supported by the vendor |

This last aspect highlights the negative impacts of choosing to develop internally. Projects require the creation of large, diverse teams, significant costs, and dependence on scarce skills that are difficult to recruit and retain. Conversely, a SaaS solution reduces this pressure. Fewer internal resources are required, there is less risk in terms of people turnover, and the vendor provides support and a roadmap of new features. This means it's all about balance, choosing between relying on internal competences or buying a turnkey solution which requires minimal resources to build and operate.

## Combined analysis

| COMPONENT | When should you choose an in-house solution? | When should you choose a SaaS solution? |
|---|---|---|
| **[ 01 ] Strategic** | Very specific or differentiating requirement | Need for speed, infrastructure and rapid adoption |
| **[ 02 ] Technical** | Controlled environment, crucial native integrations | Provides robustness, interoperability, reduced technical risks |
| **[ 03 ] Organizational** | Ability to operate autonomously using available capabilities and strategic resources | Delivers efficiency, limiting people costs, and enabling teams to focus on driving data consumption |

## Factors to understand

Analyzing the three components above highlights two distinct approaches, each linked to organizational needs and priorities.

**The in-house approach** corresponds to organizations that want, and are able, to take a very long-term investment strategy. It works best for companies that have significant technical resources, a highly integrated technology environment, and an ultra-specific business need that is difficult to address with a standard solution. Taking an in-house route makes it possible to build a differentiating asset, but implies longer lead times, a higher cost and requires a strong, long-term internal commitment to the solution.

**SaaS**, on the other hand, meets operational efficiency objectives. It is suitable for organizations looking to quickly structure their data approach, limit technical, human and financial risks and want to rely on a proven solution. It offers a clear trajectory, with a short time-to-market, native interoperability and a more transparent and manageable total cost.

**In short**, building in-house overcomes any challenges around control and ultra-personalization. By contrast, buying a SaaS solution provides robustness, scalability and rapid adoption. The choice between the two therefore depends on the degree of company maturity, available resources and the overall ambition of the project.

**A trend to buy solutions is now emerging:** in the majority of real-world cases, internal constraints, pressure on deadlines and the scarcity of specialized skills make choosing SaaS more beneficial in the short and medium term. All that remains is to choose the right solution — and not to underestimate the internal support required to transform data sharing and consumption across the organization.

# 2 The risks of [ building ] your own solution

Our extensive experience based on multiple customer projects shows that the Build approach can open up organizations to major risks if certain criteria are not met.

In specific contexts, as described above, developing in-house can be the best approach. However, too often we see that overly ambitious in-house projects run into major challenges, such as missed deadlines, additional costs, cancellation, or the inability to later switch to a SaaS solution.

These pitfalls reflect real-world experience and challenges. This section summarizes the three main types of high-risk scenarios we've witnessed within organizations of all sizes. They should serve as warnings and lessons for any data or IT leader considering building their own solution

## Strategic drift: the never-ending project

### Context:

A company decides to build its own business solution in-house in order to meet its very specific organizational needs.

### Mistakes made:

Initial objectives are not agreed, project scope evolves constantly, and the internal team struggles to align IT and business teams.

### Real-life example:

Retailer **Lidl** abandoned its ERP project after 7 years and an investment of more than $545 million.

**Consequences:**

→ Direct losses exceeded **[ $545 million ]**

→ Adoption compromised, project sponsors discouraged

→ Growth of shadow IT and DIY solutions (Excel, Power BI)

## Technical debt: the engine that breaks down

### Context:

The deployments of some internal solutions, such as business intelligence (BI) or Master Data Management (MDM) platforms may deliver the right functionality but be unable to scale and meet increasing usage volumes.

### Mistakes made:

Technical debt accumulates, documentation is insufficient, and the ramp-up of usage brings down the platform.

### Real-life example:

During a massive supply chain software upgrade, **Nike** lost $100 million in sales and saw its stock drop by 20%.

**Consequences**

→ **[ $100 million ]** in lost revenue

→ **[ 20% ]** drop in share price

→ Need to make emergency investment in an alternative external SaaS platform

## Loss of expertise: the brain drain

### Context:

Many companies have tried to create their own tools, in areas such as data lineage or monitoring business metrics, before reversing their approach after losing skills or seeing teams become overloaded.

### Mistakes made:

A small team concentrates knowledge and expertise, without sufficient documentation or resilience if people leave or are moved onto other projects.

