

Finding and Choosing a Software Development Partner

A checklist for companies choosing a software development partner

This checklist is for companies that want to commission software, whether from a freelancer or an agency. It walks you through preparation, selection and contract step by step. Use it to compare offers objectively and avoid the usual pitfalls.

Before you search: clarify your requirements

- ☐ Describe in a few sentences what problem the software should solve.
Start with the business value, not the technology.
- ☐ List the key features and mark what is truly needed for launch.
Include interfaces to existing systems such as your ERP or web shop.
- ☐ Set a realistic budget and a rough timeline.
- ☐ Name one internal contact person who is allowed to make decisions.

Screen candidates and check references

- ☐ Look at completed projects that are similar to yours.
- ☐ Ask for two or three reference clients and call at least one of them.
- ☐ Check whether the provider shows case studies or publicly visible code.
A GitHub profile or documented projects tell you more than polished slides.
- ☐ Clarify who will actually write the code: the provider, employees or subcontractors.

Assess technical fit

- ☐ Ask the provider to explain and justify the proposed technology stack.
Good providers can explain in plain language why a technology fits your project.
- ☐ Ask about quality assurance: code reviews, automated tests, a test environment.
- ☐ Clarify where the software will be hosted and who handles operations, updates and backups.
- ☐ Ask how personal data will be handled.
Also clarify whether a data processing agreement is required.
- ☐ Make sure documentation and handover are planned from the start.

Working model and communication

- ☐ Require that tasks are specified in writing, for example as tickets or GitHub issues.
Written specs make every deliverable traceable and verifiable.
- ☐ Agree on milestones with clearly defined results and acceptance by you.
- ☐ Define how often you get a status report or a short update call.
- ☐ Ask whether you get ongoing insight into progress, for example via the repository or a test environment.
- ☐ Pay attention to response times as early as the offer stage.
A provider who is slow before signing will not get faster afterwards.

Contract, rights and costs

- ☐ Put scope, price and payment schedule in writing.
- ☐ Agree in writing on the usage rights to the code and on source code handover.
You should be able to continue development without the original provider.
- ☐ Make sure the domain, hosting and cloud accounts, app store accounts and licenses are registered to your company.
Otherwise a provider switch leaves you dependent on accounts you do not own.
- ☐ Agree on payments tied to accepted milestones instead of one large upfront payment.
- ☐ Clarify upfront how change requests are ordered and billed.
- ☐ Put warranty, maintenance and post-launch support in writing.

Red flags

- ☐ Drop providers who quote a fixed price without asking a single question.
- ☐ Drop providers who will not give you access to the code or project status.
- ☐ Be wary of offers far below all others.
You will pay the difference later through change requests or poor quality.
- ☐ Be skeptical when every requirement is supposedly feasible immediately and without any pushback.

If you would like support with any of these points, we are happy to help. Frankford's IT-Solutions in Innsbruck guides companies from the first requirement to the finished software.