

Questions to Ask When Hiring a Software Development Company

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In brief

We all like to think that we know most things and that we're right about everything else. In fact, we sometimes ask questions to catch people out and show them how much more we know.

We all like to think that we know most things and that we're right about everything else. In fact, we sometimes ask questions to catch people out and show them how much more we know. But, sometimes, we let our biases dictate our questions such that we get the answers we're hoping for.

We face the same problems when hiring a custom software development company. Therefore, the trick is to agree on the structure of your questions with your teams before you start interviewing.

When hiring an enterprise software company, it's important to cover all possible themes, as listed below. However, at the end of the day, of course, you need to feel comfortable working with that custom software development company. In fact, all your people need to feel comfortable.

This is where these questions can help get you started, but make sure you also get feedback from your teams. The more people you include, the more they'll feel that they were part of the decision. They are then more likely to make the partnership work with the custom software development company you finally choose.

Teams of a Custom Software Development Company

- How do they hire people and what are their team structure and personal growth opportunities?
- What capabilities and technical specialties do their teams cover?
- How many developers / project managers / analysts do they have?

These questions might seem obvious. Essentially though, the more information you can gather about the custom software development company's people and their skills, the more you'll get a sense of their style.

It's also important to understand how they support and develop their people because this gives you an idea of what kind of employer they are and what kind of people they might attract.

Client and Industry Focus

- What type of clients do they tend to work with and from which industries?
- Do they have any references you can talk to?
- What case studies can they share, and what did success mean for each of these?

When reviewing a custom software development company, you want to get a sense of whether they can jump straight into your project. Will your challenges be familiar to them, or will there be a learning curve?

It's also great to talk to previous clients and get a sense of what their experience was like. Perhaps also ask the custom software development company what they feel they stand for. Where do they see their expertise and value-add work?

Project Structure and Communication Style

- What methodology and tools do they use and why?
- What are their updates on progress and issues?
- And what do they expect from their clients?

Everyone has a different methodology and way of working. So it's useful to understand if they'll be introducing a completely new approach to your business or not. You can then decide what works best for you. Communication is an important part of this because there's nothing worse than finding out problems when they've become so big that they need a complete rethink.

Are there any team apps they use, for example? Perhaps they prefer more face-to-face or interactions through other systems? Also, what do they expect from you, and what kind of resources will you have to provide from your side?

Technical Skills of a Custom Software Development Company

- What programming standards do they follow?
- How do you manage testing and post-project support?
- What design principles do they adhere to, and how do they manage the risk of implementation?

You might not be tech-savvy when it comes to the digital world. However, you can still ask each custom software development company to describe the technologies they focus on and what standards they follow. This allows you to compare the answers of your shortlisted companies at the end of your interviewing process.

Another aspect is maintenance and post-project follow-up. Solutions need to evolve, and things can go wrong, so what level of service can you expect?

Agreement and Risk Management

- Who owns the solution at the end of the project?
- How do they manage security risks?
- How do they manage confidentiality when working with competitors?

Naturally, you'll sign a commercial contract and perhaps also a non-disclosure agreement as you share information before making your final decision. It's important to understand, though, where the ownership of the final solution lies.

Will, your competitors have access to it should they work with the same custom software development company, for example? What about cyber threats and how confidential data is dealt with? These questions are critical to helping you understand to what level the custom software development company will support you.

Final Recommendations on Hiring a Custom Software Development Company

You should now understand the top themes you should cover when interviewing with a custom software development company. As you'd expect, there are many out there, but you can review the various 'best of' lists from market research companies such as Clutch, TheManifest, and GoodFirms.

Yes, it might seem overwhelming but make sure you understand your needs and criteria. You're now armed with a good set of questions, and then the process will naturally follow its course. When dealing with such a fast-moving and competitive industry, you can rest assured that you'll be talking to professional firms who know how to partner successfully with businesses.

References

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