

# How to choose the right software development **partner**

Go beyond the  
basics to ask big  
picture questions  
in 4 key areas.

**1** Technical  
Expertise

**2** Time to  
Market

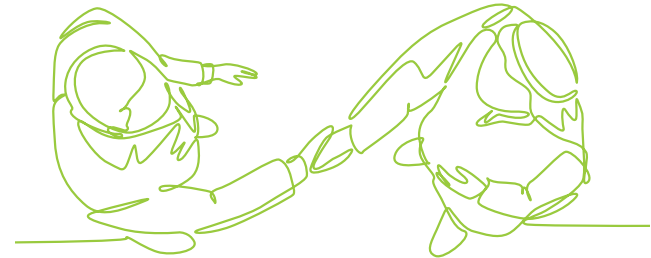
**3** Innovation  
Capacity

**4** Risk  
Mitigation



# How to choose the right software development partner

Many factors influence the decision to **outsource software product development** instead of building or expanding an in-house team. Whether it's a lack of time to recruit, the **need for specific expertise**, tight deadlines, or other reasons, outsourcing development needs can be an **excellent way to create** innovative, high-tech products and solutions.



Deciding which company to partner with, and finding the best fit for your needs can make all the difference in the **success of your project**.

Outsourcing is no longer simply offshoring to the lowest bidder.

If developing innovative technical solutions is likely to be more than a one-time project, it's worthwhile to fully investigate companies of interest and assess them for **long-term partnership** potential.

Having external technical partners **that work well with your in-house team** is invaluable for ongoing product development.

*Knowing what to ask a potential partner company can help you avoid common pitfalls.*

*There are some obvious questions such as areas of expertise and availability; however, additional questions will show the bigger picture of what it's like to work with each outsourcing team, and whether or not they'll be the best fit for you.*

**This guide covers:  
What to ask to see the bigger picture in these 4 key areas:**

**1** Technical Expertise

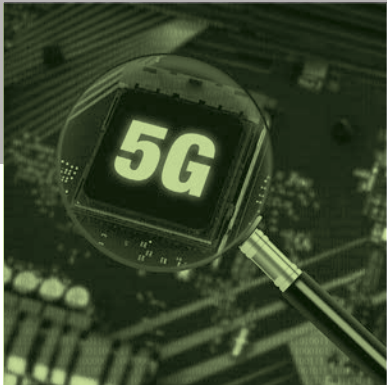
**2** Time to Market

**3** Innovation Capacity

**4** Risk Mitigation

# Technical expertise

The need for technical expertise drives many companies to look for a **software development partner**. However, to find the right for a lasting partnership, checking off a list of technical capabilities is only a first step.



## The basics

To meet your requirements, a software development company must have **designers and developers** with **expertise in** the technology you need, such as **embedded software, FPGA**, networking and communication protocols, **digital signal processing**, security, **cloud connectivity, machine learning** and data science.



## The bigger picture

*Beyond the basics, a team with long-term partnership potential will offer added value by offering these benefits along with technical expertise:*



### Industry experience.

What experience do they have? Teams with a **proven track record of experience** in different industries bring a wealth of knowledge to the table.

### Implementing best practices.

What is their process? Experienced developers can **guide you in making the right choices**, and creating a robust platform.

### Innovation.

How do they encourage **innovative thinking** and creative problem solving? If you're developing a product using an approach that's never been done before, you need **experienced partners** who can think creatively and come up with innovative solutions.

### Knowledge transfer.

Can they train your in-house team? If needed, a software development partner can **help your in-house team learn the new technology** and software product development best practices.

# Accelerating the development cycle/ time to market

“How fast can you get this done?” is a question that potential partners ask when evaluating outside developers. However, fastest isn’t always the best fit. It’s important to keep other criteria in mind to prevent time-consuming issues from arising.



## The bigger picture

*Beyond the basics, a team with long-term partnership potential will offer more than getting the job done. Look for a company that can meet your deadline the right way:*

## The basics

At a minimum, a potential development partner must have the **bandwidth and resources to take on your project**, and meet your deadline.



# TIME TO MARKET

## Track record of timely deliveries.

What is the company's history of project completion? Do they deliver on time or have ready excuses for multiple project delays? How do they **reuse knowledge gained from other projects** to help save time?

## Bench strength.

What if a primary resource gets sick or becomes unavailable? Does the outsourcing team have **the bench strength** to assign another developer to complete your project on time?

## Research and development.

How does the company invest in research and development? Do team members **stay current with the latest technology and tools**, so they're ready to implement them on your project right away?

## Teamwork.

How do they integrate with your in-house team? Sometimes, a lone developer will offer to get the job done their way. This approach can be fast, but it's extremely high risk. Developers with a **teamwork approach are better suited for big projects** that will require collaboration.

