

14-STEP GUIDE TO FINDING THE RIGHT TECH EXPERT FOR YOUR BUSINESS

You need external expertise for your project - but you don't know where to start. This guide from ADAMAPP will help you choose the right tech partner for your needs.



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1. DEFINE THE GOAL

You know you need a tech solution, but before getting too far ahead, try to clarify a few points – in particular, the key purpose of it. Almost no tech tools can deliver a wide variety of outcomes, so **try to define what your key objective is for this one, although it's OK to have a few secondary objectives.**

Some common ones are to increase spending from existing customers, improve customer service engagement, improve loyalty, increase brand awareness, collect data, control stock, develop a database of potential new customers, improve efficiency for your own team - and many more.

It's also very helpful to **try to define your target audience for the tech.** The more defined the goal and the audience, the better the result of your product will be – and this will also help in your search for a tech partner. You can look for people who can demonstrate experience achieving these goals, reaching the relevant audience and with a robust track record.



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2. IDENTIFY THE PLATFORMS

Before you start looking for potential tech partners for your project, there's one thing that can be very helpful when it comes to identifying the best tech partners - and that's **which platforms you want to use.**

Depending on the project, you might need to identify the platforms you'd like for front-end (i.e. what the customer sees) and back-end (i.e. the technical, behind-the-scenes programming).

For front-end that simply means **where you want your app, website, tool or product to appear**, such as on iPhones, Android devices, Safari web browsers, an internal company system or in several different locations.

For the back-end, you might need to ensure **the product will integrate with existing infrastructure and that you have people on your team** who will understand how to use it. There are times you won't need to specify the back-end, but just double-check with your in-house tech team to be sure. If you commission a product that doesn't work with your current systems, it could require additional user training, programming and software.

Finally, consider if your project might work best in Augmented Reality or with the use of AI (artificial intelligence - essentially, advanced algorithms) as these elements affect both the back-end and the front-end.

TIP: But don't panic if you have no idea. Many clients don't when they first look for partners, and that's fine. Any good tech expert can help you identify the most suitable platforms to meet your goals during the scoping and bidding process. But if you know the platforms before you start your search, it can help you focus and make the process of finding a tech partner faster.



3. CAST THE NET

As with everything in life, **the best recommendations come from people you trust**, so ask your network. You could post publicly on your social media pages, or send direct messages to the contacts who are most likely to have commissioned similar tech recently.

You might luck out and get one or two relevant suggestions this way, but you'll also want to add a few more to the mix. After all, the chances that someone in your network wanted the exact same type of project as you, with the same business objectives, is slim, so look a little further afield.

TIP: One of the best places to find potential tech partners is **Clutch.co**. It lists more than 150,000 agencies in 500 tech categories, ranging from web, software and app development to SEO and digital marketing. It has filters to help narrow your search, based on budget, industry, front-end and back-end technologies, and more.

4. NARROW THE FIELD

Dig a little deeper into your long-list in two ways.

Firstly, check their reviews - and one of the best places for this is again **Clutch.co**, which **provides independent, verified reviews from real clients**. Not only will this give you a feel for how successful their partnerships have been, but it also provides greater insights into the types of projects the company has worked on. **Few companies list all their projects on their own website, so this will tell you more about them.**

Secondly, go to the company's own website and take a look around. Like any other brief, you'll want to **check out the clients and testimonials**, but just as importantly for a tech partner is the quality of the website itself. If it doesn't look professional, then chances are, the work they provide for you won't be high quality either.



5. DO THEY LISTEN?

Communication is key to the success of any project, but it's an area that a lot of tech specialists aren't particularly strong in. This might not seem important, but it can cause major problems that can cost money and time.



Bad communication can cause major problems that can cost you money and time.

You can get a feel for this from your first call, but if you feel confident enough to ask them to bid, then that's where the next clues will come in. If **they don't pitch to your spec** - and don't explain why they've varied from it - or **they provide a confusing bid**, it doesn't bode well for your working relationship.

TIP: You want to get the feeling your partner is walking in the same shoes, that they truly understand your business and project requirements, and will come brimming with new ideas.





6. LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Everyone wants value for money, but basing a decision on price alone has backfired on all of us at one time or another. You might not need the Rolex of software, but the knock-off version could be so problematic or become redundant so quickly that it's a complete waste of money. Most companies want something in between - quality at a reasonable price.



