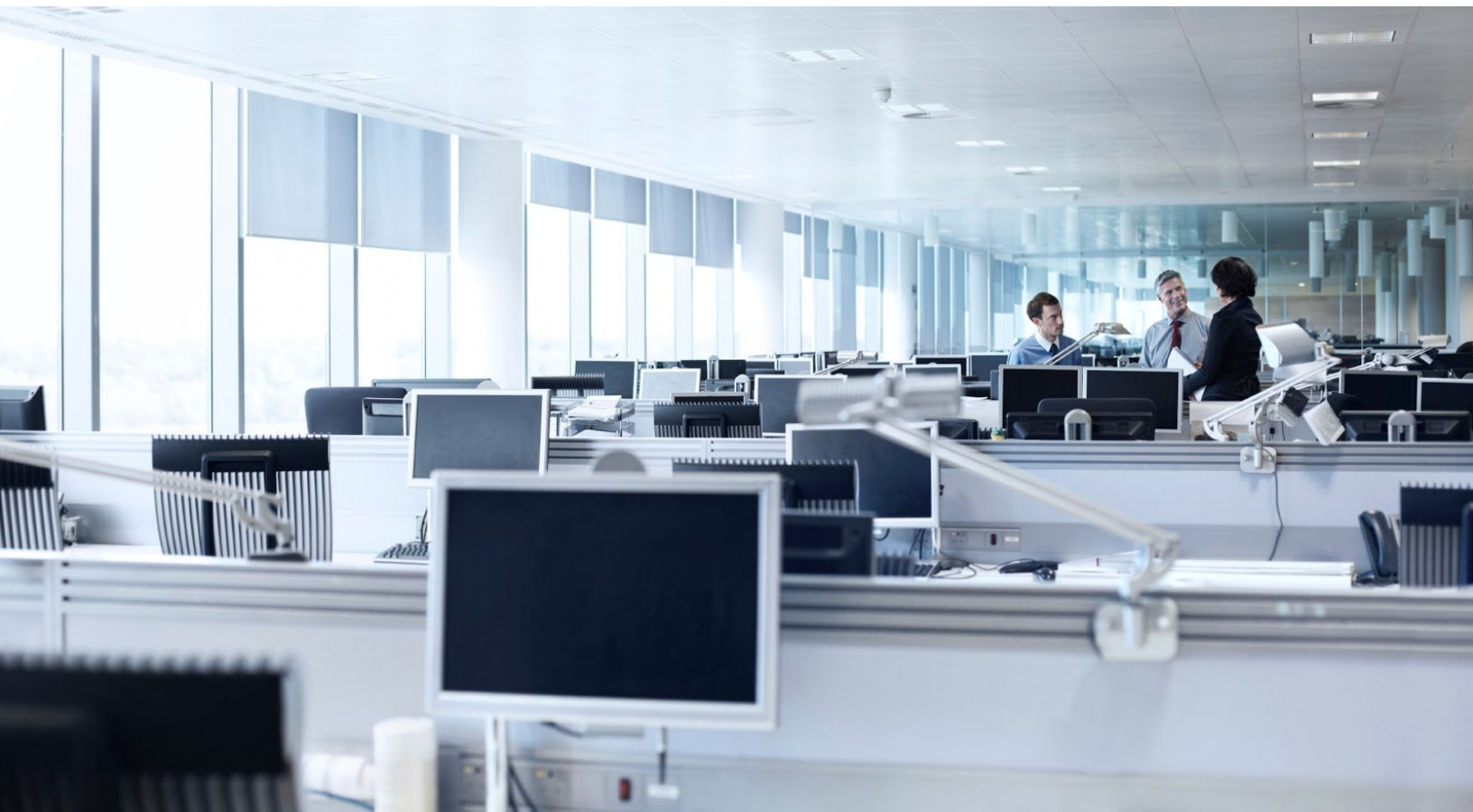# 8 RED FLAGS YOU'RE NOT GETTING THE "SERVICE" YOU DESERVE FROM YOUR SOFTWARE-AS-A-SERVICE APPS

VendorRegistry®

INTRODUCTION

During this time of need, have your software providers been accessible? Have they gotten creative to solve your specific challenges? Or did you come to the realization that your "SaaS" applications really means 'Software as a Sales' tactic?

Service from 'Software as a Service' (SaaS) app providers has been lost as too many software companies still treat customer support as a cost center. So they try to make it more "efficient" by doing things like limiting communication channels, extending response times, hiring inexperienced staff and charging for training. Unfortunately, their efficiency turns into your cost and frustration.

What you'll learn from this white paper (if you haven't already learned the hard way), is that it's not about the software; it's the people behind the software. The people—in particular, customer support or success—can make or break your utility of the business application. No software is perfect, but good support can make it highly effective. Poor support can make it unusable.

This white paper identifies the common red flags that can indicate you're getting less-than-acceptable service and describes the level of service you deserve (and should demand) from your software providers.

This information in this paper is applicable to all types of software and SaaS solutions. While not specific to purchasing software, procurement is a core function that impacts many stakeholders and, thus, a good place to start.

RED FLAG: Upfront implementation and training fees

This is a big red flag. Typically, this means that the software is difficult to implement, configure and use. Not only does this create upfront delays and expenses, but there also will be ongoing costs associated with implementing new product versions and onboarding new employees. You're also beholden to their support team, which creates an endless loop of frustration (see other red flags).

