Should you Partner or Use Internal Resources for your Cloud-Native or Mobile App Project?

Options to Consider when Choosing Internal or Partner Resources

Contents

Introduction

Fishbowl Solutions has been innovating and successfully delivering consulting projects for over 20 years. In that time, we have learned through many scraped elbows and bruised knees what it takes to lay the foundation for success. We have served in all types of consulting roles, including solution architecture, and jump-starting the process, to running the first 3-5 sprints, to completing the full project. We have also seen many failed or significantly delayed projects led by a company's internal IT team. The most common reason for the internal challenges were:

1. Internal teams have not *been there and done that* in terms of laying the foundation for a Continuous Integration / Continuous Delivery (CI/CD), or Agile process.
2. Internal teams are over-burdened with their current projects and the new project ends up as an additional task without sufficient resources.
3. An internal team typically provides general IT support and are not well versed, or have not received formal training, in mobile app, content management, digital assistant (chatbot), or enterprise search design and development. Instead, they focus on a few applications or technologies and do not have the time or skills to efficiently move forward on a new project. Plus, they cannot afford to get behind on their day job.

Nonetheless, many IT Directors still choose to handle new IT projects internally. To understand why, and the tradeoffs that come with doing a project internally versus partnering, consider the following scenario of a company about to build its first mobile app.

? Do you have aggressive goals for a new cloud-native or mobile app and want to have rapid iterations with the highest quality?

Is your IT team overloaded but you need to get an app to market quickly? Would you like a partner "that has been there and done that" to help your IT team develop an app with the right foundation for future success?

Are you looking to partner on the project with another company, but not sure if the partner should handle a portion of the project, handle entirely, or work in parallel with your team?

> *If you answered yes to any of the questions above, this white paper is for you.*

We Need a Mobile App and We Need One Now

Imagine you are an IT Director that has put together a great team of IT professionals to manage your company's existing business systems. One day, you are approached by your company's marketing director with a new request to build an "epic mobile application". She gives you an overview of the purpose of the app, her desired features, as well as the timeline for launch. She stresses how critical the app will be to the company's sales and marketing efforts. She then asks you the most critical question: can your team deliver a mobile application of this size, scale, and importance in six to nine months? Shocked, you tell her you will get back to her after you consult your team.

You leave the meeting knowing that your team lacks the skills and experiences to build the company's mobile application; however, you feel such projects should be managed by you and your team and taking on the project will enable your team to learn something new and show additional value. As you think about it, you realize that regardless of how much or little your team is involved, you will have a say in the success or failure of the mobile app project. So, before you get back to the marketing director, you lay out the following options on how the mobile app could be built:

> *Many IT projects "fail to reach the finish line and are abandoned, quietly ignored and eventually forgotten about, with the remnants being sneakily swept under the carpet," says* Information Age.

- **Option 1:** Build using internal IT resources
- **Option 2:** Partner with another company proficient in mobile app design and development. This partner could get the project started, build portions of the app, provide the design, or advise on mobile dev best practices, technologies, etc.
- **Option 3:** Partner with a mobile app development company and let them do most of the app development

In considering these, you put together the following table that summarizes the *Good* and *Bad* that could result by choosing that specific option.

Mobile App Decision Criteria – Option 1 – Use Internal IT Resources

Option	Good	Bad
Option 1 – Build internally	• Less expensive (initially) • New experiences and learned skills or training for your team • May be able to get the project started faster (no contract negotiations with a partner/3rd-party)	• Project may not get off the ground or completed due to already overworked team • Massive undertaking for IT team if they need to learn the skills needed to complete the project

		• Could be more expensive over time as the lack of experience with such projects might lead to numerous missed deadlines and expectations. Additionally, more resources might need to be added to complete the project • Other projects may need to be pushed off • Loss of customers/business or employee confidence if the app is poorly received, which is likely with an inexperienced team • Slower ROI

Fishbowl Perspective on Option 1

- Fishbowl Solutions has worked with numerous customers where after we have completed a successful project for them, they choose to handle their next project internally. Typically, this is due to budget constraints, directives from upper management, or simply the project leader's prerogative. In some cases, the customer's internal team handles and delivers the project just fine.