Low-quality tech solution could be so problematic or become redundant so quickly that it's a complete waste of money.

You'll know what your budget is, so you can pretty quickly eliminate those wildly outside of your price range. But bear in mind that **if the majority of the quotes are significantly higher than expected, it might be worth rethinking either the scope of your plans or your budget.**

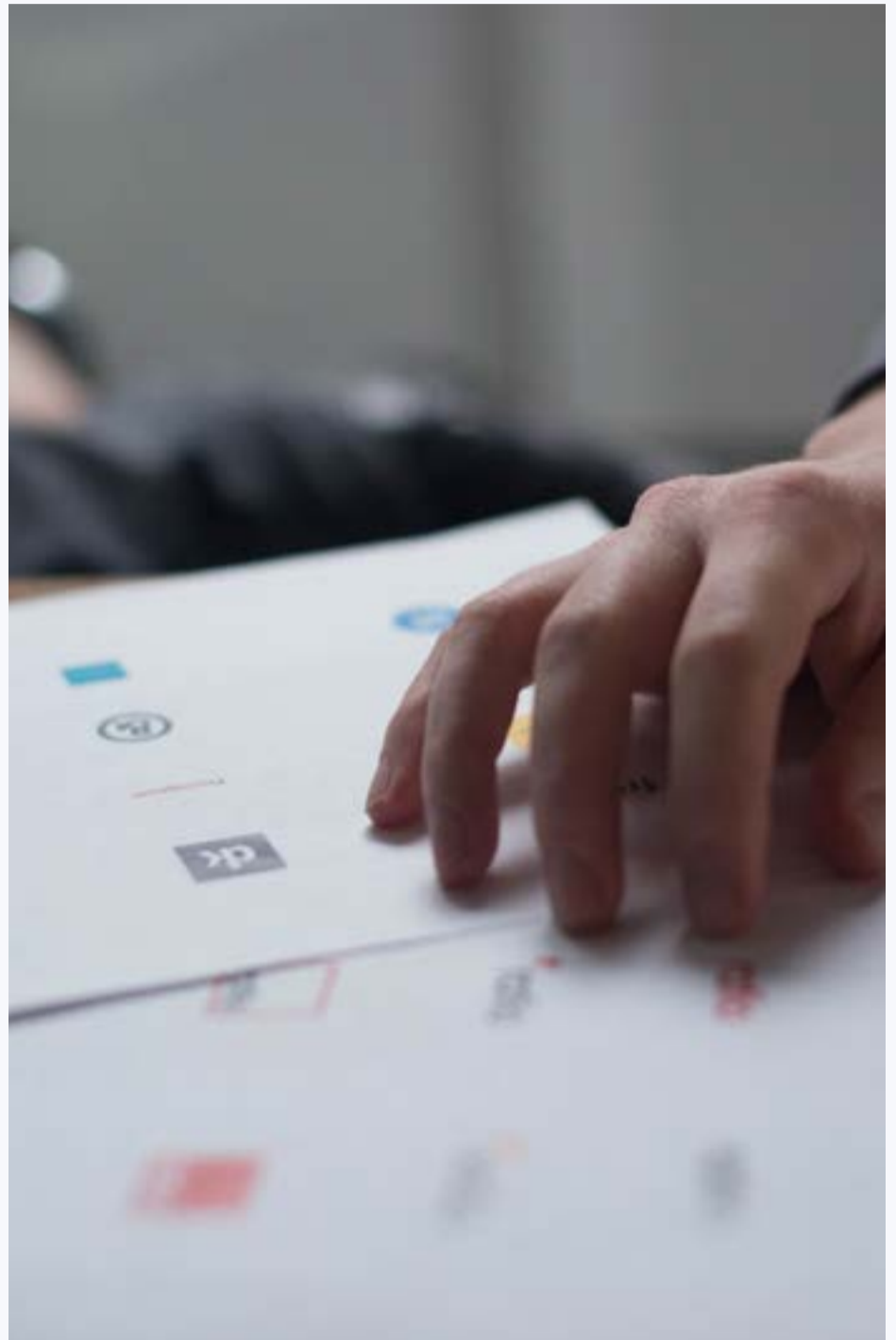
On the other hand, **if one company is significantly cheaper than the rest, it's worth looking more closely to try to determine why.** Read the T&Cs in their bid to see if they are offering services at the level you need, and take a look at their experience. It could be that the more experienced firms factored in elements you - and the inexperienced bidder - hadn't realised you would need.