YOU DESERVE: Free and easy implementation and on-going training

Solution providers should be obsessed with your utility of the software and not putting implementation and training behind paywalls. In fact, they should be reaching out proactively to offer refresher training and new employee onboarding. Ultimately, software should be easy to implement and intuitive enough for you to immediately begin using the system on your own.

RED FLAG: Support is funneled through email or contact us forms

All you want to do is talk to someone, but your only options are email or contact us forms. Aargh! Their "efficiency" means more work, delays and frustration for you. Worse, these limited support channels may mean the provider gets too many issues and complaints.

YOU DESERVE: Live, multi-channel support

A five minute conversation almost always is more efficient than many email exchanges over hours. The providers with the best support get this. You should have access to a live, knowledgeable person via toll-free phone or web chat, in addition to email. If you don't, be very leery.

RED FLAG: Always working with new support people

This could be a sign of several issues. Most concerning is if your provider is not treating their employees well. If they aren't treated well, they certainly will not treat you well. This issue also may be that they just aren't hiring the right folks.

YOU DESERVE: Productive, professional relationships

When you consistently work with the same support team members, you're able to build real relationships. A personal familiarity between support and customer makes interactions more productive and saves everyone time. Moreso, real relationships actually make it a joy to work with your software provider.

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RED FLAG: Not knowing your history or inability to reference a request ticket number

Ever find yourself repeatedly explaining the history of your issue with every provider support member you talk with? It's a waste of time and only leads to confusion or duplicative work. This type of interaction typically means the provider is not using a sophisticated ticketing system or are not taking the time to document your request, which could speak to broader disorganization issues.

YOU DESERVE: Issue tracking and resolution

You should have the confidence that, once you report an issue or make a request, it is being taken care of by the provider. They should provide periodic updates; it's not up to you to constantly remind them. Most importantly, the provider should notify you when the issue is resolved and confirm it was to your satisfaction.

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RED FLAG: Delayed responses or just plain unresponsiveness

Ever get a "we'll respond to your request within 24 hours" automated response email when you're just two hours from your bid deadline? Ever report the same issue multiple times and they just stop responding to you after a while? Providers with poor support

resources or a culture not ingrained with superior support in mind operate on their own schedule, not yours.

YOU DESERVE: Uncompromised responsiveness

If your software provider prioritizes customer support and ingrains it in their culture, then responsiveness comes naturally and unquestionably. Unlike good wine, support issues don't age well. Thus, the most efficient means to resolving problems is through responsiveness. Ultimately, your provider should respect your deadlines, not their own.

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RED FLAG: Your colleagues and constituents are on their own for support

In your interconnected organization, you're not the only "user" of your software system. Your colleagues and constituents enter information, receive reports, participate in workflows and otherwise interact with your system. If your provider does not offer support for your colleagues and constituents as well, this is a red flag. If they don't support them, then, guess what, you'll have to…or the work doesn't get done.

YOU DESERVE: Support for your colleagues and constituents, not just you

It takes a village. Your utility of software often depends on others. Therefore, providers should support virtually anyone that interfaces with their systems. Without a doubt, this is an added cost to providers, but systems that are intuitive and easy-to-use don't have this worry. If a system truly is easy-to-use, then the provider will welcome any and all engagement with your village!

RED FLAG: Escalations are black holes

Providers that do not appreciate support view escalations as the customer's impatience. Thus, escalations often go unheeded or, worse, are suppressed because the support personnel believe it is a poor reflection on themselves.

YOU DESERVE: Access to senior leadership

Customer support folks that are in tune with their customers understand the difference between a need for urgency versus impatience. Escalations often mean "I have a looming deadline" or "I need multiple sets of eyes on my issue." All of these require management's involvement, so you should know senior leadership by name and have their direct dial, if not their cell phone.

RED FLAG: Suggestion box

Suggestion boxes give customers the perception that they've been heard, but rarely do external ideas rise to the decision makers. If they don't, then you're dependent upon someone willing and able to present and defend your idea to senior management. Thus, unless customers are ingrained in the provider's product development process, then the Suggestion Box is just window dressing.

YOU DESERVE: An active voice in future improvements and new features

Astute providers actively listen for (even solicit) ideas from customers. Furthermore, the best providers include customers at the beginning of the product development process to ensure the needs are well defined and the solution, well, is a solution.

BOTTOM LINE AND NEXT STEPS

The bottom line is that customer support can send you down one of two paths—one of less work, more speed, greater utility and better outcomes or one of added expense, delays and frustration.

As you research software solutions, you'll find many have similar offerings. Good customer support can accelerate the ROI of your software investment from years to just months. Thus, it's not about the software, it's about the people behind the software.

Is it even possible to assess good customer support ahead of time? Unfortunately, as a buyer evaluating options, good customer support is ingrained in a provider's culture, not documented in a policy manual. And, it's difficult to look into a provider's culture. However, we've created a checklist you can use to test whether good customer support is truly a part of the provider's culture—giving you guideposts to make sure you're heading down the right path.

[Request our Customer Support Assessment Checklist.](#)

If you'd like to learn how excellent service can make your procurement workflows easier and more effective, [schedule a conversation and demo](#).

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