



5 Questions for a Vendor Partner



Choosing the right vendor to partner with is vital to delivering your project to spec, on time, and under budget.

Not every organization will choose to use a partner when creating a new offering. But a vendor that is an expert in their field can bring unparalleled expertise and knowledge to the table. This relationship can help make your project stronger, more customer-focused, and ultimately, more successful.

Whether you want to develop a state-of-the-art website, create a new app, or build a tech solution to solve a business problem, we recommend asking yourself the following five questions during the vendor evaluation process.

The answers will reveal whether or not this company is the right fit for your project—and will help you achieve your business goals.

#1

Has our organization done our research?

Your organization should have a strong vision of the outcomes you want to achieve before even beginning to evaluate vendors.



This includes:

- Mapping your customer data to analyze trends.
- Doing user research to grasp what your customers want.
- Understanding how any new offerings will tie in with your core technology stack.

Without this research, you won't truly understand what you're trying to accomplish—and a vendor partnership won't be successful. Once your team has the full picture of your project and its impact on your organization, you'll be able to evaluate vendors more effectively.

#2

Does the vendor understand (and challenge) our strategic goals?

The right vendor will do more than take orders.

They must also be:

Business-Focused

A vendor must be a partner in your project and ask questions to get to the root of your business goals. For instance, if you say you want to build an app, the vendor should ask:

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- What business problems are you trying to solve?
- How will this app impact your company strategy?

Challengers

A vendor should challenge your assumptions and provide industry expertise to affirm that what you're looking to create will help you achieve your intended result.

A vendor should research and understand your vertical, customers, and goals. This way you can work together to use the right approaches to solve customer problems and move your company forward in the market.

#3

Is the vendor providing solutions based on what we need, or what they know?

Helping You Navigate

A vendor must have a vast knowledge of different technologies. If they only offer one tech product or service to help you create your offering, dig deeper.

Is that the only technology they develop on or work with?

The vendor you choose for your project should be able to recommend and work with the best technology for your goals—not simply select a tool because it's the only one they know.

Strategy must be the focus, not the technology.

#4

Is the vendor a cultural fit for our project team?

Vendors can seem very similar during the pitch process.

But once you choose one, they become an extension of your project team. You're putting a huge amount of your business in their hands—so you need to confirm that your working relationship will be a successful one.



Use the RFP process to answer the following questions:

- Can you trust the vendor to meet deadlines and deliver to spec?
- Does their communication style fit yours?
- Will they provide updates on a schedule that suits your team?
- Is their knowledge as extensive as they say?

Mitigate the Bait and Switch

What makes these questions even trickier is that you typically interface with a completely different team during the sales process than the one that will execute your project.

It's the project team — the architects, developers, project managers, and designers — that will make or break your success.

Start Speed Dating

During the sales process, consider asking the vendor to set up quick, five-minute calls with some of their company's developers, project managers, and designers.

These people might not be those guaranteed to work on your project if you move forward with the vendor, but having a conversation with them will give you a better understanding of how a working relationship might unfold.

This can make a monumental difference in the overall success of your project.

#5

Have we spoken with other companies that have worked with the vendor?

It's pretty standard to ask for referrals during a vendor evaluation process.

Typically, the vendor will provide you with contacts who had great experiences.

Turn this process on its head.

Ask the vendor to provide you with contact information for a client who was unhappy with the vendor's services at some point. Find out how the vendor and client navigated the issue.

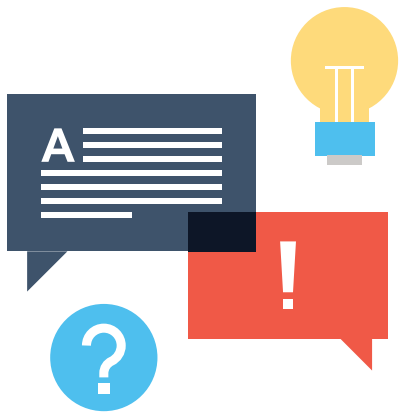


You might consider some of these questions:

- You were unhappy at some point during your relationship with the vendor—What happened and how did each of you respond?
- What was your biggest issue during your project and how did you overcome it?
- If you could change one thing about your project with the vendor, what would it be?

Every project has its ups and downs, but you must dig deeper to get to the true essence of whether this vendor will be a good fit for your company.

The right vendor will make or break your project —Work with a partner you can trust.



Are you ready?

Selecting the right vendor to execute your project is vital to its overall success.

We hope you use these questions as you evaluate potential organizations to ensure your choice is the right fit for your goals.

We'd love to provide our insight and experience to make your app, website, or mobile project successful.

Email us at shoptalk@acella.net to get started.