

R&D Outsourcing

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Outsourcing: more than a partnership

Experts from leading IT companies talk about how to find a permanent partner and build long-term and lasting relationships.

The IT services outsourcing market has a rich and interesting history, both in the world in general and in Russia in particular. IT partners are not just pay-receive providers of products and services. There are such people, of course, but they are in the minority. The main part of outsourcers builds long-term relationships with their customers, grows, develops, transforms along with them. It happens that entire teams of specialists move from an outsourcer to a customer on a permanent or temporary basis (outstaffing). Although the latter is officially banned in Russia, knowing certain nuances of the legislation, it can be used without violating anything. The other side of the coin - insourcing - also feels good. If a business, for one reason or another, decides to transfer a certain set of tasks and projects to an external contractor, then no one bothers him in the same situation to take one or several directions for himself, especially if he managed to grow up the appropriate professionals in his company or find such specialists in the market.

Oleg Bunin ("SIGMA")

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In most industries, including housing and communal services and energy, I consider insourcing to be excessive: firstly, as I said above, this is not a very useful phenomenon for the development of the market of the first, and secondly, there are IT companies in Russia with sufficient industry expertise and resources, including catalogs of our own solutions for the automation of individual industries.

In the last issue of IT Manager, we have already touched upon the topic of outsourcing and insourcing in the post-pandemic era. Today I would like to continue this topic, focusing on the aspects of finding a permanent partner and building long-term and lasting relationships, as well as other equally important points.

We help the state

I would like to start with such an important state-level topic as import substitution in IT. The international situation is by no means improving, but rather the opposite. More and more Russian enterprises and organizations are subject to international sanctions. Respectively. Western IT vendors refuse to work with domestic clients. We need an alternative in the form of Russian products, but they are not always available. Or what is available is an order of magnitude lower in quality, functionality and level of support. According to the experts interviewed by us, in this case, partnership with outsourcing companies could also help. "If you can't find a good product, you can create it. But if an enterprise plans to do it on its own, in most cases such projects are doomed to failure. The created product faces the classic problems of custom products: it is expensive to maintain, long and expensive to develop. The more correct way is to find an IT partner to create such a product. Then the company gains access to a wider range of best practices that allow for a better quality and market-oriented solution. Taking into account, when creating a product (including an import-substituting one), not only his own needs, but also market needs, the customer receives a replicable solution, with a lower cost of support and additional functionality, on the sale of which he can earn extra money. This

is how the majority of good domestic IT products appeared, which not only are not inferior to foreign ones, but also surpass them in a number of characteristics, "comments Oleg Bunin, Technical Director of SIGMA.

Evgeny Svidersky (MTS)

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Cloud providers, responding to the current needs of customers, open up the direction of design solutions. The new direction helps businesses and government agencies with a cloud strategy and complex IT projects, focusing in their projects on long-term cooperation with the client.

In turn, Sergey Klyuev, director of sales for the Manufacturing industry at Atos IT Solutions and Services, looks at this problem from a different angle. "The outsourcing company in its specificity is a kind of crossroads where the needs of enterprises meet, as well as the methods and products that satisfy these needs. Scaling tailored to the needs of a specific customer, but in demand solutions is one of the possible options for contributing to import substitution, "he says.

Industry experience

It is also interesting to analyze the industry preferences of IT outsourcing clients. "In almost any industry, the availability of industry-specific competencies, as well as completed reference projects, is a big plus for an outsourcer," says Evgeny Mineev, executive director of Reksoft. - This does not apply only to the subject area, many industries have their own specifics for working with project documentation, regulatory requirements, legislation, etc. An outsourcer who does not understand the nuances of the specifics of organizing project activities in a particular industry can make quite serious mistakes on

the first stages of projects and requires special attention from the customer's team during this period.
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Evgeny Mineev (Reksoft)

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In general, there is another change in the technological order, which leads to the launch of new large-scale IT programs. On the one hand, this opens up opportunities for growth, but on the other hand, it overheats the labor market, where the ability to work remotely has shifted competition for IT resources to the regions.

