

5 Questions to Ask When Choosing a Health IT Consulting Partner

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About this guide:

When you're evaluating potential partnerships for Healthcare IT resources, it's important to be able to accurately assess the type of service you can expect from a new vendor. Getting the answers to these questions will help you make an informed decision, and ensure you're able to get what you need from your vendor relationship.

1

Does the firm specialize in a certain software vendor or operational area?

The weakness in hiring a highly specialized firm is that other outside help is inevitably needed for projects like legacy support.

Having a consulting company that knows your software inside and out can be a great comfort when you've got a big project. A firm that deals with a single vendor or product may deliver a depth of expertise and product knowledge that rivals others.

The weakness in hiring firms like this becomes apparent when they are asked to work with various other software systems or in an area that is outside their particular expertise. This can occur, for instance, when support for a legacy system is needed after an implementation, or when a large IDN is managing several smaller hospitals that are all using software different from the IDN's primary vendor.

In such cases, a second consulting firm is often needed to fill the gap. Other times, the primary HIT consulting vendor will subcontract the work to be performed on the other system.

At Blue Eagle Consulting, we work on all major healthcare software systems in order to provide consultants that are the best fit for your individual project. That way you won't be stuck dealing with multiple vendors, or having rates inflated by subcontracting. This ensures you'll get a high capacity consultant for a fair rate.

2

How long has the company been in business and are they well referenced?

You need to ensure the firm you're researching is actually capable of completing the job you're hiring them to do.

This question really comes down to reputation. The length of time a company has been in business and the number and size of their referenceable clients says a lot about who they are and the work they are able to deliver to your organization.

The bottom line is that you need to ensure the firm you are researching is truly capable of completing the job you're hiring them to do. Spend a little time getting to know them, identify their strengths and weaknesses as a company, and then make an assessment as to how you would be able to partner with them.

3

Specializing in Healthcare means that a firm can see beyond just the requirement you're trying to fill.

Is the firm focused on Healthcare?

Industry specialization is just as important as vendor/product specialization. It may seem fine to source generic technology skills like report writing from a generic technology consulting shop, but would you really want your rock-star BI consultant to have just come from a data warehouse project at a steel mill or from a large university hospital system?

Specializing in healthcare means that a firm can see beyond just the requirement you're trying to fill. They have a real understanding of the clinical or business problem you're trying to solve. This knowledge allows them to be much more selective in the recruiting process and deliver higher quality consultants than you may find elsewhere.

We've spent more than ten years building a company that delivers high value expertise with a sole focus on healthcare. That narrow scope is what has helped us produce valued results for our clients time and time again.

4

Does the firm staff a bench, or perform an individualized search per requirement?

Firms that don't staff a bench can focus solely on meeting your need, and not just try to fill a gap with their current inventory.

There are those times when you have a project so big that you just need to throw some people at it and experience isn't your top priority. In these cases, consulting companies that keep a bench may work out well for you. They generally staff a few very senior consultants and keep several less experienced junior consultants available to supplement other personnel needs.

In many cases though, you may be looking for a resource with much more specialized knowledge and expertise. Firms that don't staff a bench of full-time consultants can focus solely on meeting your specific need, not just trying to fill a gap with current inventory.

Our 'bench' is an extensive network of proven, senior level healthcare consultants that we've spent years building. Because we don't staff full-time consultants, we can focus on providing you the best individual resource we can find. We won't stick you with lower quality consultants while we hunt for the ace you really need, and we won't train juniors on your dime.

5

A firm that focuses solely on contract engagements delivers the best of the best consultants for your immediate business needs.

Does the firm offer multiple services, like contract, contract to hire, and permanent placement?

A company that offers all of the above can look very attractive on the surface. But professional service firms that attempt to be everything to everyone seldom perform well. In practice, the type of service firms offer has an enormous impact on the type and caliber of consultants they can provide.

The contract to hire firm is good for delivering a large volume of low to moderately skilled individuals. It offers the opportunity to ‘try before you buy’, and is a good way to source future employees. You shouldn’t expect to find many candidates with skills or abilities above those of your current staff. In general, contract to hire firms are helping people looking for jobs, not clients looking to solve problems.

Firms that specialize in permanent placement are able to deliver much more tailored candidates, but again, the assumption is that you’re looking for a future employee. These searches take a long time, and have many complexities with compensation, relocation, non-competes, etc.

If you have a critical long-term position that you need to fill at your organization, this type of search firm may be what you’re looking for. Just don’t expect them to be able to put out your current fires anytime soon.

Lastly, a firm that focuses solely on contract engagements, like Blue Eagle, delivers the best of the best consultants for your immediate business needs. They are the ‘Special Ops Unit’ of the consulting world. These consultants have the premium expertise that allows them to pick and choose their assignments and survive the swings of the independent market.

You won’t find these professionals in a pool of contract to hire candidates, and you’re not likely to sway them to take a permanent position at your organization. But when you have a critical project with an aggressive time line, these consultants are your ‘go-to’ resource to get things running smoothly.

The 5 Questions to Ask When Choosing a Health IT Consulting Partner:

To review, when you're getting ready to engage a Health IT consulting partner some helpful questions to ask are:

- 1. Does your firm specialize with a certain software vendor or operational area?**
- 2. How long have you been in business, and can I speak to a few client references?**
- 3. Is your firm focused only on Healthcare?**
- 4. Do you provide bench consultants, or do more specialized searches for my requirements?**
- 5. Do you do contract to hire, permanent placement, or straight contract resources?**

If you're looking for a new consulting partner, or evaluating your current vendor relationships, we hope that these five questions will help you determine the type of vendor you're looking for, as well as understand the value a partner like Blue Eagle can bring to your organization.

Please don't hesitate to contact us to discuss any of your current or future consulting needs.

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