MOSS ROCK
SOLUTIONS

Successful Custom Software Project:

12 Questions to Get the Software Integrations You Want and Need

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Many companies struggle with efficiency because their custom software is not integrated. Have you ever been frustrated because your accounting division uses one type of software and human resources another? You feel like there has to be a better way for these departments to stay on the same page and be able to complete tasks efficiently.

You have many choices for packaged software, so why bother with custom software? The purpose of packaged software is to work for the widest and broadest spread of businesses. It does a good job for everyone and a great job for few.

You are unique, and software specifically built for you and tailored to your needs can take you to the next level.

Sure, custom software may be more expensive up front, but it can streamline your business long term. You can increase profits by being more efficient. Plus, you can cut down on team member frustration. Increased morale will also increase productivity.

A Proven Process to Create Custom Software to Fit Your Needs

Any custom software developer should be 100% focused on you. That's the whole point of custom software!

Here are 12 questions every custom software developer should ask before they create custom software to meet your needs:

1 What does your business do? What's the big picture?

We need to understand what your business does and what your goals are. By understanding your business and how it operates, we can better understand your needs. We also would like to know about your growth plans. A major benefit of custom software is that it can adapt and grow with you!

2 What challenges do you face? What are the pain points in your current processes?

Brainstorm your current challenges and frustrations. If there are points in your current processes that are frustrating and don't work well, let us know. We can come up with a solution and build it into your software.

3 Why are you considering a custom software option? Have you tried other canned software services that didn't fit the way you work or meet your specific needs?

By understanding your past software experiences, we can develop the best solution for today. There may be some parts of the software that were once helpful and others never quite met your needs.

We also want to hear your hopes and dreams for software integrations. How would you like different departments to be able to share information and communicate with one another?

4 Why did the other services not fit the way you work?

Companies function in different ways. Hearing about how the solutions you tried in the past didn't work helps us see gaps we can fill. During this part of the process, we work like detectives. What clues were left behind from past software frustrations? What can we do to build a custom solution that solves for those issues?

5 Can you envision what a successful solution would look like? How should it work? What should it do?

I'm sure you have sat there dreaming about a solution to your software problems. What have you dreamed up? Please share your vision and ideas with us. Gather feedback from multiple employees across various departments. Then, let us know what you want your software to do.

6 Or do you have no idea what a successful solution looks like, but you believe one must exist or can be created?

If all you know is that whatever you have right now isn't working, that's ok. We can draw on your experience and ask questions to help discover a successful solution together.

7 What things are you unable to do in your current processes?

To answer this question, create a spreadsheet. In column 1, list your most frustrating tasks. In column 2, briefly describe what it would take for that task to not be frustrating. Don't worry about the details.

Take this opportunity to brainstorm with a colleague or two. Start by jotting down your ideas on your own.

> ***"Compared to coming up with ideas as individuals, group brainstorming actually produces fewer ideas—and the ideas tend to be of lower quality. ... A promising idea early in a brainstorm tends to shape the rest of the session as people gradually fall in line."***
>
> ***— Ben Taylor, Work Culture blog***

Once you've gotten your ideas down, then come together to discuss them.

8 How do your pain points rank?

Take the time to organize your pain points from most frustrating to least. There is no need to spend too much time on this. Just take 15-20 minutes to rank as many as possible.

9 How would your life and your team's lives be better if you could fix your top pain points?

Now you get to dream a little. If those top pain points could go away, how much better would it be? Think of your frustrations floating away and having the ability to get more done to improve and grow your business.

10 How much time would fixing your pain points save?

Can you estimate how much time this would save your team in a day? A week? A month? A year? Start small, then do the math to see how much time each year is being wasted (and you could get back). Take the time wasted in a week and multiply it by 52.

11 Based on the number of hours this could save you, looking at costs, wages, and resource usage, what would that represent in dollars saved by your company?

Get out your calculator and do the math.

Take the number from the previous question (in hours) and multiply it by the average salary (in hours) of your team. Now you can see how much money is being wasted, too.

How much money can your company save with a good custom software solution?

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If you solved these problems and saved this much money, what new opportunities could you pursue?

Here is another chance to dream. Think of what you would do with all that time and money. Could you develop new products? Open a new location? Take your first vacation in five years?