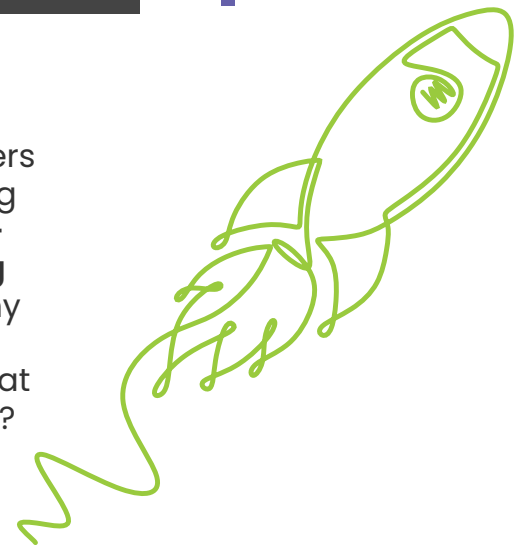
## Partnerships.

Is the company involved in the tech community? Do they have a **network of partners that can support and accelerate the process** of going to market with a new product?

## Communication.

Are the requirements clear? Do team members feel comfortable voicing concerns, **offering suggestions, and receiving feedback?** Are there any cultural differences between companies that could cause a problem?

*Fastest isn't always the best fit.*



# Expanding development and innovation capacity

Having a reliable, trusted outsourcing partner allows you to **scale your extended team up and down** as needed for different project cycles. This flexibility is a primary driver for many companies to develop long-term partnerships.

*When working with an outsourced team, a key objective is to minimize the strain on your in-house resources. A good partner will bring a team of creative thinkers and innovators to the table who can offer new ideas and improved methodologies.*

## The basics

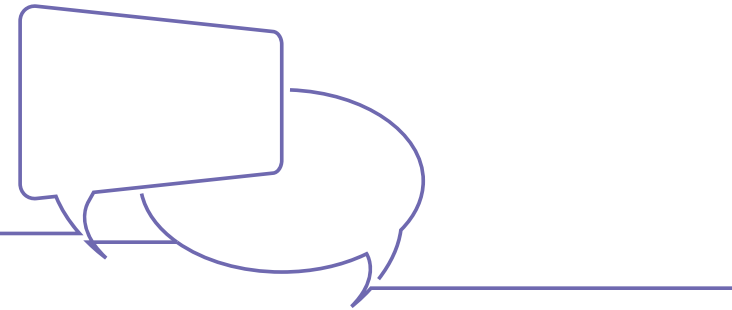
Simplifying the criteria for evaluating potential partners down to what each will charge to get X done in X time makes it easy to compare up front. However, **order-takers aren't innovators**. And, inexperienced developers may need more oversight than your team can offer.



## The bigger picture



*If you need creative problem-solving and innovative new solutions, ask for information that goes beyond bandwidth:*



### Proven innovative approach

**Ask for specific examples** of innovative thinking that the team has applied to projects. Of course, companies can't share confidential information; but, for completed projects with products on the market, they should be able to talk about innovative thinking that went on behind the scenes.

### Respect for constraints

Engineers are creative. If you ask for fresh thinking and new ideas about how to solve problems, they'll enjoy the challenge and return with a wealth of ideas. However, every project has constraints. How well can the **outsourced team work within those constraints**, even if they would prefer to use another method?

### Independent and transparent

While you want an outsourced team to be able to work without being micro-managed, they shouldn't go dark until the end. Ask if they **work collaboratively, and how they keep everyone up to date** with what they're doing.

### Communication

The ability to communicate comes up over and over again for a reason. Ask about **how a company's team will prepare and present their ideas**. Even if developers are highly skilled, they need to be able to communicate with people who don't share their level of expertise to be able to explain what they're doing.

# Reducing risk with project controls

Building a technical team in-house requires human resources as well as equipment and infrastructure that can quickly escalate in scope. For that reason, some companies prefer to **outsource and eliminate the risks involved** with building an in-house team. In the interest of minimizing risk, it's important to work with an external partner that has good project controls in place.



## The basics

Start by asking how the team evaluates projects. For large projects, sometimes a **feasibility study** must be done separately **before creating a detailed plan** and budget. Can the company do a separate evaluation of the project itself, before bidding on the work?



*An experienced team with a proven track record will greatly reduce the risk of making mistakes.*

## The bigger picture

*Beyond the basics, a valuable partner can reduce multiple risks throughout the product development process. Look for a team that offers risk-minimizing strategies:*



### Changes.

Keeping a project moving on time and under budget can look easy on paper, but is **challenging when inevitable changes happen**. Ask how the company estimates workload, sets priorities, and raises issues about potential problems.

### Additional costs.

After determining that the company's pricing works within your budget, ask **what contingencies are built in** for additional out-of-scope work.

### Deliverables.

What guarantees can the company make to ensure that they will **meet the deadlines** they agreed to?

### Quality.

Are you in **agreement about the level of quality** that can be delivered at the agreed-upon price in the timeframe needed? Be sure that terms such as **rough prototype** are well defined so that there are no surprises in the end.

### Professionalism.

How do you know the company can **successfully implement new technology**? An experienced team with a proven track record will greatly reduce the risk of making mistakes.

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