

# Vendor Evaluation Checklist: Software Support & Maintenance

Use this checklist to evaluate how well a vendor meets essential criteria for long-term software support and maintenance services. For each question, choose one option and assign points:

- **A answers** = 10 points (Strong maturity and best practice)
- **B answers** = 5 points (Adequate but may require reinforcement)
- **C answers** = 0 points (High risk or lack of readiness)

## BLOCK 1: Monitoring & Proactive Support

- ☐ **A)** Automated tools and real-time monitoring (10 pts)
- ☐ **B)** Basic manual monitoring (5 pts)
- ☐ **C)** Only responds when issues are reported (0 pts)

## BLOCK 2: Legacy & Undocumented Systems

- ☐ **A)** Experienced with legacy and undocumented systems (10 pts)
- ☐ **B)** Handles case by case (5 pts)
- ☐ **C)** Avoids legacy systems (0 pts)

## BLOCK 3: Service-Level Agreements

- ☐ **A)** Formal SLAs with defined timelines (10 pts)
- ☐ **B)** Informal expectations only (5 pts)
- ☐ **C)** No SLAs or vague timelines (0 pts)

## **BLOCK 4: Support Team Expertise**

- ☐ **A) Senior support-specific engineers (10 pts)**
- ☐ **B) Mixed or shared project team (5 pts)**
- ☐ **C) Junior team or contractors (0 pts)**

## **BLOCK 5: Security & Compliance**

- ☐ **A) Regular security updates and compliance support (10 pts)**
- ☐ **B) Updates only, limited compliance experience (5 pts)**
- ☐ **C) No clear security or compliance process (0 pts)**

## **BLOCK 6: Documentation & Knowledge Management**

- ☐ **A) Maintains living system documentation (10 pts)**
- ☐ **B) Documents on request (5 pts)**
- ☐ **C) No documentation approach (0 pts)**

## **BLOCK 7: Communication & Reporting**

- ☐ **A) Regular reports, dashboards, clear contacts (10 pts)**
- ☐ **B) Email updates as needed (5 pts)**
- ☐ **C) No defined reporting or communication process (0 pts)**

## **BLOCK 8: Onboarding Process**

- ☐ **A) Structured onboarding within 2–4 weeks (10 pts)**
- ☐ **B) Case-by-case onboarding (5 pts)**
- ☐ **C) No clear onboarding process (0 pts)**

## **BLOCK 9: Continuity & Backup**

- ☐ **A) Redundant team in place (10 pts)**

- ☐ B) Informal backup coverage (5 pts)
- ☐ C) No backup—single point of failure (0 pts)

## BLOCK 10: Vendor Fit & References

- ☐ A) Demonstrated experience with similar companies (10 pts)
- ☐ B) Some overlap with your needs (5 pts)
- ☐ C) No relevant experience provided (0 pts)



### Scoring Instructions



#### 90–100 Points: Process-Driven Partner

##### Summary:

The vendor demonstrates a high level of process maturity and operational discipline. They have structured workflows, strong documentation practices, proactive monitoring, and experienced support staff. Their ability to handle legacy systems, formal SLAs, security compliance, and clear communication channels signals a well-managed organization.

##### Recommendation:

This vendor is well-equipped to manage business-critical or regulated systems with minimal risk. Proceed with confidence. They're likely a good fit for long-term partnerships, enterprise environments, or systems with high availability and compliance requirements. Request case studies to confirm domain expertise, then move forward with onboarding.



#### 70–89 Points: Reliable but Lightly Structured

##### Summary:

The vendor meets most of the key requirements but may handle some aspects informally.

Their team shows experience and technical strength, but gaps may exist in areas like documentation, onboarding consistency, or escalation protocols. The foundation is solid, but the maturity of delivery may vary depending on the individual engineer or specific project.

**Recommendation:**

Suitable for most mid-sized projects or systems where internal oversight is available. Consider supplementing their support with internal documentation or monitoring to fill process gaps. Request clarity on weak areas before signing—especially around SLAs, backup coverage, and onboarding. Trial engagement or phased implementation is recommended.

**50–69 Points: Operationally Incomplete****Summary:**

This vendor shows signs of competence but lacks process consistency. Their model may rely heavily on ad hoc solutions, limited planning, or unstructured knowledge transfer. Risk is elevated if you're dealing with undocumented systems, legacy code, or high-frequency changes.

**Recommendation:**

Use only for systems that are not mission-critical or where failure has a low business impact. Avoid depending on them for long-term ownership or continuous improvement. If you must proceed, define exact deliverables, use time-boxed contracts, and monitor delivery closely. Avoid outsourcing responsibility entirely.

**30–49 Points: Reactive and Inconsistent****Summary:**

The vendor appears underprepared for structured software maintenance. Key functions like proactive monitoring, system testing, documentation, and security may be missing or handled inconsistently. Support quality likely depends on individual effort rather than team processes.

**Recommendation:**

Engagement carries considerable risk. Avoid using them for essential systems. If engagement is necessary (e.g., due to budget or legacy familiarity), clearly define exit terms and retain in-house expertise to reduce dependency. Do not enter into multi-year agreements. Trial projects should be limited and closely observed.

**0–29 Points: High-Risk Vendor****Summary:**

The vendor lacks readiness in multiple critical areas. They likely have no structured onboarding, poor documentation habits, minimal or no monitoring, and a reactive-only approach to incidents. There's a high probability of extended downtime, unresolved bugs, and poor visibility into system health.

**Recommendation:**

Do not proceed unless this is a low-risk system in a temporary or throwaway environment. If you are already engaged, begin exit planning. These vendors may cause more operational harm than benefit and could drain internal resources. Look for alternative providers with better process discipline and stronger references.