7. ASSESS THEIR EXPERTISE

In their bid, your potential tech partner should be able to provide some solid examples of similar **projects** they've worked on. They might also have specialists on their team devoted to the specific technology or platform you need the project built in.

In some cases, they might even have special certifications in those areas, which can be an indication that the company is particularly adept at the skills you need.

TIP: However, do take certificates with a pinch of salt as some can be gained with just a couple of hours of training. Real-world experience is always more important.



8. DO THEY KNOW YOUR INDUSTRY?

Your potential tech partner might not know you or your company personally, but it can make a huge difference if they know your **industry**. When **they understand your business and who your competitors are**, they will be well placed to help you stand out among the competition.



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9. EXAMINE THE SUPPORT PLAN

It's something few people think of when looking for a tech partner but is absolutely essential - **what plans have been built into the bid to provide product support after delivery?**



You will need some level of ongoing support, at least for months, if not for years.

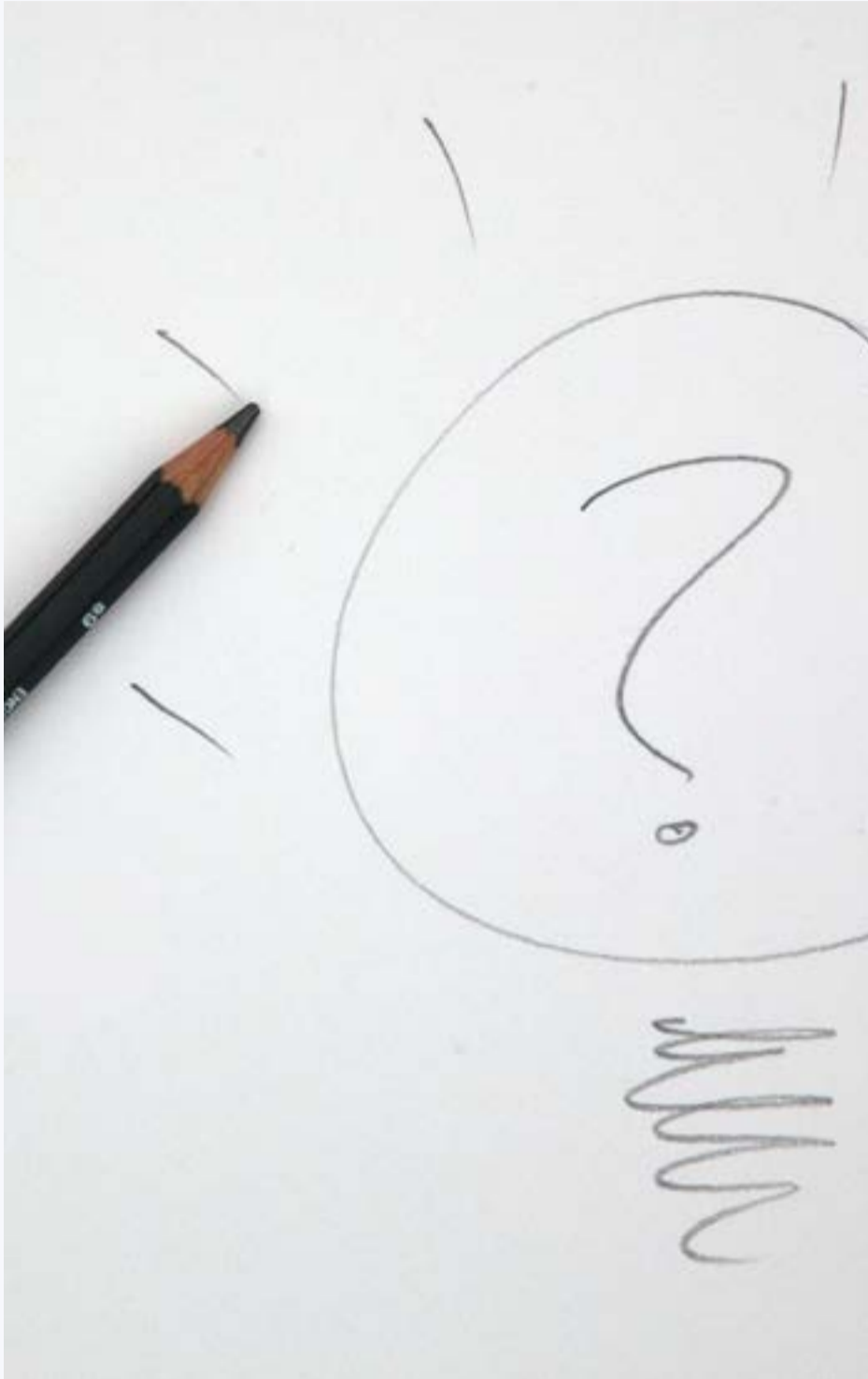
It is almost inevitable that you will need some level of ongoing support, at least for months, if not years, and if they plan to just hand over the final product and vanish, you could soon end up with a tool that is virtually useless.