Andrey Fitisov, director of Opentask (Open Service Technologies), distinguishes three features at once. "Firstly, companies are increasingly striving to move from the all-inclusive service format, based on a monthly fee, to such service conditions under which only actually rendered services and work performed are paid for. This leads to the fact that outsourcing companies are forced to optimize their resources, especially in the regions - to abandon full-time employees, branches, and reduce logistics costs. This is possible only when the outsourcing company can reach the direct contractor in the regions, reducing the chain of intermediaries. Today, technology allows you to do this, also because a smartphone is a full-fledged tool not only for communication and recreation, but also for work. With its help, you can manage a remote worker, monitor him, evaluate the quality of his work. Secondly, companies, especially small ones, which are not ready to invest heavily in IT, expect that the outsourcing company will be able to automate the internal processes of the company itself within the framework of the contract. For example, organizes approvals between different departments of the customer before performing work. Or, say, it will provide a convenient personal account for its employees to work within the outsourcer's platform. And the provider must be able to do this.

Andrey Fitisov ("Open Service Technologies")

Andrey Fitisov ("Open Service Technologies")

An outsourcing contract is a long-term project for both parties, consisting of several stages, from

identifying requirements and candidates to organizing the transition to service. Therefore, maximum study and trust is essential here. From my own experience and feedback from colleagues, I can say that the pandemic, with its limited opportunities for personal contact, negatively affected the ability to quickly establish such maximum trusting relationships.

And the third point is the requirement for quick access to any information related to the service provided. For example, in our case, the customer wants to see the number of completed orders for his regional divisions or statistics of breakdowns of various equipment. This analytics allows him to optimize costs, "explains the expert. Sergei Klyuev (Atos) agrees that there are special industry requirements for IT outsourcing. "There are even industry standards that describe the requirements for organizing an IT infrastructure. Many enterprises, when choosing an outsourcer, conduct an audit of both the organization and the service solution for compliance with industrial requirements," he concludes. A specific example related to the banking industry is given by Evgeny Svidersky, director of project solutions for cloud business at MTS. "If we consider the outsourcing of activities related to IT infrastructure, more and more customers are outsourcing information security tasks. It should be borne in mind that there are industry standards, regulatory requirements that impose restrictions on infrastructure management processes, especially in terms of information security. As an illustrative example, the following block on information security can be cited: the need to comply with PCI DSS, FZ-152, compliance with the requirements of Bank of Russia Regulation No. 382-P / 719-P, GIS security (FSTEC order No. 17), security of KII facilities (187 -FZ) ".

Sergey Zinkevich ("CROC Cloud Services")

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Outsourcing must be central to digital transformation. Only very large companies can implement such a large-scale project using only internal resources. But sometimes it is more useful for them, at least, to turn to third-party consultants, so that their eyes are not "blurred". In general, outsourcing allows shifting many tasks of informatization onto the shoulders of one or several contractors, and concentrating all efforts on the company's development strategy.

Choosing "our"

It's good when the business has already found an outsourcing partner who perfectly understands the industry specifics, sees the current and strategic tasks, as well as ways to solve them, as well as his own specialists, has experience in implementing the most complex and large-scale projects. But how to understand that it is "your" partner, that you can work with him for more than one year, or even more than one decade? "It's simple: first, you need to change your approach, for long-term relationships you need to let know that these relationships are long-term," says Oleg Bunin (

"SIGMA"). - This is facilitated at least by the existence of an IT development strategy or a digitalization strategy. In addition, a certain transparency is needed on both sides, so it is important to share information with the outsourcer and not ignore his suggestions. Continuous dialogue, discussion of problems and plans for the development of the customer's business contribute to the strengthening of relations and the development of the outsourcer's competence ". Victoria Bukhar, commercial director of LANIT-Integration (LANIT Group of Companies), is sure that it is necessary to look not for "our own", but for "our" outsourcers, and for this it is necessary to apply a flexible sourcing model. "A properly organized IT control unit, a kind of unified customer service in the IT field, will allow attracting the most qualified service contractors on suitable terms and, if necessary, dynamically redistributing tasks between them, without fear of jeopardizing the performance of business applications and infrastructure," she explains.

