

6 Stops on the Way to Right Software Development Company

Foreword

Looking for a software development company is hard and challenging.

This is one of the cliches which you will find in any guide or helper dedicated to this topic. Unfortunately, it is true.

There are no “real” things to touch or test as to when you buy some products. It makes the whole process hard. And if in case of some services the success (or no success) totally depends on the skills of a service provider, e.g. cleaning service, or the cost of no-success and its consequences isn't so painful and is restorable within time, e.g. service of a hairdresser, in the case with custom software development services the final success depends on all participants, including you. Besides, the cost of the mistake may have many zeros and can be crucial for your current or future business.

These are the peculiarities which you should know and keep in mind when you start looking for a team to work with.

Having worked in the industry of custom software development services for more than 10 years, our experts have prepared some advice for you on how to survive this journey and what pitfalls you may face.



Stop 1: Set goals and priorities

Before you start looking for a software developer, think carefully over the following things:

- Your business goals and objectives
- Concept of your future solution (features, design, etc)
- Technical requirements
- Budget & time limitations

Surely, some things can (and definitely will) be changed but you need a clear base to start with.

These things defined will also allow you to make the right decisions about what team fits your requirements.

Pitfall: If you are a specialist in your own domain and don't have enough time and resources to think about the solution concept and requirements, it is ok. In this case, we would recommend you to formulate the key results which you would like to receive after the solution development and concentrate your efforts on searching for the companies which could help you with defining all technical and non-technical requirements - we call such services [Discovery Phase](#) or Business Analysis or Planning phase.



Stop 2: Define requirements to company

Surely, the criteria you will follow while choosing your tech partner will depend solely on your requirements, however, we recommend paying attention to the following 3 points at least.

1. Price Range

Sometimes companies claim the average price range of projects they have been working with. This information can usually be found on corporate websites or catalogs. Compare it with your budget estimation. For example, if you have a budget of \$20K, there is no sense to write to companies working only with big and very pricy projects.

Pitfall: Don't take these numbers as the only guideline for choosing a developer. The project price may range from its complexity. Only after receiving the project estimation, you may make some conclusions. So, get a quote from each company to get something to compare.

2. Location

Is it crucial for you to hire software developers whose office is in your home country? Or it is ok to work with companies based, for example, in Eastern Europe? Usually, software design in developing countries is much cheaper than in European or American countries due to pure economical reasons: salaries are lower. Besides, many domestic companies find their technology partners in other countries.

Pitfall: Study the market. Find out what countries are claimed to deliver quality development services. Research the companies' resources. We think it is better to make a contract with a company from Belarus or Poland with a ready-to-work team sitting in the office, rather than with a domestic company which will give your project to third party developers and will charge you ...twice.

3. Experience

Experience in software development is a very tricky question. You cannot apply any «standards» here. Some technologies appeared only several years ago, so sometimes developers just cannot physically have more than 3-5-10 years of experience. If the company has been on the market for 5 years and more and has more than 30 employees, it is very good. This means that the company has managed to survive in this competitive world, it has had projects and showed results.

Pitfall: Speaking about portfolios, there is no such number of completed projects after which a company becomes «experienced». It is the question of projects' quality and level of experience of the developers rather than their quantity. Besides, sometimes customers do not allow app developers to publish their projects in a portfolio. So, ask and you will be answered.



Stop 3: Make companies list

There are thousands of software development companies in the world today. They vary in size, price lists, range of services, technologies used, and so on. So, what should you start with? The answer is pretty simple: with a list of developers and primary information about them. Where to find them? See the options below.

1. Google Companies

Obviously, it is one of the easiest and fastest ways to inquire about the existing companies and collect primary information about them, their services, competencies, etc. Surely, neither Google nor Bing nor Yahoo gives you the full list of all app developers in the world (and we don't think you need to know them all). They will suggest the first hundreds start with.

Pitfall 1: Don't be too lazy to look through not only the first 10 search results found, but also dig deeper into them. In most cases, first places in search results are occupied by companies that spend a lot on marketing and SEO, and you don't want to narrow a range of choice, do you? Moreover, try various keywords describing the services you are looking for (see Stop 0 where you defined who you are looking for). Search engines will give you various results for «software development company» and «web development companies» queries.

