

# Recipe for partnership success - seven ingredients to look for when picking a technology service provider

By [Bob Leibholz](#)

Answering these seven questions fully could be the difference between delivering a double-reverse somersault, or a belly flop



In a noisy, hype-driven marketplace, businesses often struggle to pinpoint which technology service providers will deliver the best results. Making the right choice, selecting a partner that not only understands and addresses evolving business needs but also propels a company forward, is a challenging task. By asking the right questions beforehand, the business will be able to make the right choice with much more confidence. After all, a lot hangs on the partnership, and it is important to shake the tree early for any potential issues that could arise. So, what are the key criteria for picking the right technology service partner?

Answering these seven questions fully could be the difference between delivering a double-reverse somersault (well-timed, expert and beautiful) or a belly flop (inelegant, painful and embarrassing). Ask, does your potential technology partner have...

## 1. The right skills set

It seems obvious, but it surprising how often this one goes wrong. Make sure, before starting out, that your technology partner possesses not only the complete set of technical skills needed to accomplish the project at hand, but also everything from solution & technical architects to designers, front and backend developers, manual and automated QA personnel, project and relationship management along with the myriad of specific skills

that are required or may conceivably be needed. Key to this is ensuring your technology partner can handle unanticipated technical needs that often arise during the development and integration phases of a project.

## **2. Capacity**

Does your technology partner have the capacity on-hand and flexibility to add resources quickly and efficiently? The best technology partners have a “bench” of qualified players to choose from and have internal flexibility to add resources quickly without “going to the market” or using third party contractors—something that adds considerable timing, quality and security risks to your project.

## **3. The right size**

Size matters. Size is a good proxy for experience and capabilities—until your partner hits a threshold, about 10,000 people, over which size begins to limit its ability to be flexible or focus on projects of less than \$10M per year. Optimally, your technology partner will have no less than 1,000 technical personnel, will have been in business for least a decade, and will have grown each year.

## **4. Adaptability**

Look for demonstrated ability to learn and adapt quickly. No two businesses are alike, and therefore needs vary — even between similar businesses within an industry. A technology partner should have successfully completed a wide range of projects and have either or both industry and technical relevance to your project. While it’s not reasonable for you to expect your partner to have a detailed understanding of the intricacies of your business processes on day 1, it is certainly reasonable to expect that understanding within a few weeks.

It is also essential to take into consideration the provider’s ability to adapt not only to different client companies, but also to changes in the technology landscape. The current technology climate and pace of change means that these days we often see a new innovation become available in Kiev the same instant it is born in San Francisco and likewise the reverse can happen, when the technology is developed in Kiev and instantly adopted in Silicon Valley. This dramatically impacts the way projects are planned and can necessitate pivoting to a new course of action to meet business demands.

## **5. The right core values and transparency**

Core values such as collaboration, conscientiousness, honesty and adaptability to client workstyles are key. You need to be able to trust your technology partner from the start and be able to work happily side by side with them.

In order to produce a good outcome, you will need to engage in a thoughtful solution design process with your technology vendor. Be sure that those you are considering will test approaches, build PoCs, prioritise features largely based on value to client, criticality and dependency, assess alternative software packages, develop a go-forward project plan and ultimately ensure that your potential investment is used wisely.

Your partner needs to be 100 per cent transparent on any issues that may arise; anything less is not acceptable. They must collaborate with you as closely as possible—to the level of daily standups or presence if required. And they must be honest with you in suggesting alternative approaches or solutions and, at the same time, must be able to adapt to your company’s workstyles, including project methodology and internal dynamics.

## **6. A healthy approach to budget**

Is your potential technology partner willing to fully discuss budget and answer all your questions? If not, or if the answers sound vague, run a million miles – unless your hobby is burning money. While it is important to allocate the right level of budget and to not cut corners, losing the battle for want of a nail, knowing how the budget will work upfront is important.

## **7. Discipline and staying power**

Subsequent to solution design, careful management of resources by your vendor, including supplying you with detailed progress and staff utilisation reports, should be expected. For larger projects that may involve a number of initiatives, focusing on stakeholder alignment and putting in place a strong program management discipline is key to coordination of efforts. Look at the work they've done before. Does it start with a bang and end with a whimper, or can they maintain focus and commitment at the same level for the entirety of the engagement?

The world is well on its way to a cloud-based, mobile-first, digital, automated self-service paradigm, both externally (customer-facing) and internally, so selecting a technology partner that ticks all these boxes is crucial. Caution pays off when choosing - take your time on answering these questions. Because the last thing you want is to be addressing these issues half way into a project. Get it right, and you will stay on time, on budget and on target.

*Bob Leibholz, Chief Development Officer, [DataArt](#)*

*Image Credit: [NakoPhotography](#) / Shutterstock*

Original article can be found here: <https://www.itproportal.com/features/recipe-for-partnership-success-seven-ingredients-to-look-for-when-picking-a-technology-service-provider/>