TOP TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK REFERENCES WHEN BUYING SOFTWARE

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Finding the right software for your business can seem a daunting task. How do you know which solution is the best fit for your company? How do you know which will be the easiest to get up and running and which has extra costs that will only become apparent after installation? If only there were some group of people you could talk to who have had experience with the software.

Luckily, such a group exists. Ask the software company you are considering for the contact information of some of their current customers. By contacting these users, you can easily have your questions answered by people whose experiences will most likely have been fairly similar to yours.

When asking a prospective software provider for references, stipulate that they should be as similar to your company as possible. You'll want to speak to companies of comparable size with similar business requirements, preferably in your industry and who have worked with the software for at least a year. Ideally, the references you receive will also be located near your company so you can understand the level of customer service offered to your region.

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Once you're in touch with the references, it's time to ply them with the important questions that will give you the key points you need to make an informed decision. But which questions should you ask? To help you out, we've put together the top questions to ask a reference once you've got their ear:

1. What was the true cost of the software? Did installation come in over or under budget? How much is the upkeep and maintenance of the software?
2. What's the quality of the support you receive from the vendor? Is support handled by the vendor themselves or through a third party consulting or tech firm? How often have you contacted the vendor for support? How long did it take for you to get the support you needed?
3. Have you experienced any bugs or problems with the software? How often are updates provided and how are they installed?
4. How smoothly did implementation of the solution go? How long did it take and how helpful was the vendor in getting the software up and running?
5. What system did you use prior to implementing this one? Why did you switch to the current solution?
6. How has the solution cut costs or improved efficiency (or has it)?
7. Which features of the solution are the most/least helpful?
8. What other software did you look at before selecting this one?
9. Does your company receive benefit from the vendor in return for being a reference?
10. What is your relationship with the vendor?

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