They should provide this information in their pitch. If they don't, it should sound alarm bells.

You'll need some kind of ongoing support option, and if your product is expected to be in use for longer than the initial support plan, a model to explain how and when you can access support afterwards.

TIP: The unfortunate reality in the tech world is that a lot of companies talk the talk in the early days, then deliver a product, take the money and wash their hands of it. If there are any problems with it or aspects you don't understand, you'll be left with a poor-quality or completely unusable product or tool.

What's more, in many cases, **you'll want the product to adapt to your needs over time**, and the original provider is usually the one best-placed to do this - if the product was well-made in the first place, of course. If you no longer have a relationship with them - or if the company no longer exists - then you're back to square one trying to find a new tech partner.



10. WHAT'S THE PROCESS?

You are typically looking for a tech partner because you need the expertise they have but you lack. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't understand the **process**.

TIP: If the company can't explain to you, in simple terms, how they work and how the project will progress - in clear and jargon-free language - then you might want to look elsewhere.

Of course, **there will be areas you will not understand nor need to be involved in**. You don't need to learn coding or complicated technologies, but you should be able to understand the basic process and the key steps to build the product or tool.

Ultimately, you want someone who will work with you to achieve your goals - and that means bringing you along for the journey.



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11. HAVE A CHAT

Ask to speak with the people who will be your day-to-day account manager and potential tech leads on the project to find out if they speak your language - literally. The world of tech is highly diverse, with specialists from across the globe.



Find out if they speak your language.

While this allows for a vast pool of talent, it brings with it language barriers that can cause some quite serious problems. It can be enormously helpful if **the person who will be managing your project is fluent in the same language as you.**



12. HOW DO THEY OPERATE?

Consider your potential tech partner's company culture and how it aligns with yours. This could cover a lot of areas, but hopefully **the bid, the reviews and testimonials, plus your initial conversations**, will give you a feel for this.

One area to consider is communication frequency - do you prefer regular updates and to be consulted throughout the process, or just want them to just get on with it and only check in occasionally? **Does your company require frequent face-to-face briefings** to update large teams on the project, or **do you prefer remote video or audio calls** with only a few key players?

Another area that can shed some light is a sneak peek into your potential tech partner's staff satisfaction levels. This can be trickier to determine, but **a LinkedIn check and some Google searches for staff reviews** might shed some light here.

Happy staff almost always make for better outcomes and a more enjoyable process along the way. And if the company has a high turnover of employees, **it could also mean it will have problems meeting deadlines or even completing your project** to the level you expect.

Other areas you might want to consider, particularly for bigger projects, are if your potential tech partner has shared **values** and understands your brand's vision, which **you might find in their annual reports or simply through conversations** during the bidding process.



13. LOOK FOR A TRIAL PERIOD

A professional company will not try to lock you into a long-term contract before the collaboration starts. Instead, **they will typically offer you a price for the first few weeks and/or the first month** of collaboration that could lead to an early result, such as tech analysis or UX/UI design.



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After this, you would have an idea of whether this tech partner is right for you, and you can then commit to the long-term project.

You'll get a feeling for how responsive this tech partner is, how they collaborate, whether they really understand your goals, etc.

TIP: For major projects, if someone tries to lock you into a long-term contract without a trial period, then think twice before committing.

14. THE FINAL DECISION

It could be that none of your potential tech partners ticks every box above, in which case, you'll need to think about the ones most important to your company.

And bear in mind that your tech partner will be just that - a partner. **Tech projects are rarely design and go**, so you need a partner you can trust, who will make the process enjoyable and will give you a high-quality, professional product that stands the test of time.



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