Pitfall 2: Study companies' details carefully - their websites, social profiles, founders, and employees profiles. This basic information will help you not to waste your time on the companies which initially don't fit your requirements or look suspicious. Good companies publish their information freely and update it regularly.

2. IT Companies Catalogs

There are platforms where you may find lots of companies, study their portfolios, locations, references, etc in one place. Here are some of them: clutch.co, techreviewer.co, goodfirms.co, and more

Pitfall: Most such directories make ratings of companies. Sometimes they are true and unbiased, but sometimes it is just a check question: the companies which pay more are placed at the top. There is nothing bad about investing in the company promotion, so, take into account the info there, but don't take it as gospel. Spend some more time to review all options you have.

3. Word of Mouth & Network

Did your business partners or friends make applications previously? Did they hear about any company worthy of attention? Have you or your friends visited any expert IT conference? Contact them and ask about the experience they had.

Pitfall: Don't ask your competitors as they may do a bad turn.





Stop 4: Shortlist companies to contact

Ok, right now you have found about several dozens of software development companies that look trustworthy. What's next? We recommend you make a table with the key information about the companies and your requirements defined at Stop 2. It will help you to systemize all the data gathered.

Sample of such table you may find [here](#)

Pitfall: Don't shortlist and contact too many companies. You will get tired of discussions and calls with all of them and the whole process may become a mess. From our experience, the most optimal number - 6-7 companies. Shortlist some to make a backup plan too.

Stop 5: Contact and get a quote

This is the point when you should gather crucial information about the companies and their business proposals (see our detailed guide about the estimation process and business proposals [here](#)). Now you can start narrowing your choice. Look at the table and delete those companies, which do not fit your requirements in price, location, experience, and other specific parameters.

Theoretically, you should have 2-3 companies left on your list. These companies may look almost the same for you, and you may be in two minds which company to choose. That's where we come to the next stop of your long journey.

Pitfall 1: We'd recommend you to get rid of only those companies which don't fit you in 2 and more parameters.

Pitfall 2: Provide detailed feedback to the companies which sent you business proposals about why their offer doesn't fit. Maybe they will find a way to fix it?





Stop 6 - Choosing the best

Well, what other questions should be answered to help you to make a choice and sign a contract?

1. How do they work?

Ask about the number of employees, how many of them work in-house, as freelancers. Ask about the departments they have. Figure out what [development methodologies](#) are used (e.g. Scrum, Kanban, Waterfall), [engagement models](#), how the whole app development process is built, etc.

Experienced app developers will be eager to answer all your questions and to provide you with all the necessary documents and data (the best ones will provide this data even in their business proposals).

Pitfall: Before asking these questions, make a small research about the app development process in general. It will help you to make a clear picture of how it should be built, and you will compare it with the processes within the companies you choose from. At the very least, the company should be able to cover the following [stages of software development](#):

- Analysis and Research
- Design
- Development
- QA
- Release
- After-launch Support

2. How good are they in communication?

As we mentioned above, the success of software development will depend on everyone involved in the process. That's why communication becomes so important and almost crucial.

Are you satisfied with the communication with a company?
Are they clear and precise in what they present and do?
Do they listen to you?

Pitfall: Sometimes all communication is done by a well-trained salesperson. Ask to meet with other team members - project managers, business analysts, developers, etc. - to understand if you will be able to make one team.

3. Are there any additional services?

A good software development company thinks not only about building a solution, good developers think about the strategy and profits the customer should get from the application. Do they offer post-launch support? Do they have any partners which may help with the application promotion?

Pitfall: If a company provides too many services and the size of this company isn't truly big (e.g. services of analysis, design, development on all types of platforms, promotion, marketing, consulting, etc and the team is 20 people), such a company may outsource some services to 3rd party teams. It is very tempting to address just one company, but we would recommend finding the companies that specialize in their own domain (development, marketing, sale) and coordinate their work.





In Conclusion

In this short guide, we tried to gather the most common steps and pitfalls that you may face while searching for a software company. We do hope that it will help you to find the right tech partner for your project.

If you have any questions or would like to share your story about searching for a development company, don't hesitate to contact us at info@sumatosoft.com