RAGNARSON

PERFECT PROGRAMMERS

HOW WE WORK

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Collaboration in a nutshell

So you're an entrepreneur with a ground-breaking idea for the world's next web-based application. That's great! One catch: you lack the technical skills to build the software, and make your idea a reality. That's where we come in. We are Ruby developers specialized in building web applications for start-ups. Together, we can surely realize your vision and bring your product to market sooner than you thought possible.

Before we embark on this journey, we think it is important for us to get to know each other and to ensure that our way of work is a good fit for you. In order to give you a general idea of how we work, we have prepared a brief roadmap of our onboarding and software development process:

1. First contact
2. Signing a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) (optional)
3. Sharing a code repository (if one exists) and other useful materials with us
4. Preparing estimates (optional)
5. Interviews with developers
6. Signing a contract
7. Development
8. Possible directions of development
9. Ending the contract

First contact

Before starting any project we always arrange an introductory call (or a meeting in person if possible). We would love to get to know you and your idea and make sure that we are a good match for each other. When you first get in touch with us be ready to answer lots of questions. We want to know if and how we can help you.

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A typical conversation consists of:

- Introduction
- Pitch of your idea. A good pitch should answer following questions:
  - What pain would you like to relieve?
  - Who experiences this pain (who is your target market)?
  - What distinguishes you from competitors?
  - How do you plan to make money from it?
  - What is the current stage of your product?
  - What does your current team look like?
  - What are your milestones for the next 3 months?
- How we work in a nutshell: We will briefly describe how we work, and what we expect from you.
- Technical deep-dive: Apart from the pitch we also need to get some additional information. In order to get an idea of what kind of developers and how many of them you'll need, we would really like to know:
  - When would you like to start?
  - How many developers do you think you need?
  - What is your test coverage? (optional)
  - What is your budget?
- Our rates and available developers
- Q&A
- Next steps

After a conversation you will receive a summary, along with an outline of required documents – typically templates of non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and/or frame agreement. If, after speaking with us, you like our offer and wish to proceed to the next step, we will arrange interviews with selected developers.

Prepare for development

You have a great idea for a software service! The million dollar question is: how will people use it and how are you planning to make a business out of it?

At the beginning, if you haven't done so already, you will have to gather information on who will use your software service and how will they do it. The simplest approach to translating this information into software requirements is to write “user stories”. User stories are very short, clear statements of things that

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your users wish to use your software for, and why. A typical user story looks like this:

> As a [*type of user/type of role*]
> I want to [*do something using this software*]
> So that I can [*accomplish something that is important to me*]

As a picture is worth a thousand words, we also encourage you to draw mock-ups and wireframes. These don't have to be comprehensive or fancy – they can be hand-drawn on pieces of paper and then scanned if need me – but they need to be detailed enough so that we can start the work, and at least cover Minimally Viable Product (MVP) usage scenarios. Focus on the main functionality and we will fill in the blanks later on, as we proceed with development.

We usually use Pivotal Tracker for project management, and to keep track of all the user stories that guide the development.

It is very important that you set aside enough time to lead the development. We will build your software service, but we will need you to guide us, provide us with clarifications and be available when we have questions. At the beginning, you will need to set aside the better part of a day or two to clarify what you want to achieve and to get used to the tools. Later on, each feature will require your input, clarification and guidance – so as to ensure that our implementation lives up to your vision and expectations.

It is essential for both sides to have a common understanding of, and agreement on, that at Ragnarson we work on a time and materials (T&M) basis. What this means practically speaking, is that you have to pay for each hour of development.

In our experience, this approach is what start-ups need to properly lead the development of their product, and get it to market in as quick and cost-effective manner as possible.

Development

The first steps are similar for all projects. We will suggest a number of services that will help us with development. If you would like to use other tools, that's fine as long as they are not terribly outdated, not well-supported by their authors, or barely usable. We practice agile software development by following SCRUM rules.

Even though we provide you with a team of self-sufficient professionals it is expected that you will lead the project. Following each iteration, you should gather the team and discuss, at minimum, the two most important things:

1. What was done during this sprint?
2. What do you plan to accomplish in the next one?

First, you should carefully review each delivered task in order to make sure that it works and/or looks as you anticipated it would.

