



Choosing a software partner

The questions to ask any vendor before you sign

Every builder sounds convincing in a sales conversation. These questions are how you look behind the pitch. A good partner answers all of them without hesitation, and hesitation on the basics is an answer too.

Who actually does the work

- ☐ Will the people in the sales conversation also build the product?
- ☐ Can you meet the developers who will work on it before you sign?
- ☐ Is any part of the work subcontracted, and to whom?
- ☐ Who is your day-to-day contact once the project is running?

Ownership of code and data

- ☐ Do you own the source code, and does the contract say so in plain words?
- ☐ Can you export your data at any time, in a format another system can read?
- ☐ Are the domain, hosting and third-party accounts registered in your name?
- ☐ Are any licence costs hidden inside the monthly fee?

What handover includes

- ☐ What exactly do you receive: source code, documentation, credentials, deployment instructions?
- ☐ Could another developer take over from the handover alone, without calling them?
- ☐ Is the handover described and priced in the contract, or a favour to negotiate later?

After launch

- ☐ What does support cover exactly, and what counts as a billable extra?
- ☐ How are changes and new features priced: fixed quote, hourly rate, bundle?
- ☐ How quickly are security updates applied, and who watches for them?
- ☐ Which response times are guaranteed on paper, not promised verbally?

If the partner disappears

- ☐ What happens if the company stops, is sold or drops this product line?
- ☐ Can you reach the code without their cooperation (your own repository, escrow)?
- ☐ Could another party continue the work without rebuilding from scratch?
- ☐ What is the exit arrangement: notice period, final handover, cost?

No vendor scores perfectly on every question. What matters is whether they answer directly, and whether the answers end up in writing.