Victoria Bukhar (LANIT Group of Companies)

Victoria Bukhar (LANIT Group of Companies)

In 2021, investing in IT is as natural as paying to rent an office: IT has become a key part of the business. With regard to IT outsourcing, the market is quite conservative - despite serious changes in the economy under the influence of the pandemic, there are no prerequisites for a significant revision of the sourcing strategy now, since the focus on outsourcing traditionally demonstrates its effectiveness for the tasks of infrastructure maintenance and technical support of typical business applications.

According to Evgeny Svidersky (MTS), the search should be focused not just on an outsourcer, but on a strategic IT partner, that is, a supplier from whom a client could receive a range of digital services and services, taking into account all the individual characteristics of the business. "As a rule, large companies are not ready to be satisfied with standard solutions and have additional requirements for products, so suppliers have to develop individual IT solutions" to order ". At the same time, many customers cannot afford a staff of qualified IT experts who can help formulate requirements for cloud services, conduct migration and provide follow-up support. Thus, the next stage in the development of IT outsourcing is the approach when the supplier turns into a customer's partner who does not just provide a finished product or function, but takes over the responsibilities of the customer's internal IT department: formulates tasks, implements, maintains and supports. And he even develops entire strategies, for example, cloud ones, "the expert says.

Sergey Klyuev ("Atos IT Solutions and Services")

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For large companies, outsourcing often becomes a necessity: the development of complex IT products and systems leads to the fact that it becomes more and more difficult to create, implement and maintain an IT solution with the help of one enterprise; specialists are required who possess methodologies and tools. Compromise, hidden outsourcing, creation of subsidiaries, the main business of which is the development and support of IT of the parent company of the holding.

According to Dmitry Shilov, Director of the Competence Center for Service and Outsourcing at Technoserv, the problem of finding "your" partner is no longer so urgent. Russia has a rather mature market for outsourcing IT services, so both suppliers and customers know what to expect from each other, especially when it comes to companies that have been operating on the market for many years. "For several years now, service providers have had a clearly formalized product offer in our country. Each segment has its own leaders who provide service with the required quality. The maturity of potential customers is also very high. Therefore, customer confidence in service providers is not a cornerstone, he says. - Market participants generally understand what to expect from each other and how to reconcile controversial issues if necessary. Certain difficulties can arise when the customer for the first time faces the need to work out an outsourcing contract. Here, the general recommendation would be to conduct a survey of the market of providers of required services and work out the issue with the leaders in their segment. " Sergey Zinkevich, director of business development at CROC Cloud Services, advises focusing on the client's portfolio, existing customer references (preferably from the same industry), reviews. Also, according to him, it is important to familiarize yourself with the SLA and add the necessary points to it, since the company will be guided by this document along with the service contract throughout the entire period of work. In addition, according to the expert, close attention should be paid to the customer focus of the service provider and its proactivity. "When choosing" my "partner, I recommend paying attention to experience, the presence of a diversified portfolio of projects (cross-industry and cross-technological experience can seriously enrich pr

(See the project chart). The general culture of production is also important (this becomes clear on the very first small projects). It is necessary to regularly communicate with a partner with an exchange of expectations and feedback, "adds Evgeny Mineev to Reksoft.

Dmitry Shilov (Technoserv)

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Cloud services are service providers 'response to customers' needs to consume IT services on demand. This is a natural development of outsourcing companies specializing in IT infrastructure maintenance and software development. Most of these vendors have cloud services in their product portfolio.

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