The next step is to choose the most important tasks from an icebox (stories not assigned to any sprint) and move as many of them as your developers are able to do to backlog. For each of the task you've selected, the whole team will estimate the relative complexity and assign a certain number of points (the higher the amount of points, the harder the task).

You then move the tasks that we expect are possible to complete in this sprint from the icebox to the backlog. You can think of the backlog as the "to do" list for a given sprint.

The more sprints we do together, the more accurate we will get at figuring out how many points worth of work can be tackled successfully in the next sprint. This is called software development velocity and it is relative to every project,

and to every software development team, which is why it takes a few sprints to get a good sense of what we can accomplish within a week.

During the week, when developers start to work on particular tasks, there is inevitably something unclear, requiring a more detailed description, or something for which we require a wider perspective from you in order to implement it properly. This is a completely normal part of the software development process. In order to ensure that we can stay on schedule with each sprint, make sure that you reserve some time throughout the week to field additional questions from developers.

Development teams

Ragnarson provides a capable team of developers who are able to lead the project on their own from the technical point of view. They know how to prepare a scalable solution and implement it with the technological building blocks best suited for it. Some start-ups hire their first developer who is trained by our team in order to make him or her their CTO at a suitable point in time as the project progresses. We are able to teach him/her and pass on all the necessary knowledge, both about your project and good software development practices.

It is always possible to extend or shrink the team. Just let us know about your plans and needs in advance. We have experience with working in mixed teams, across time zones and countries. You can provide your own CTO, developer(s), and we can work in cooperation with other contractors. Anything is possible, and we can accommodate whatever type of team you'd prefer for a project, as long as it is well organized and everyone follows the same good practices, both in communication, and in software development.

Agreements

Typically there are two documents which we sign with our customers: an NDA (Non-Disclosure Agreement) and a Frame Agreement. We can provide you with

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templates for both of them. After both you and Ragnarson have reviewed and accepted the terms of the agreements, they are printed, signed, scanned and sent to you by e-mail. The original version is sent later, via traditional post. We expect you to send us back both versions (digital and original) with your signature.

Most of the contracts have an indefinite duration. We are completely fine with ending our relationship as long as we get notified before the minimum period of notice (as stipulated in the agreement).

Estimates

Some of our potential customers ask us to prepare estimates for their project. They want to know how much time we need need to implement an MVP, or a particular set of features. For some types of projects this approach can work, for many it doesn't.

In particular, this is not how a typical start-up works. Usually everything is very dynamic, priorities change from week to week during development, and each sprint may look completely different from what we had planned at the beginning.

Based on our experience, it is really hard to accurately estimate the amount of time required to implement a set of features. Often, the pessimistic estimate takes twice as much time as the optimistic one. The difference is even more pronounced if the estimate is prepared by more than one developer. This is not unique to our way of work, and is a well-documented phenomenon in software development.

Even though we are not fond of estimates for all of the reasons above, we can prepare them if necessary. Usually this takes 8-16 hours of work (depending on

the size of the project), and it is not free. You will have to pay for each developers time accordingly to his/her rate.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Do I have to pay for bugs?

Yes, bugs are an inevitable part of software development. Because of our T&M approach we charge for fixing them as well.

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APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDED TOOLS

Code repository – GitHub
Issue tracker – Pivotal Tracker
Internal chat – Slack
Calls – Google Hangouts, Skype
Hosting platform – Heroku

APPENDIX B: TECHNOLOGY STACK

As web developers we focus on working with Ruby, however there are many different frameworks and technologies that we know:

BACK-END DEVELOPMENT:
- Ruby on Rails
- Sinatra
- Lotus
- Roda + ROM
- Event Machine

FRONT-END DEVELOPMENT:
- HTML5
- Scalable CSS
- JavaScript
- jQuery
- Angular.js
- Ember.js
- CoffeeScript

DATABASES:
- PostgreSQL
- MongoDB
- Redis
- Elasticsearch
- Sphinx
- Apache Solr

DEVOPS:
- Chef
- Capistrano
- OpenStack
- Ceph
- GlusterFS

OTHER:
- RSpec
- Git

and many, many more. We always choose the technology stack individually for each project.

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