The Top 10 things you should consider when selecting an SAP implementation partner

It's no secret that there are a lot of different SAP consulting firms. Between SAP Digital Business Services, the big 4 firms and a wealth of smaller companies, how do you choose the right firm for your needs? Consider the following requirements when you evaluate potential implementation partners.

1. Experienced consulting staff

Look for a company that employs former CTOs, CIOs and operations VPs, with experience in digital transformation and defining business processes. Gartner suggests selecting, “Service providers with heavy investments in both training and asset development, and with points of view regarding the benefits, challenges and suitability of specific solutions to the client requirements, are better able to assist clients in technology enablement.” You should also ensure the company has hands-on implementation experts in both operations and IT, to provide the technical and daily operations expertise that ensure an efficient solution.

2. Access

While large consulting companies showcase seasoned experts on their website, most small and medium sized businesses find themselves relegated to junior, less experienced staff. Ensure you will have regular access to an expert team that will give your project the time and attention required to develop an optimal solution.

3. Industry expertise

Choose a partner who has expertise in your industry or a similar industry; this generally delivers the most efficient solutions. While many of the skills are transferable, there are differences in process automation best practices for an automobile manufacturer versus a consumer packaged goods manufacturer. Gartner suggests SAP consultant expertise should also include:

a. The ability to suggest optimal industry processes and recommend appropriate business asset investments and systems.

b. Expertise in how business knowledge is captured, maintained and integrated within the SAP infrastructure.

c. Innovative ideas and thought leadership. Avoid “order takers.”

4. Business process expertise

Better consulting firms will have established project methodologies that provide a clear vision for every step of your project and post-implementation support. All costs considered, the right IT consulting partner can help your company save 25 – 30% based on profits from operational improvements, increased efficiencies, and heightened market share. Look for a firm with deep expertise that can generate a detailed business strategy, process design and innovative implementation.

5. Change management expertise

Change management expertise is one of the most overlooked parts of an SAP implementation. Whether change stems from new technology, new business processes, M & A, or restructuring, hire a firm with change management expertise. This should include a plan to provide the techniques, best practices and training, so your team is prepared and excited to embrace new technologies and processes. Gartner suggests looking for SAP consulting firms that also:

a. Invest in developing business change management methodologies, training and multi-sourcing service integration (designing a solution that optimizes the integration throughout the entire business infrastructure, inclusive of various vendor technologies).

b. Have the proven ability to deliver a solution that helps companies meet business objectives, while staying on time and within budget.

c. Facilitate internal cross-department agreement on business objectives, standardized processes and program governance.

6. Accelerators and best practices

Experienced partners will have a wealth of proprietary and third-party accelerators, tools and best practices that speed your migration and ensure the most efficient solution. For example, some companies have tools that do a rapid assessment of your system to identify potential issues so they can provide the most accurate quotes and timelines. Choose a firm that can deliver the resources and knowledge about solutions that will be most effective for your environment and needs.
7. Innovation

A good consulting team should focus on creating innovative processes and procedures that fit your business, rather than trying to fit your business into their mold. Look for companies with creative solutions that drive value, while still preserving what makes your company unique and valuable.

8. Client references

This is standard for hiring any company, but when hiring a firm to update your business processes, ask deeper questions than the standard on time, on budget and quality of work inquiries. Ask:

a. “How well did the consulting firm listen and did they provide innovative solutions to your challenges?”

b. “What processes or expenses were streamlined as a result of the solution?”

c. “What are the results from the digital transformation and is there a path for future growth?”

d. “Do you feel the firm acted as your partner and was invested in your success?”

9. Technology expertise

Any SAP partner being considered should have deep expertise in SAP; confirm this by looking for a firm with an SAP certification or partnership. In addition to SAP expertise, look for a firm that is also knowledgeable about digital technologies, cloud, machine learning and IoT. Select a company that can integrate these various technologies seamlessly and securely, as well as incorporate third-party tools and modules that fit your needs and reduce your implementation timeline.

10. Value

More than just price, consider the value of the services you will receive. Does the firm have a history of implementations that decrease costs, streamline operations and speed production? There are too many digital transformation projects that languish due to digital tools and processes that are not well integrated and do not deliver the desired results. Look for a vendor that delivers real, integrated results that customers use successfully.

---

ThoughtFocus is an SAP Silver Partner that offers full-service strategic and process guidance for digital transformation, technical integration expertise, and support services. For more information on how we drive business value through innovative SAP S/4HANA implementations, please visit www.thoughtfocus.com/sap or call 310-427-7654.

www.thoughtfocus.com  info@thoughtfocus.com