

# 6 QUESTIONS

to Ask When Looking for a  
Software Engineering Partner



# Introduction

More than ever, companies are delivering more customer value through software and digital experiences. As a result, more and more businesses are realizing they need a software engineering partner in order to grow — both in terms of size and scale, as well as product / service / feature offerings. Outsourcing may seem like the obvious solution, but there's actually a significant difference between traditional outsourcing vendors and today's software engineering partners.

“Outsourcing” typically means throwing a business problem over a wall and then receiving a solution some time later. It's a straightforward business transaction that requires very little collaboration between client and vendor.

While there are definitely still situations where this approach makes sense — and vendors who can provide this type of service — we do not advise traditional outsourcing for developing software products that drive your revenue. You'll find much more value (and innovation) working hand-in-hand with a knowledgeable technology partner.

In this e-guide, we'll assume that you are in fact looking for a software engineering partner. More importantly, we'll provide you with best practices for selecting the *right* software engineering partner and ensuring that your partnership succeeds.



## QUESTION 1

# Why do you want a partner?

This may sound like a very basic question, but identifying exactly why you want a software engineering partner is crucial to selecting the right one. Different partners have different strengths and ways of working with clients, so it's important for a business to truly understand its own vision, capabilities, and maturity. In our own 20+ years of experience as a software engineering partner, we have found that most clients partner because they face one or more of the following challenges.

01

**You don't have the right skills.**

You want to build a new product or service, but it requires niche skills that you can't access locally.

Or — as is more often the case these days — you want to leverage the technology or offerings of an entirely different industry in order to innovate your own market (think Apple Carplay or ATT U-Verse).

03

**You need to transform your business.**

We often work with traditional businesses who are on the cusp of digital transformation but don't yet have the processes, infrastructure, or mindset to drive the changes required to digitally transform. In this scenario, you're looking for a partner who can help you reorganize your business in addition to doing the actual "heavy lifting" technology work.

02

**You have the skills, but not the scale.**

Even the most tech-savvy companies will lose revenue and market share if they can't continuously deliver better features to more people faster. You need a partner who can help you quickly ramp up your engineering operations through established teams, processes, infrastructure, etc.

04

**You need to do more with less.**

We'd be remiss if we didn't mention cost savings as a reason to partner. Budgets are tight for many companies right now, so partnering with a software engineering services provider can often help you achieve more results for the same amount of investment.



## QUESTION 2

# How mature is your organization?



Does your organization have the culture, executive buy-in, and processes to work with a software engineering partner in the first place? You have to know what your future goals look like in order to sell a partnership to your executive team, and you need your executive team to be 100% behind the partnership in order for it to succeed. Not only must you be able to clearly see where your market is going and how you will (or want to) fit into that evolution, but you must be able to identify your own maturity parameters:

- **Product Maturity**  
Do you have a successful, repeatable development process? Are you predictably releasing high-quality products? How often do you have production problems? Are your processes automated? How's your customer satisfaction?
- **Organization Maturity**  
Does your leadership have a solid vision and strategy? Do you have the support and resources to engage with a partner? Do you have the metrics to measure success?
- **Partnership Maturity**  
Do you have the people, processes, technologies, and infrastructure in place to collaborate with a third-party partner?

Most companies we work with are able to self-assess, but maybe not in a specific area. This is especially true for companies who are emerging onto the digital scene. Much like the adage, "You don't know what you don't know," a business may have a general idea of where they want to go but not the knowledge of how to get there. In this scenario, it's crucial to bring in an advisor who can help you clarify your goals and identify the specific steps to achieve them.

For example, we once partnered with an insurance technology company who had a reactive, customer-driven roadmap but wanted to become more proactive and product-centric. Their goal was to actively engage in R&D and both disrupt and define their market. We came in first as an advisor and then as a technology partner to reorganize their business and establish the right systems and processes. The client has since become a true thought leader in the insurance technology industry.

## QUESTION 3

# Is the right person driving the search?

We realize this may be a sensitive topic because — if you're reading this e-guide — this section applies to you. However, we've found that when a company is at a point where they want to differentiate themselves through software or digital products, then they need someone with experience in software or digital products to drive the search for a software engineering partner.

While Procurement and other business-oriented teams should definitely be involved in the process of selecting a partner, they should not be leading the charter because they will not be the ones to ultimately consume that partner's services.

In our experience, the most successful partnerships are driven by the:

- Chief Technology Officer
- Chief Product Officer
- Chief Digital Officer
- Chief Experience Officer
- VP/AVP/Director of Engineering

These individuals are the ones who are most informed about the business context and technical roadmap, and they can identify whether or not potential partners can meet their requirements from a skill and process perspective.

For example, we recently partnered with a fleet management company who wanted to enter the video telematics market. Before committing to a full partnership, the CTO decided to engage us in an advisory capacity to create a proof-of-concept (PoC) for potential revenue streams.

Because the CTO already had an in-depth understanding of his company's existing solutions on a technology level, he was able to recognize the value of our suggestions and verify that we had the "technology chops" to move forward with the partnership.



CTO



CPO



CDO



CXO

VP / AVP / DIRECTOR  
ENGINEERING

YOU

## QUESTION 4

# How do you select the right partner?



As we mentioned before, different software engineering partners have different strengths. For example, if you want to industrialize your current processes or optimize a platform for third-party systems, you should partner with a provider who specializes in IT services. These types of partners are your more traditional “outsourcers” who will execute on your specific guidelines, manage repetitive tasks, or maintain your current systems.

