10 Essential Questions to Ask When Assessing Your Software Systems and Vendors

These 10 questions can quickly determine the state of your software systems and vendors. If you answer "No" to 6 or more, you're at a critical crossroads. It may be time to look at a modern software solution from a reliable and trusted vendor to provide accurate, real time information to increase customer satisfaction, sales and profit.

Is your software:

1. Based on modern unified commerce technology?
2. Meeting your business needs?
3. Keeping pace with today's rapidly changing retail environment?
4. Providing real-time information across the enterprise?
5. Backed by a vendor plan regarding future updates and support?

Has your software vendor:

6. Ownership remained consistent with a company you know and trust?
7. Executive leadership, management and staff remained stable?
8. Giving you the attention you deserve?
9. Kept all of its promises to fix problems or add new functions?
10. Continued to have 100% support come from North America?

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Integrating people, process and IT

Is your software:

1 Based on modern unified commerce technology?

With unified commerce, there's one version of the truth. Online, instore, kiosk, mobile and catalog are all connected in real time. While there may be several channels, there's one software platform connecting them all. Channels shouldn't be separate but linked together through unified commerce technology to consolidate key elements historically housed on multiple systems.

2 Meeting your business needs?

Software represents a significant financial investment. You need to make sure you're seeing results. Investing in functionally rich, configurable and integrated software increases sales from all channels, improves efficiencies and produces tangible results that boost the bottom line. Your software should support all mission-critical processes.

3 Keeping pace with today's rapidly changing retail environment?

The main challenge with operating in today's retail environment is keeping up with customer demands and expectations. Your software solutions should make it effortless to give customers exactly what they're looking for. Aside from having the basics, your software needs to support more advanced functions around the customer engagement including pricing, product features, delivery options and product availability.

4 Providing real-time information across the enterprise?

Access to the most up-to-date information is essential to making better business decisions. Enterprise software must provide real-time visibility of data and statistics about your entire supply chain, regardless of the channel. Data that was once siloed must now seamlessly integrate to support the customer shopping experience. Information must be able to flow freely across the organization.

5 Backed by a vendor plan regarding future updates and support?

The online revolution currently impacting the retail landscape means the demands of tomorrow will be vastly different from today. To stay ahead of the competition, your software must meet the requirements of the present and future. Your vendor should have a well-defined roadmap for the next three to five years. This will give you a good idea of whether your software is in line with your future needs.

Has your software vendor:

6   Ownership remained consistent with a company you know and trust?

With so many mergers and acquisitions taking place in the industry, many software companies have gone through significant ownership change. As retailers commit to supporting and funding priority initiatives, you need to collaborate with the vendor to see projects through successfully. This becomes challenging when companies are in a state of flux.

7   Executive leadership, management and staff remained stable?

When there is change in leadership, new management and account reps don't understand your business model, and there is no relationship history. The "I don't know anyone at the new company" syndrome increases your frustration. Working with a solid company with the same ownership has its benefits, versus one that is in transition.

8   Giving you the attention you deserve?

Do you ever feel the software provider is more interested in selling software to new customers instead of servicing and taking care of existing customers? As companies are challenged to increase business and meet short term goals, existing and loyal customers can be overlooked. Successful companies that identify these high-value customers and continue building relationships will succeed in the long run.

9   Kept all of its promises to fix problems or add new functions?

Top-notch maintenance and support services are non-negotiables – not extra perks. Many retailers are constrained by inflexible and outdated software and you must evaluate if the software vendor has the capabilities and technology available to support the new retail model. The decision will need to be made whether to continue maintaining legacy software or make the strategic decision to acquire software designed to achieve unified commerce.

10   Continued to have 100% support come from North America?

We've all been frustrated by dealing with undertrained help desks that don't understand the product or idiosyncrasies of the business environment. Often the help desk is more interested in closing the service ticket than actually solving the problem. If support and product development are in different time zones or countries, resolving issues and receiving prompt resolution may take days versus hours.