- However, for larger, more complex projects like the mobile project described above, Fishbowl sees customers struggle to deliver a viable solution using internal resources. This is due to the development skills needed to not only get the app built, but also an understanding of the necessary steps and process it takes to do so. Additionally, what resource skillsets – designers, developers, project managers, security and user access experts, testers, etc. – are needed at each phase. Lastly, such projects need to be governed by best practices and an agile-like delivery framework - things that can only be learned through experience.

- Even if a company does have a team with the skills needed for a new project, those employees have other tasks as well. No one has the dedicated time required for the project, or team members need to spend many hours learning or receiving formal training for new technologies or systems before even starting.

Q: In your estimation, what percentage of the projects completed within your organization in the past 12 months…?

Mean Percentages

Successfully met the original goals and business intent of the project	69%
Included project sponsors who were actively supportive of the project	62%
Finished within their initial budgets	57%
Finished within their initially scheduled times	51%
Experienced scope creep or uncontrolled changes to the project's scope	49%
Lost its project budget upon failure	32%
Were deemed failures	14%

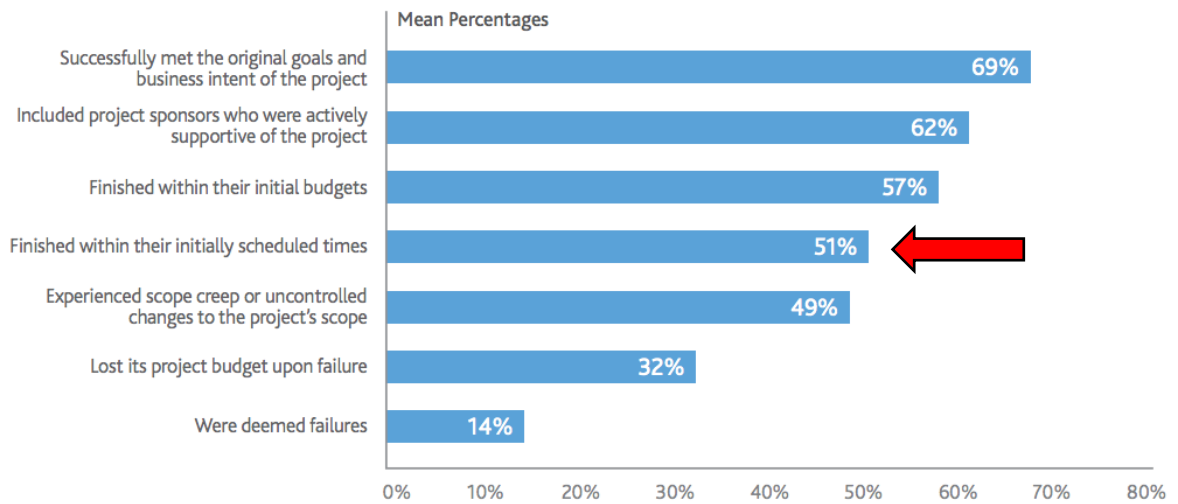0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%

Figure 1 - Percentage of Completed IT Projects
The red arrow above is shown to indicate that less than 49% of IT projects fail to be completed on time.
Source: PMI

Mobile App Decision Criteria – Option 2 – Partner on Portion of Project

Option	Good	Bad
Option 2 – Partner with another company to get the project started, build portions of the app, provide the design, or advise on mobile development best practices, technologies, etc.	• Help ensure best practices and proven delivery processes (Agile) are followed • Help to guide use of security best practices and modern authentication frameworks • New experiences and learned skills for your team • Decreased time to market • Partner brings experience and knowledge to the internal team, providing framework and methods for the project	• More expensive initially but less expensive over time • If money is budgeted to pay the partner to complete only a portion of the project, it is hard to get more money to bring the partner back, if needed. • Project stalls after handing off because internal workload gets backed up • Even though a portion of the project will be completed by the partner, expect the overall project to still take longer. This will be due to the inexperience of the internal team, as well as the lack of dedicated

		resources. In many cases, your internal team will not be able to keep with the pace of the partner.
		• Internal team may not have experience with user acceptance and overall validation testing, leading to unmet expectations.