### Real-life example:

The **FBI's Virtual Case File** was an IT project launched in 2000 that saw repeatedly high turnover of managers and specification changes. It was

**Consequences**

→ **[ $170 million ]** spent without concrete results

→ Inability of FBI to operate effectively post 9/11

→ Devaluing of internal and external trust

## Analysis

| | | Typical scenario | Estimated impact |
|---|---|---|---|
| KEY RISK | **Strategic drift** | Vague scope, no ROI calculations, structural issues | Long delays, wasted budgets |
| | **Technical debt** | Unstable, non-scalable tool | Drop in turnover, operational overload of systems |
| | **Loss of expertise** | Specification changes, lack of continuity, project termination | Lost code, sunk costs |

## Factors to understand

Building a technology solution in-house is a resource-heavy choice, which can deliver strategic advantage or high risks. Our experience highlights three major issues:

→ Strategic drift, when the project loses focus, pace and alignment

→ Technical debt, when the platform becomes a burden rather than a business driver

→ Loss of expertise, when everything depends on a few key individuals with no guaranteed continuity plans

These scenarios are not outliers: they are common, regardless of the sector or the size of the organization. In all cases, they lead to significant financial losses, damage to overall IT strategy, and a stall in business adoption.

**Before building a solution in-house, it is therefore essential to rigorously evaluate:**

→ The company's technical and organizational maturity

→ Its ability to mobilize, structure and retain key resources over multiple years

→ Its commitment to managing a complex software project over the long term.

If the company does not score highly against these criteria, it is better to rely on a proven solution, even if it means adapting uses, rather than carrying the entire risk and cost alone.

# 3 The true cost of [ building ] your own solution: beware the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)

The financial argument remains one of the most decisive when choosing whether to Build or Buy. However, it can also be one of the most misleading, especially if you evaluate the costs of building in-house solely based on team salaries or the resources required for initial development. Instead, organizations need to calculate the total cost of ownership (TCO) across the whole project, from development to operations. This means that the cost of building a data product marketplace in-house far exceeds the initial development investment.

Unlike SaaS, where costs for subscriptions, support and storage are generally transparent, contracted and easy to plan, building in-house hides many expenses, including people costs, infrastructure, maintenance, compliance, continuous training, and support. And that doesn't include the risk of failure or non-adoption that weigh on ROI calculations.

**Here's an overview of the main items to understand when considering a Build strategy.**

| Cost type | Detail | Cost/Estimated order of magnitude | Main sources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **People & talent** | Full team: Product owner, front/back dev, architect, UX, QA, DevOps, security, etc. | $300,000 to $700,000/year | Gartner IT Budget Benchmarks 2023, Forrester Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) reports, Customer feedback |
| **Infrastructure & hosting** | Cloud/On-premise, supervision, monitoring, CI/CD, backup, security | 10-20% of the overall budget/ year | *Gartner Cloud Infrastructure TCO 2022, AWS TCO Calculator* |
| **Maintenance & support** | Updates, fixes, evolutions, level 2/3 support | 25-40% of the initial cost/year | *Forrester TEI™ reports, Gartner App Development Trends 2023* |
| **Opportunity costs** | Time-to-market (12-24 months), tying-up of strategic resources | Estimated impairment loss: 6 to 12 months | *Gartner Data & Analytics Summit 2023, Onepoint Testimonials, La Poste* |

| Cost type | Detail | Cost/Estimated order of magnitude | Main sources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Risk of non-adoption** | Poorly adapted UX, lack of robustness, technical debt, lack of long-term resources | Up to 30% ROI losses | Forrester CX Index™, Orange customer feedback, BPCE |
| **Compliance & security** | Development and maintenance of regulatory requirements (GDPR, ISO, etc.) | $50,000 to $150,000 per year | *Gartner Compliance Cost Benchmarks*, CNIL, Deloitte Cyber reports |

## Comparative analysis

| CRITERIA | Solution Build (In-house) | Solution Buy (SaaS) |
|---|---|---|
| **3-year TCO** | $1-$1.5 million | $300,000-$600,000 (subscription, support included) |
| **Average ROI** | After 24-36 months | From 6-12 months depending on adoption rates |
| **Key risks** | Additional human costs, technical debt, UX | Moderate vendor lock-in, dependence on vendor technical roadmap |
| **Sources of differentiation** | Very specific business UX | Market best practices, continuous innovations |

## Factors to understand

The real challenge of the Build approach lies in its total cost of ownership over time, rather than its initial budget. Where a SaaS solution has transparent, contracted and predictable costs, in-house projects rely on a number of (often underestimated) other items that have to be managed over time.

Here are the key takeaways from a TCO perspective:

→ **Costs are fragmented and grow:** each area of the project (talent, maintenance, hosting, security, compliance, support) becomes a cost in its own right, requiring continuous investment.

