

Online Catalog Mgmt Key Questions to Ask Providers

Company

1. How long have you been in this business?
2. How many clients have you sold? How many have you lost, and why?
3. What size or types of clients fall into your “sweet spot”?
4. What peripheral or support services do you offer that support your product (e.g., eCommerce, accounting, custom development, training)?

Products/Services

1. Is your solution offered as perpetual licensed software or on-demand solution?
 - If perpetual license:**
 - a. What are the hosting requirements?
 - b. What should I expect regarding upgrades (both timing and pain)?
 - c. Do you provide customization/implementation services? Can a third party?
 - If SAAS/ASP:**
 - a. Do all tiers include maintenance and support?
 - b. How often are new features introduced?
- c. What do I do if I need a feature you don't have or plan to have soon?
2. Do you offer a free trial? What's missing in the trial version?
3. What technical support services are available?
 - a. Is your support team located in the US or abroad?
 - b. What is your SLA for support issues?
4. Do you have a support knowledge base, community forum, or applications that are shared by customers?
5. How can I export data in the event I need to change platforms? Do I own and control my data?

Features

2. What key features are included in your solution (for online, offline catalog, and catalog management)?
 - a. What features are currently missing?
 - b. What features are on your roadmap?
 - c. What features does management love? What about shoppers?
3. What is your product's competitive advantage over other packages? Why?
 - a. Price? Dashboard? Ease of use? Flexibility? Don't say “all of the above”.
4. Do you provide integration to catalog tools, or can retailers use your solution to manage offline catalogs as well?
5. Do you provide search capabilities as part of your online catalog?
 - a. How does your search algorithm work (spellcheck, synonym, etc.)?
6. How does your platform integrate with other systems (search, eCommerce, CMS, analytics, rich media, and back-office)?
 - a. Please list the applications for which you have standard integrations already built.
- b. Please list the applications where you have built custom integrations.
- c. If not, do you publish APIs?
7. What security do you provide against external intrusion and malicious manipulation?
8. Do you have a management console to manage catalogs?
 - a. What can I manage with it?
 - b. Does it include reporting and a dashboard?
 - c. Please describe your reporting capabilities (batch vs. real-time, ad hoc, etc.).
 - i. Please provide a list of standard reports.
 - d. Is it web-based, application-based, other?
9. Please describe your product data model capabilities.
 - a. How do you handle size and color attributes, custom attributes, image capabilities, etc?
10. Please describe your category capabilities.
 - a. Category hierarchy, category data, custom category data, images, etc.

Pricing

1. Describe your pricing model. Do you charge for number of users, assets, etc? Are there different levels?
2. Why do I want to pay to upgrade to the next level?
3. How do you charge for annual support? What about maintenance?
4. Are there any hidden fees (e.g., implementation, transaction costs, revenue sharing)?

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