



Provide smarter R&D services
to help our clients evolve

How to choose a software development vendor

Checklist by HQSoftware

Introduction

Using this comprehensive checklist will help you select the most suitable software development partner.

Whether you've zeroed in on your chosen vendor or just have a shortlist to choose from, this checklist will help you make a wise decision.

It will also help even if you're just starting to explore the software development market, or if you have only a dim view of what your upcoming project will look like.

What you will learn

Before you start looking for suitable candidates, you need to decide on the parameters of your project. You will better understand how to describe your plans, what requirements to put forward, and your budget and time limitations.

You will learn what details to pay attention to during the search for a suitable developer and what information to collect about the candidate companies. This article will explain how to check the quality of their services, whether they can protect your data, and what expertise they can provide.

When starting the project, you'll know what questions to ask about price management, whether the vendor has clear business processes, and how the team will support your project in the long term.

Outcome

As a result, your choice of vendor will be backed up by proven insights gathered by various businesses. Please note: it is not necessary to follow every point of the checklist. Choose the questions that seem the most important for your project.



What is your future project?

1. Thoroughly describe your idea. Find examples of similar solutions, or develop good specifications for a one-of-a-kind solution.
2. Describe the scope of the project. Include a list of tasks you want to be accomplished. Be clear about the background to the project, if any. History can affect the current project.
3. Determine what tasks, from the general scope of the project, could be included in the MVP – Minimum Viable Product. This will help to determine the validity of your idea and save the budget if the project turns out to be unpopular with your target audience.
4. Define a budget for the project. If you need an investment to do it, ask the vendor for a technical assessment of the project.
5. Decide on a deadline. Ask whether the vendor can accomplish the task in time.
6. State your expectations in terms of service quality level. Choose the criteria that will form the basis of evaluation: the professionalism of the working team, the clarity of information given to you on the project, the ability of the vendor to complete the project in time and budget, and others.



Who is your potential vendor?

1. Collect basic information about a potential vendor. Learn about the company's target industry, years in business, addresses.
2. Learn about the experience the vendor has working with your type of business. How many successful projects has the company completed for your industry? How many years has it provided services for your industry?
3. Ask for relevant customer reviews.
4. Examine the vendor's technical setup, including preferred development tools, architectures, databases. Learn what methodology is used most often and determine whether it suits you.
5. Ask for a description of project development stages, communication methods, and the possibility of short-term onsite work.

6. Check on the vendor's rates and payment conditions.
7. Ask for a dedicated project manager who will be in charge of your product development and let you concentrate on marketing efforts.



How can you ensure the vendor's credibility?

1. Examine the company's credibility by taking into account the following:
 - Market reputation
 - Article publication
 - Participation in industry expos
 - Main competitors
2. Examine the clients who are quoted as references. Has the vendor done any work for your rivals? Are there any clients not quoted as references?
3. Search for reviews on platforms such as Clutch and GoodFirms. Pay attention to the parameters for which the vendor is endorsed more often. Also, check whether the vendor reached the top position organically or paid to be there.
4. Does your vendor have a clear strategic direction? You can ask whether it is important to build a long-term relationship and whether innovating together in future is possible.
5. Ask who the account managers are from the vendor's site and how they will communicate with the ones from your side.



Who will be on the development team?

1. Ask whether the vendor can provide you with any particular expertise that might be required for your project. If that expertise is missing, can a specialist be hired as soon as possible? What is the general staffing time for your type of project?
2. Learn whether the vendor subcontracts any work. Does it work with freelancers?
3. Examine the role assigned to each member of the team and what their responsibilities are. Are there junior developers and, if so, who is responsible for managing and teaching them?

4. Ask about escalation procedures. What is the company's process for resolving issues that arise, and who is responsible?
5. Ask whether ongoing service will be provided by the implementation team – the same one that developed your product.
6. Learn how the vendor's staff keeps up with the latest technology or industry updates. Are they familiar with recent tech trends and industry requirements?
7. Who is responsible for replacing team members?



How will the vendor secure your solution?

1. Ask about security measures your vendor can take to protect the created intellectual property. Your project may utilize sensitive data and business-related information that needs to be protected from corruption, violations of ownership rights, theft, and other threats.
2. Check whether the vendor conducts technical upgrades to keep security levels adequate.
3. How can the vendor use information obtained during the project? Learn what type of Non-Disclosure Agreement the vendor offers. Does the vendor comply with GDPR?
4. Ask whether the vendor outsources security services and how the company measures the reliability of subcontractors.
5. Learn about the vendor's backup policies, data recovery procedures, and DevOps infrastructure.