→ **Invisible costs are added:** implementation delays, restrictions on critical resources, non-adoption, technical or operational overload - these elements weigh on ROI without always being visible in the initial budget.

→ **TCO is highly dependent on internal maturity:** only highly structured organizations can absorb the ongoing burden of operating an in-house developed solution.

→ **SaaS offers a controlled budget trajectory:** shared costs, subscription model, inclusive support, integrated scalability. All of this provides better visibility on a 3-year commitment.

→ **The risk of budget variance is higher on in-house projects**: a bad initial estimate can destabilize the project. SaaS, on the other hand, allows for a gradual ramp-up, with possible adjustments as usage scales.

When it comes to TCO, the right question is therefore not "**How much does it cost to launch?", but "How much does it cost over three years – in resources, focus and risk?**".

# 4 The advantages of [ buying ] your data product marketplace

Based on our experience with hundreds of customers, we are convinced that buying a SaaS solution is the most relevant option for the vast majority of data product marketplace projects.

This conviction is not based on commercial self-interest, but on what we have seen in the real-world. SaaS solutions on the market today deliver a level of functionality, pace of innovation and operational requirements that are currently extremely difficult — and rarely cost-effective — to reproduce internally.

However, we have recommended a Build strategy to some customers on multiple occasions. Their cases were specific, their technical maturity high, and their challenges justified tailor-made development. In these contexts, SaaS would have failed, and we knew it. But these examples remain the exception.

For everyone else, taking a SaaS approach is the rational choice, due to the reasons set out below.

## Why *buying* is particularly suitable for data product marketplace solutions

Data marketplace projects have several characteristics that make a SaaS solution even more relevant:

→ They are **emerging solutions**, which combine governance, automation, UX, analytics and orchestration. These requirements require mature technology capabilities that are difficult to develop in-house.

→ The **increasing integration of generative AI and intelligent agents** into data product marketplace workflows creates a technology gap that is difficult to bridge without dedicated vendor R&D teams.

→ Data marketplace projects are part of **hybrid and distributed ecosystems**, which require native interoperability (connectors, APIs, market standards).

→ Finally, the **business pressure on deadlines** and user experience requires fast time-to-value, which only an off-the-shelf product can deliver.

These characteristics lead to clear operational benefits when choosing a SaaS data product marketplace, as summarized below using data from leading industry analysts:

| | | Why is this relevant for a data marketplace project? | What do the experts say? |
|---|---|---|---|
| BENEFITS | **1. Fast implementation & accelerated ROI** | A SaaS solution from a data product marketplace vendor is immediately operational. There is no need to recruit a product team or wait for a custom-developed MVP. | *Gartner (2023)* indicates that 60% of internal data projects exceed their initial budget by more than 30%, mainly due to delays in time-to-market. Adopting a pre-existing solution drastically reduces this risk. |
| | **2. Cost reduction and budget predictability** | Packaged data marketplace solutions often include support, updates, and security, with clear costs. | *Forrester TEI™* reports highlight operational savings of 25-35% over 3 years with SaaS platforms vs. internal build (skills, development, support). |
| | **3. Access to continuous, cutting-edge innovation** | Leading vendors regularly deploy new features (advanced governance, AI, automated workflows) in line with market standards, all vital for managing the data product lifecycle. | The *Gartner Hype Cycle for Data Management (2023)* emphasizes the importance of "Data-as-a-Product" and the difficulty for companies to maintain a high level of technical innovation in this segment on their own. |
| | **4. Built-in security, compliance, and auditability** | External solutions are certified (ISO 27001, SOC2, GDPR, etc.), with regular updates to remain compliant. | A marketplace developed in-house must be audited continuously. Forrester notes that 72% of CIOs consider security to be the number one obstacle to a build strategy. |

| | | Why is this relevant for a data marketplace project? | What do the experts say? |
|---|---|---|---|
| AVANTAGES | **5. Interoperability with existing data ecosystems** | SaaS platforms in the data product marketplace sector are natively compatible with tools such as Snowflake, Databricks, Collibra, and Power BI. | *Gartner* states that interoperability is critical in data mesh architectures and that Buy solutions facilitate this best-of-breed approach. |
| | **6. Business adoption facilitated by proven UX** | Vendors are investing in the user experience to encourage usage by both business and data teams. | According to Forrester, an intuitive UX increases adoption by 40% within 6 months of deployment. Internally, the risk of low adoption of a tool that is poorly perceived by users is very high. |
| | **7. Focus on business value, not technology** | The Buy model allows internal efforts to be focused on transforming data into value (curation, consumption, governance), rather than software development. | This is one of the key takeaways from the *2023 Gartner Data & Analytics Summit:* data teams must reposition themselves as business enablers and not technical developers. |

# 5 Portrait of a [ *Buy-ready* ] business for a data product marketplace solution

### Size & maturity

→ Medium to large company, or large company with high organizational complexity

→ Data maturity not yet high or shows strong differences between departments

### Resources & teams

→ Under-resourced or overstretched IT teams

→ Few internal product/data resources available such as Product Owners, UX, developers, QA, etc.

