A human approach to application development.

Let go of that programmer stereotype: introverted, oblivious to budget, and hell-bent on using all the latest gadgets. At J Street, we're fully plugged in to the human dynamics behind creating successful partnerships and phenomenal solutions. You won't find anyone that's better at listening carefully, anticipating issues, and avoiding pitfalls.

How to Choose the Right Development Team

The whole process of finding a developer can be paralyzing. How do you even start? Search Google? For what? Software developer; application developer; web developer; database developer? That'll net you a huge list for sure, but then what? How do you choose the right developer? The whole prospect can feel like a crapshoot; one made all the more perilous when you consider that giant stack of chips riding on your choice.

At J Street Technology, we've been working with clients for over 20 years. In that time, we've developed some recommendations on the topic. We hope you find our checklist useful.

Any developer you hire should have:

✓ The technical chops to build what you need

Let's say you need a web application. If so, hire a developer with solid experience building web applications; not one who'd be shifting gears to accommodate your job. Specific technical expertise may seem expensive up front, but it's likely to pay off in many ways later in the project.

✓ Plenty of business savvy

Hiring a developer with experience in your industry is definitely a plus, but not a requirement. A good developer is a quick study who's well versed in exploring how any business operates and why it operates that way. The goal of all this analysis is not to change the way you work; it's to create a superbly designed, holistic solution that capitalizes on every possible opportunity to support and streamline your business.

✔ Stellar communication skills

Sadly, not all geeks are created equal. If you find a developer who's driven to hide in an office and hammer out code within moments of meeting you, keep looking. A good developer collaborates willingly, listens intently, and communicates effectively – through conversation, writing, graphics, hands-on demonstrations, etc.

✔ A respectably long list of references

Always ask for them and always call them. Again, it's not critical that the contacts be from your industry. (See the bit about business savvy above.) What is important, though, is comparing oranges to oranges. That said, a good developer will provide not only the client name, but the name of the project (so you can refer to it specifically in your call), the type of project (web app, desktop app, etc.), and a list of the technologies used.

✔ An hourly fee structure

While the notion of paying a set price can be alluring, the truth is that fixed bids can breed adversarial relationships. Think about it: You want the most robust, elegant solution you can possibly get; the fixed bid developer wants to produce something you'll sign off on as quickly as possible to maximize their profit. Your goals are at odds from the get-go, and the relationship only gets more strained from there. (Read more.)

On the other hand, an experienced developer who works by the hour probably packs several times the programming punch into every working moment, ultimately saving you both time and money. And because both your needs are fairly met throughout the project, you and the developer will more likely end up in a long-term relationship. It's a win/win.

✔ The wherewithal to be an effective partner

Speaking of relationships, it's worth considering your expectations for this one. For example, do you rely on face time to build rapport with a colleague? If so, explore whether you and/or any developer you're considering have the ability to meet in-person (Are you both willing to travel? Do you have offices or ready access to another acceptable meeting site?) If not, is teleconferencing an option? Continuity is key in a partnership, too. Hiring an overextended developer who will squeeze your job into his or her schedule is a mistake, no matter how good that developer may be. So is hiring a one who has a "day job" or whose business is in danger of folding.

The safest bet – especially if you're looking for someone to build and maintain a business-critical application – is to find a development shop where a team of people share knowledge about and responsibility for your project. That way you and your business aren't left in a lurch when one person becomes unavailable for whatever reason. Now let's say you've found more than one developer who meets all of these criteria. What next? First you celebrate, of course! Then listen to your gut, and make your choice. Why not? At this point the odds are definitely in your favor.

Contact the J Street Team Today to Schedule a Free Consultation

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