However, if you need help digitally transforming your business, innovating a product line, or even taking over a service or solution, then you need a very different type of partner. GlobalLogic falls into this second category, wherein we create distributed teams that blend seamlessly with our clients’ teams in order to provide high-level innovation and end-to-end engineering services. We refer to this more as “partnered insourcing” rather than outsourcing.

If you do not have an advisor to guide you through the software engineering and IT service provider landscape, we suggest leveraging analyst reports to find a matrix of who does what. Once you narrow down partners to interview, some good questions to ask include:

- How are you different from your competitors?
- What are your core competencies?
- How much attention can you provide me?
- Have you previously done what I want to do?
- Have you worked with someone like me before?
- Do you have case studies / customer references?
- Do you have experiential learnings that can be applied to my unique situation?

More importantly, though, your potential partner should be asking *you* questions. If a partner blindly agrees to everything you ask for, or if they promise you 100 Java engineers for the lowest cost — that’s a red flag. A good partner will ask you *why* you want those 100 Java engineers, and they will even challenge you if they don’t think it’s a good approach.

Even if you simply want to partner with an IT outsourcing vendor to collaborate on a short-term project, you should be open to (and value) a partner who demonstrates the ability to say, “No.”

## QUESTION 5

# Does team location matter?

You've heard the terms "onshore, nearshore, offshore," but does it really matter where your extended software engineering team is located? The simple answer is no, but let's expand.

Some companies do have a very strong reason for wanting their partner team to be located in a specific location or time zone, such as customer support, location-specific markets, or even a long-term strategy to establish teams in major technology hubs. But for most companies, they simply need access to specific skills. In this scenario, it really doesn't matter where those skills are located — as long as you have the right processes in place for distributed engineering. We call this mindset "rightshoring."

We once consulted with a company who wanted a QA center in a specific location because it was a short plane ride from their local headquarters. In our opinion, the targeted location would be unable to support the skill sets and other requirements of the client, but they were insistent that they wanted a "nearshore" team.

We ended up not working with the company, and they moved forward with establishing a two-story QA center in their desired location. Cut to a year later, and they were facing significant collaboration challenges, even though their teams were distributed across just *two floors*.

So regardless of whether your teams are distributed across a building or across the world, what really matters is establishing solid processes and tools for distributed collaboration. For example, GlobalLogic has developed an entire science around building distributed engineering labs, which includes parameters and tools such as:

- KPIs, SLAs, and other metrics to measure the progress of a client's lab
- Communication and documentation tools like Jira, Confluence, Wiki, SharePoint
- SDLC best practices, Agile and Scrum processes, Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe)
- Escalation processes, aligned organization structures, partnership owners



## QUESTION 6

# Do you have a team integration plan?

You've selected a partner — great! You already know that you'll need to set up the right processes, infrastructures, and technologies for distributed engineering before bringing your partner on-board. We won't go into detail about these requirements because your partner will likely be able to provide you with (or at least advise you on) everything you'll need. Instead, let's talk about team integration.

One of the biggest challenges of bringing in a software engineering partner that many companies don't think about is the people aspect. We often experience push-back from a customer's in-house teams who may feel threatened about working with an "outside" partner. They may be resistant to the change or even actively undermine the partnership.

If you don't have a communications and collaboration process in place before working with your selected partner, you will face significant cultural challenges. Below are three crucial lessons that we've learned over the years to smoothly integrate our teams with our client's teams.

01

## Start planning at the contract level.

Many contracts are structured in a standard vendor-client format, which creates unequal footing at the very beginning of the partnership. Where you can, format your contracts to read more like a true partnership, with team incentives, MBOs, and other metrics of success that put your internal and partner teams on equal terms. In our own client partnerships, we operate under a "shared burden, shared success" mentality.

02

## Be transparent with your internal team.

Be upfront and direct about bringing in a partner, and create a plan to win over your internal teams. Assure your teams that they are still very much valued; tell them exactly what to expect of the new partnership; and explain specifically how a partner will benefit both the company and them personally. A well thought-out communications plan is just as important as your technology or process plans.

03

## Integrate your teams immediately.

To further cement a "one team" mentality, create a common organization chart and make sure that your internal and partner HR teams are talking to each other regularly. Identify a partnership champion on both your end and the partner's end, and create "partnership ambassadors" among both teams by sending members to work at each other's engineering centers for a few weeks. Video chat is a great tool for real-time collaboration, but nothing compares to creating relationships in a face-to-face environment (excluding COVID precautions, of course).



# Conclusion

Finding the ideal software engineering partner can be daunting, but with the right strategies and the ability to self-assess, it can lead to enormous benefits. Beyond black and white metrics like ROI, partnering with a software product engineering company can provide you with a unique outside perspective that leads to surprising new innovations — and new and expanded revenue streams!

We hope this e-guide has provided you with a valuable blueprint for selecting a software engineering partner. To learn more or to speak with one of our own experts, please reach out to [info@globallogic.com](mailto:info@globallogic.com).

## About GlobalLogic

GlobalLogic is a digital product engineering company with 20+ years of experience. We are headquartered in Silicon Valley and employ 19,000+ designers, architects, and engineers across 3 continents. With 400+ customers, we have helped some of the top brands in the world design and engineer their next-generation products and digital experiences.