→ High turnover of talent or difficulty in recruiting high-demand skills

### Objectives & challenges

→ Need for rapid acceleration of data consumption and value

→ Strong requirement to drive immediate business adoption

→ Willingness to structure data governance without waiting 12–24 months

### Constraints

→ Need to standardize practices across multiple departments, business units, or subsidiaries

→ Regulatory or security pressure that requires compliance with common standards such as GDPR and HIPAA

→ No clear objective or requirement to build a software platform for strategic differentiation

# 6 10 questions to answer to find out if you're a [ *Buy-ready* ] business

Before embarking on a data product marketplace project, it is essential to understand your actual context and requirements in order to pick the right implementation model. This 10-question self-assessment clarifies whether your organization is ready to adopt a Buy approach.

| Answer YES or NO to the following questions: | ✓ Yes | ✕ No |
|---|---|---|
| Do you need to set up a solution in less than six months? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Are your IT or data teams already busy or understaffed? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Do your business users require a solution that is intuitive and that they can adopt and use quickly? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Does your company lack skills in data product development? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Is their poor alignment between business and IT when it comes to data priorities? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Have you experienced any failures or delays on previous internal IT projects? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Is data governance a key issue in your organization? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Are your use cases close to the rest of the market (catalog, scoring, etc.)? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Is your priority adoption and change management, rather than technology development? | ☐ | ☐ |
| Are you in an industry with strong compliance and security requirements? | ☐ | ☐ |

## Interpretation of the results

→ **Answered yes to [ 7 ] or more questions:** You are clearly 'Buy Ready'. A structured and proven SaaS platform will maximize your return on investment.

→ **Answered yes to between [ 4 and 6 ] questions:** Evaluate your differentiation issues in detail. A hybrid or configurable solution may be sufficient.

→ **Answered yes to [ less than 4 ] questions:** You should consider the building your own option, but only if you have the in-house technical expertise and a clear strategic vision in place.

# 7 [ *Build or Buy* ]? The real challenge for data leaders

The choice between Build and Buy depends heavily on an organization's profile, data maturity, available resources, and the role of software in its strategy.

→ **Build** is suitable for organizations that are capable of designing, maintaining and developing a solution over time, with strong governance processes and long-term investment resources.

→ **Buy** is for organizations that want to accelerate progress, secure adoption, reduce operational risk, and focus their efforts on data governance and value creation.

But in the case of a **data product marketplace**, the challenge goes beyond the technology itself. It is a complex and intensive project, which:

→ Requires broad functional coverage: metadata management, self-service UX, workflows, collaboration, security, compliance

→ Must meet specific needs related to the creation, distribution and consumption of data products

→ Needs an approach where governance, business adoption, and technical consistency must work together from the start.

Thanks to these factors, buying a dedicated solution normally becomes more strategic — and more differentiating — than building it yourself. As Gartner first outlined in 2023, data product marketplace projects are best addressed by specialized, best-of-breed platforms, designed specifically for this use. In its Hype Cycle for Data Management 2025, Gartner named Huwise (ex Opendatasoft) as a vendor in the Data Marketplaces & Exchanges category. An experienced and recognized player in the market, we support organizations in the deployment of ready-to-use, interoperable and use-oriented SaaS platforms, based on a clear objective of turning data into usable, easily-consumable products to create real and lasting value.

# [-]uwise

Huwise helps data leaders transform their data into a source of knowledge, innovation, and performance.

We design a SaaS data product marketplace solution tailored to business teams and non-expert users, making data accessible, actionable, and value-generating. With Huwise, organizations provide employees and partners with secure, self-service access to their data products through a single platform.

In just a few weeks, we can deploy any type of data product marketplace, whether internal or external.

Today, more than 350 clients across 25 countries rely on Huwise to accelerate their data initiatives, with over 3,000 platforms already deployed worldwide. Backed by 14 years of expertise in data management, we deliver tailored support to address the concrete use cases of our clients.

Data made yours.

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