Project Trouble? A custom software design firm can help.
By Yuri Yushkov

If you've been in the software game for any length of time, you know that IT projects can take an unexpected turn causing project delays, lost productivity, cost over-runs and lost revenue.

There could be a change or loss in personnel, the project could move in a different direction and require additional resources, or your customer may need something done quicker than expected.

Perhaps the project took a different shape along the way and additional manpower outside of the current staff is needed to finish. Maybe there was an unexpected challenge with the infrastructure and external expertise is required to complete the project.

Or it's time to make your idea come to life with a prototype and you simply don't know where to begin.

So who should you call for help when you need something done urgently but lack the expertise or resources to do it? An outside software design firm is the answer.

Unfortunately, not all software design firms are created equal. And choosing the right firm can mean the difference between a project successfully completed on time and within budget to one that's… not.

To ensure a positive outcome, there are five key aspects you want to consider when vetting a potential firm.

1. Communication. Communication is crucial to the success of any project. Recent industry reports confirm that poor project communication is a one of the critical challenges of outsourced software development.

To limit and prevent surprises, there should be a dedicated project manager that is available to answer your questions. This person should be comfortable with speaking to both clients and developers using the business concepts and technology languages most familiar to each group.

By leveraging the talents of a skilled project manager, you can offload the otherwise daunting task of trying to explain the intricacies of your business to the developers working on your project.

A check-in protocol to show regular progress should also be in place. This will help address issues and, if necessary, allow for quick corrective action.

If the firm can't or won't provide these services, then move on.

2. Experience. You want a firm that understands different types of technology and workflow scenarios, so it's important that they've worked with a variety of industries and have the know-how to handle your problem.

They should provide a portfolio of work and client references. Make sure to check them.

3. Relationship. The firm you choose should care about your company's needs and take an interest in your company's long-term goals. They will be working closely with you, so it is important to feel fully supported during the project.

Don't be afraid to ask if the firm has long-term clients and what percentage of their business comes from referrals.

4. Legalities. Companies must be vigilant to protect their rights and intellectual property when dealing with any firm, especially those overseas. It is crucial to have your property rights secured through a contract that's enforceable in a court of law. Firms you engage outside the United States may not be subject to the same laws or penalties.

Take the time to build yourself a safety net and have a lawyer look over the contracts to protect your interests before moving forward.

5. Price. To prevent billing surprises, discuss not only the project, but the follow-up once it's completed. Determine if there will be any software updates that require tweaking. Consider on-going maintenance and support needs. If not addressed, these aftercare services can pile-up and result in unplanned expenses.

Shop around, compare price and don't be afraid to negotiate.

So, don't panic when a software project turns urgent. Instead, consider partnering with a custom software design firm that can get you back on track by offering the expertise and resources to get the job done.

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