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The Top 5 Questions Hotel Companies and Tech Suppliers Need to Ask When Looking for a Development and Consulting Partner

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Long gone are the days when a company would "off-shore" its software development requirements as a regular course of action - especially within the travel and hospitality industry. As our industry becomes increasingly dependent on technology to support operations, there is now the need to find a technology and consulting partner that understands not only the inherent complexities but also has the development resources required to truly deliver.

Our industry can be viewed, at times, as being somewhat 'Schizophrenic' due to the influx of new platforms and products hitting the market. The challenge lies in connecting all these new solutions to our incumbent platforms such a CRS's, PMS's, CRO's, etc. and the list goes on and on. So, when looking for a tech partner to assist you with adding more horsepower and expertise to your current IT and development resources, there are a number of key questions you should ask.

Do They Focus on Speed of Adoption?

Many organizations believe that being first to market is the most important factor when developing software. However, this couldn't be farther from the truth. It's true that you need to focus on speed, but more importantly, you need to focus on the speed of adoption related to the engagement. When completed, how well and quickly will the implementation and adoption of a product or integration be received? Your development partner must be keenly aware of the market and changes within it as they are in throws of providing you with strong consulting and technology support. Also, related to adoption, end–user communication is vital to the success of any engagement so the lines of communication with the user community must always be open and active.

How Do They Manage Risk Avoidance?

In several cases, technology and consulting engagements fail due to the lack of up-front due diligence and a full needs assessment. Impeccable documentation regarding findings is key along with a very clear statement of work and strong project, engagement and delivery management. Most technology partners will understand that invariably there will be "scope creep" and both parties need to be flexible, however, keeping things moving is very important.

Ensuring engagement with your company as the project continues through its evolutionary process is something that needs to occur. This ensures quality deliverables at each milestone. This all needs to be wrapped up upon completion of the project with user acceptance testing sign-off and launch support.

Do They Fully Understand the Impact of Guest Experience and Engagement?

Within the travel and hospitality industry, traveler experience and guest engagement are the key areas of focus when it comes to new technologies. When deciding upon a development partner, you will want to ensure that they are experts in the industry and have a strong track record of delivering products or integrations that can enhance overall traveler/guest engagement. You will also have to have confidence in where your prospective partner stands related to the value of user experience and

user interaction. As new products are being designed for our industry, you will need your partner's guidance to make sure that the engagement goals of your technology are delivered.

Do They Understand Your Business?

We often hear that technology service providers do not require domain experience. This is a costly mistake when it comes to the travel and hospitality industry. Our industry is unique because high touch service is the driving force of the business. With this in mind, your partner needs to have a strong grasp of specific operations, technology, integrations and the hierarchy specific to this complex ecosystem. Look for companies that have a senior management team with a wealth of experience, ongoing involvement and that have been in the trenches when it comes to working with industry stakeholders. To grow, you need a network of skilled partners to fill in your service or expertise gaps.

How Strong is Their Bench?

When we talk about a technology and consulting partners "bench," we mostly mean how strong are the people that will be working on your project and also how strong are others that may need to jump in to support the primary development team. How deep is their technical knowledge and will the resources required be complimentary to your business and sector? Unexpected things often transpire during the development and delivery of a solution, product or integration. Knowing that the people working on your project and those backing them up are top-notch, will ensure a successful engagement.

Finally, thinking long term is critical. Technology is changing at a breakneck pace, and if a company does not consistently move their systems forward, they are falling behind. The last few Phocuswright reports have focused on some of the latest emerging trends set to reshape the industry. These trends include speech recognition and natural language processing, chat and messaging, neural networks, artificial intelligence and the impact of the mobile traveler. Once again, ensuring that you choose a technology and consulting partner that has their finger on the pulse of our industry will guarantee a mutually beneficial and successful partnership.

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About Andrew Sanders

Andrew Sanders is Vice President at DataArt's travel and hospitality practice. He has been closely involved in delivering successful, profitable solutions for over 20 years among a variety of vendors of hotel central reservations systems (CRS), property management systems (PMS), mobile infrastructure and mobile application products.

About DataArt

DataArt is a global technology consultancy that designs, develops and supports unique software solutions, helping clients take their businesses forward. Recognized for their deep domain expertise

and superior technical talent, DataArt teams create new products and modernize complex legacy systems that affect technology transformation in select industries.

DataArt has earned the trust of some of the world's leading brands and most discerning clients, including Nasdaq, S&P, United Technologies, oneworld Alliance, Ocado, artnet, Betfair, and skyscanner. Organized as a global network of technology services firms. DataArt brings together expertise of over 2,200 professionals in 20 locations in the US, Europe, and Latin America.

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