

10 Tips For Choosing a Software Product Development Vendor

by Decision Design Corporation

If you have a great idea for a software product, but aren't an expert in software development, chances are you are considering entering the rough waters of Outsourced Software Development – hiring a company to bring your vision to reality.

The outsourced development waters are filled with many perils, but for the company that selects the right vendor, the results can be highly rewarding. Here are ten tips to help you navigate the outsourced development vendor selection process to success.

1

Do not hire "code writers".

Bringing a new software product to market is a complex undertaking that involves design, client interfaces, packaging, marketing considerations and branding, distribution and many other issues beyond the software itself. Look for a vendor who has experience in every aspect of bringing software to market.

2

Know what your clients will want.

Software only provides value if a client thinks it does. Before choosing a software vendor, you must have a clear idea of what the product will do and how it will do it. Having a written description is not as important as being able to clearly and concisely articulate the product description to a vendor partner.

3

Know what features are more complex.

Look for a vendor that is willing to identify which requested features are more complex and costly to implement. Features cost money and increase product complexity. Knowing where the complexities lie, allows you to decide if the feature is a release 1 necessity or if it can wait until the next release.

4

Choose a vendor you can talk to and trust.

It sounds simple, but an inability to communicate with your vendor freely and openly will be the death of your project and could cost you a ton of money. Hire the vendor that you can relate with the best, who still has the right skills to get the project done and who you trust will be around to see the project to its end.

5

Protect Your Intellectual Property.

Look for a Vendor who does not want a license fee or equity stake in the final product. Also, enforceable written agreements and NDAs are a must. If your product will be sold globally, both your lawyer and your software vendor should have experience in global software sales. Additionally, understand the ramifications on your property rights of using any open source software in your product prior to development.

6

The Simplest Technology Should Win.

Software development is like a cross country race – there are many roads to get to the end. Do not choose a vendor just because they are "specialist" in a particular technology. Instead, choose one with a broad experience in many different technologies and let them tell you what technology is best. This will not only make the initial development go smoother, but will ease support burdens down the road.

7

Understand your vendor's staffing model.

If someone assigned to your project leaves mid project, does the vendor have a plan to complete the project? A vendor's ability to manage staffing problems during your project will be a key to your project's success.

8

See an early version early.

First release products are often more idea than specifics. A vendor that provides early prototype samples will often save you money because costly features that you may not want or need will be axed in the early prototypes.

9

Understand what a vendor can and cannot do.

Even a vendor with a broad experience in software product development will have weak points. Know what those are before selection and, if it is an important element of the product, consider sourcing that component elsewhere.

10

Understand the "Quality" Process.

It's a fact of software life – Even great software has bugs. How you respond to those bugs reported by clients is the key to software product success. Make sure the vendor has a post-launch quality process that will get "product killer" bugs found by clients fixed quickly and painlessly.

Bringing a new software product to market with an outsourced software developer is a long term commitment. Entering the relationship with the right perspective will be critical to both your successes. Taking the precautions listed above, will help ensure that both you and your chosen vendor are set up for success.



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