How is the quality of software development ensured?

1. Learn what industry or international standards the vendor follows, e.g. ISO.
2. Does it follow best practices and conventions of coding?
3. Examine whether the company's technical specialists have decent experience and skills backed by certificates.
4. Ask what the standard quality deliverables are during the project lifecycle.
5. How are reviews, testing, and satisfaction evaluation performed? Detail what methods for performing these activities will be acceptable to you.

6. Consider the vendor's expertise in the software domain and related topics: database management, networking, deployment technologies. The degree of expertise in each area will have an effect on the overall quality of the product.
7. Learn whether the vendor maintains partnerships with software development industry leaders, such as Microsoft.
8. How does the company handle large-scale projects? Scale is measured in terms of lines of code.
9. What tools does the vendor use to author the code, gather and validate code quality metrics, track defects?



How does the company manage costs?

1. What are the vendor's standard payment models? Learn whether the vendor can develop a customized pricing model if required. Ask the vendor to consult you on payment models and propose the most suitable one.
2. Examine the contract cost and price stability, any potential hidden costs, and exception costs based on team performance.
3. How is the spent time accounted for, and what is the payment schedule?
4. Learn about taxes, commissions, and milestone management.



How does the vendor perform quality assurance?

1. Check quality assurance certificates that the vendor's engineers possess, e.g. ISTQB.
2. Look into whether the vendor is able to provide a multi-year managed service for your future product if continuous testing and support are needed.
3. For a short-term project, is it possible to augment the development team with testers?
4. Can your vendor fit quality assurance activities into its chosen methodology processes?
5. What services does a Service Level Agreement include in terms of support and quality assurance? Pay attention to test-case efficiency, defect-reporting quality, traceability, and test-plan quality.



Does the vendor have robust processes?

1. Does your vendor have project tracking and reporting procedures in place? Learn whether they are measurable in terms of performance. The processes include:
 - Documentation
 - Team communication
 - Management
2. Is the vendor ISO-certified? Or, look for a certificate relevant for your industry requirements.
3. Examine the following project management parameters:
 - Proposed methodologies: Scrum, Kanban, etc.
 - Resource management within the project
 - Change management and control procedures
4. Do the project control procedures of the vendor fit within your own?
5. Examine the reusability of tech components. Does the vendor ensure this?
6. Learn whether the vendor follows design standards such as SSADM, CMMI, etc.



Does it have a good supplier culture?

1. Ask whether the vendor tolerates changes in schedule and requirements. Is it ready to accommodate your needs?
2. Is the team friendly and open about the challenges of the project? Do members of the team appear friendly to each other?
3. Is the vendor consistent during contract negotiations?
4. Does the team understand the business purpose of the project? Do they provide appropriate advice based on your needs?
5. Examine the development approach of the vendor—whether it is imaginative and flexible, driven by problem-solving and business requirements.

The outcome

When you have collected all the information you need, you can rank your overall satisfaction on each parameter. You can use the following table to make it easy.



Parameter

Satisfied

Not quite

Not satisfied

Pass

Image of the vendor				
Credibility				
Potential development team				
Data security of the future solution				
Project quality indicators				
Cost management				
Quality assurance services				
Business processes				
Supplier culture				

General conclusion:

About the author:

HQSoftware is a trusted **IoT, AI/ML, and AR/VR solutions developer**.

The company is acknowledged by such world-class ratings as Inc. 5000, CIOReview, Clutch, GoodFirms.

We deliver complex projects as a full-cycle team globally. **Turn to us for:**

- Consulting and business analysis
- Rapid PoC and prototype development
- Hardware manufacturing
- Embedded software development
- Middleware development
- Big Data, AI, Machine Learning
- UI/UX design
- Web and mobile application development
- Third-party integrations
- Quality assurance
- Post-project maintenance and enhancement

More about us:



[Download our Android AR application](#)



[Download our iOS AR application](#)






Contacts:

For more information you can contact HQSoftware staff directly:




Estonia Office

-  Tallinn, Liikuri 10 - 107
-  +372 712 00 22
-  estonia@hqsoftwarelab.com






USA Office

-  New York City, 315 Madison Avenue #3045
-  917 720 3806
-  usa@hqsoftwarelab.com



Belarus Development center

-  Minsk, Pobeditelei pr., 57
-  +375 29 911 81 91
-  belarus@hqsoftwarelab.com

Contact us via website:

<https://hqsoftwarelab.com/contact-us>



Provide smarter R&D services
to help our clients evolve

2020