Getting to know you and your company helps us build a vision for your custom software. By answering these questions, you help us to create something that will bring your company to the next level and you will save time, money, and frustration.

Imagine working with custom software that allows your departments to communicate with each other. Through increased efficiency, your company will grow and your software will grow with you.

Think about what this could mean for your company.

Terms of Beginning Engagement

Thoughts of all this saved time and money might get you excited. You start dreaming about all you can do for your company and are ready to dive right in. However, don't be hasty. You want to protect your business. If you don't, you could end up with a substandard product that you still have to pay for. Even worse, you could end up with legal troubles. Don't let this happen to you.

Here are a few more tips to consider before starting your project:

1. **Make sure you enter into a Non-Disclosure Agreement.** An "NDA" provides legal protection for you and your developer from unauthorized disclosure of proprietary information and processes or sensitive data. Your developer will learn much about your business and have access to very sensitive information. It's best to protect both of you.

2. **Ask for copies of any contracts the custom software developer requires.** Be sure to read any agreement thoroughly. A well-written contract will spell out both parties' legal duties, rights, and obligations. This process can help define expectations at the beginning of the relationship, especially regarding communication. Although a lawyer is not needed to draft the agreement, it may be good to seek legal advice before entering into a contract.

3. **Be sure that the contract contains all of these components:**

- **Project Steps** - Organize the agreement into steps of phases of the project. It should explain the finished product of each stage and the amount to be paid upon completion. Being thorough helps both parties understand expectations. It also decreases the risk of a final unsatisfactory product at the end by providing bail-out points.
- **Software Specifications** - This should act as a guide to precisely what will be created. Being clear from the beginning will lessen the chance of misunderstandings.
- **Payment Arrangements** - The contract should clarify payment practices. Will the cost be based on time and materials or a fixed price?
- **Copyright Ownership** - This can be an honest debate. Who owns the intellectual property rights of the software? Most of the time, the developer owns the copyright since they created the software. The client only has a license to use the software in this instance. However, there are ways for the client to own the copyright if this is important to them. Be sure to discuss this topic adequately. A mutual agreement is critical before signing the contract.
- **Background Technology Ownership** - If the client owns the intellectual property rights of the software, background technology ownership must be addressed. This term refers to all the materials, development tools, and data developers used that end up in the final product. When the client has copyright ownership, they also own the background technology. Suppose the developer does not

wish this to occur. Then, they must include a provision in the software development agreement that states the developer retains ownership of all background technology. In this case, the developer needs to grant a license to use the background technology to the client.

- **Software Warranty** - It's good to include a software warranty provision in the contract. A software warranty provision is a promise from the developer that the end product will function as promised for a specific amount of time. If the software doesn't perform as stated, the developer will fix it. These provisions can vary but generally specify a timeframe between 90 days to a year.
- **Title Warranty** - This type of warranty is a promise from the developer that the client will receive a good title to the software.
- **Noninfringement Warranty** - This specifies that there is no infringement of patents, trade secrets, copyright, or intellectual property rights in the software.
- **Dispute Resolution** - No one wants to go to court to settle a dispute. It's best to outline ways to resolve disputes outside of court. There are two methods to choose from in dispute resolution. Arbitration brings in a third party to decide the issue. They look at the merits of the case and make a decision. If the parties agree to binding arbitration, they are waiving the right for the court to enforce the contract. Mediation is less formal and more affordable. This process brings in a third party to sit down with both parties to help them resolve the dispute. They provide objective views to help guide the two parties through talking out the issue.

The Value of Custom Software

We can build you a fantastic product by getting to know your company, your current frustrations, and your hopes for custom software. Your employees will be less frustrated and have more time to focus on their work. You gain more time and money to help your company grow and blossom.

By taking the time to ask the right questions and draft a complete contract, you will protect yourself and ensure that you receive the promised product. When working with the right software development company, this should be a simple process that delivers results for you.

It's time to get excited about the possibilities. Instead of having countless applications and programs to complete daily tasks, think about having one. Good custom software can grow with your company and increase efficiency. You are unique. Invest in custom software that helps your company shine.

Dream about how your custom software might work and and let us work with you to make it a reality.

Click here to schedule a free consultation with our team.