Fishbowl Perspective on Option 2

- Other times, Fishbowl helps customers gets started with an initial project jumpstart. Getting the project started and moving forward, transferring knowledge along the way, and working alongside the customer's team to get them off to a great start. In these jumpstarts, Fishbowl takes a more hands-off approach, allowing the customer's team to handle most of the project.

- Fishbowl also has the ability and the expertise to handle portions of the project alongside the customer. Fishbowl hands off and transfers knowledge after a certain portion of the project is completed and the internal team is ready to finish it.

- One other important note: There are a lot of IT consulting companies pretending to be mobile development experts. Put each partner through a vetting process. Make them provide examples of past work, Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) estimates, high-level project plans, and references.

> Project managers often use the word "resources" to refer to people, so "not enough resources" refers to not having enough people to complete the work for a project. It accounts for **22 percent of failed projects**. *(Source: PMI)*

Mobile App Decision Criteria – Option 3 – Outsourced App Development

Option	Good	Bad
Option 3 - Partner with another company and let them do most of the app development.	• Decreased time to value (app/project completed faster) • Project contractually obligated to produce deliverable • Experienced and knowledgeable team working on project • Less day-to-day work and stress for internal team as partner is taking on most of the work	• More expensive initially • Missed opportunity to expand internal team skills • May get off to a slow start due to finding budget and best partner to work with

	- Ability to plan, design, and build with experts in respective fields - Such work typically includes a maintenance agreement	

Fishbowl Perspective on Option 3

- Working with a dedicated and proven partner for a mobile app can reduce time to value, decrease risk, and give your associated IT team the opportunity to learn what such projects entail, perhaps preparing them for the next one.

- Fishbowl Solutions brings over ten years of mobile application design and development expertise, and for each project we work closely with the customer's application development team. We integrate our team with yours and assign tasks accordingly. Most work is done in parallel.

- Fishbowl provides recommendations on the appropriate mobile/web technologies and whether a hybrid or native-app build will be the approach. For hybrid mobile apps, Fishbowl uses Apache Cordova. This allows us to use web technologies to create the mobile-ready user experience while also being able to leverage native capabilities on the devices. With this approach, development teams can reuse a large percentage of the code on both the mobile application and the portal/website application.

> Accounting for **11 percent of failed projects**, team member procrastination goes together with poor project management. If developers are procrastinating—or if the people the developers are depending on aren't supplying answers, code, or services—it should be obvious that the project plan is headed off track. *(Source: PMI)*

Which Option is Best for your Organization?

For the mobile app project discussed above, there is not a one size fits all option. Instead, IT directors or project champions and associated teams need to consider factors such as time to market, resource availability, cost, who the users are (personas) and how many, as well as whether the app will be private or public. Fishbowl can help you figure all this out by digging into what the skills of the organization are and where gaps exist.

We start this process by digging into the root of the business problem you are trying to solve and sharing with you how we have helped other customers solve similar problems. We then explain the options you must partner with us and give you our recommendation on the level of partnership we feel you need. Regardless, when we hand off to your team at the end of the project, a full knowledge transfer occurs, and additional training and teaching can be provided if needed. If you decide to tackle the project on your own there will be no hard feelings. We will follow up in the future to see how the project is going. Whatever is decided, we want to see companies realize their

vision for a mobile app or other IT project by understanding what's involved to realize it, what building it out looks like, and how it will be supported.

Additional Resources

- Fishbowl's Mobile App Development page: https://fishbowlsolutions.com/mobile-applications/
- Fishbowl's Custom App Development page: https://fishbowlsolutions.com/custom-application-development-chatbots-mobile-apps-websites-and-more/

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