

# How to navigate IT nearshoring in the DACH Region

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With a shortage of specialist IT resources impacting digital transformation across the DACH region, more and more agencies are looking to outsource to plug the gap.

At TEC Agency, we offer a comprehensive and collaborative nearshore engineering service based out of Cluj-Napoca, the technology capital of Romania. Tapping into almost a decade's experience working with a range of agencies across Europe, we wanted to share some of our learnings on nearshore collaborations, and how agencies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland can best collaborate with nearshore partners to meet clients' needs, on time and on budget... and make a profit!

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## Looking long term

When assessing nearshoring as a solution to your digital needs, and the relationship you want to have with a nearshore partner, you need to think long term. **An agency will benefit most from establishing a long-term nearshore collaboration**, one where the partner operates as an extension of its team, working alongside them to plan, evaluate and execute across multiple client briefs.

A more short-term, detached approach increases the risk of impacting both efficiency of delivery and the bottom line. Too often, agencies take on the initial brief without engaging a partner and then look to bring in support on an ad-hoc, individual role basis, with the expectation that someone can parachute in and save the day. Or agencies under-scope a project on a less familiar platform because they haven't fully grasped the technical requirements or integration nuances. In both cases they are likely to incur delays, and additional costs, to bring in the skills they need to complete the brief.

It is also worth noting that **the long-term approach goes both ways**. Look for nearshore partners who see long term value in the agency relationship, who are prepared to invest in working with you to grow as a business and contribute to your combined, ongoing success





## Integrate early to avoid financial risk

To ensure the successful delivery of development projects, agencies should **integrate the specialist expertise of their nearshore partner as early as possible, creating an integrated team that covers different core components** such as project management, dev ops and testing. This team can – and in many ways should – be a composition of in-house and development partner staff, working alongside side each other from the outset (something that is a lot easier to do, both technically and culturally, in a post-pandemic world).

**By involving a nearshore partner at the very beginning of a project, when you are estimating on costs and resources, you can be sure the solutions, and the quotes, you present will be accurate.** Adding their specialist expertise from the outset means your team will have a more comprehensive picture of requirements, minimising the risk of under-scoping the scale of development work and with it the risk unforeseen costs or delays. . After all, you wouldn't expect a builder to quote on a property development without consulting the specialist contractors he needs first to understand to the full scope or work!

# Plan, prioritise & adapt

Far too often **specialist resources are not prioritised early enough**. It is unrealistic to expect development partners to have the expertise you need just "sat on the bench" waiting for a call up – if they did, you would have to wonder about the quality of that team! With demand for engineers across the DACH region so high, the best resources will always be engaged in pre-planned projects, as part of an integrated team, adding their insights and skills to a project's fulfilment.

It is, of course, impossible to plan for everything. There will be times when needs pivot at short notice and your delivery plans (and the resources involved) need to pivot with them. In this case, our advice is to look out for early warning signs. **As you map out a project's likelihood to convert to a live job, evaluate the different possible outcomes and assign probabilities to each which you can then monitor as the project progresses**. For example, if the chance of needing additional DevOps resources that you don't have in house increases beyond 50%, look to engage a nearshore partner on the availability so you can line it up ahead of time.

This level of planning and adaptation is made a lot easier if you are working with a long term partner, one that understands not just the project but the culture and values of the agency as a whole. **By working and planning together, the development partner can serve as an extension of your team, and you can grow together as businesses.**





## Be proud of your partner!

Augmenting your team with a nearshore partner brings in **specialist expertise and experience**. As you look to cement a client relationship and lock out potential competitors, it can be tempting to pass this expertise off as your own. It is understandable that you want to present the best possible solution to your clients and so what does it matter if the skilled resources you are contracting aren't your own? Well, it can matter a lot. **Lack of transparency leads to increased potential for creating misunderstandings and presenting a muddled picture to the client**, something that can inadvertently impact the project delivery and have a much more negative impact on the client relationship.

If agencies chose to nearshore, they should embrace the partnership they have formed and explain to clients how they are being **innovative in sourcing the best talent in Europe**. They should highlight the benefits they offer the client, in terms of breadth of skills and experience – after all, you have picked the development partner for a reason; be proud of your choice!

A background image of two giraffes facing each other, with their heads and necks visible. The giraffes are brown and white spotted. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be read over it.

## Two heads are better than one

Something we see a lot – and something which is often cited as an issue – is the reliance on one project manager straddling both the agency / client and agency / nearshore partner relationships. While it might seem logical to have one person across all aspects, **the single manager approach only serves to complicate lines of communication, slow down the process and delay project delivery.** With a one project manager approach, they are bouncing between teams (but only with the authority needed to make decisions on one side), having discussions, getting input, relaying information...generally juggling a lot of balls at once, with one hand tied behind their backs!

In our experience the best approach is to employ two project managers – both properly empowered – one agency side to manage the agency resources and the relationship with the client, and another to manage the development resources. **The two project managers then need to work together, in regular communication, taking decisions together with a combined and more comprehensive perspective of the overall project** – this way the two teams can be better integrated, issues can be discussed with inputs given in real time and timescales can be better managed.



So, in summary, **our five top tips** for getting the most from a nearshore development partner are:


1. **Look to build a long-term relationship with a trusted partner** – that way they can better understand your culture and help you grow as a business.
2. **Involve them from the beginning of a project** to ensure you estimate correctly and avoid unexpected costs.
3. **Avoid ad-hoc team and last-minute requests where possible** – and when it isn't possible, heed the warning signs so all parties can be agile enough to respond.
4. **Be proud of the partner you have chosen** and praise their virtues to the client, don't try and pass them off as your own.
5. **Use two project managers**, in close collaboration, to ensure there is clarity for all stakeholders across the project and delivery timelines are met.



A high-angle, top-down photograph of two women sitting at a wooden desk in a modern office. The woman on the left has curly hair and is looking down at a document. The woman on the right has straight hair and is also looking at the document. They are both wearing light-colored blouses. On the desk, there is a laptop, a calculator, and several papers. In the background, there are potted plants and a denim jacket hanging on a chair. The overall lighting is soft and natural.

# Why tec:agency?

Over the past nine years, **TEC Agency** has worked with more than 10 leading agencies across Europe, providing the vital nearshore resources to fulfil client briefs. Using our expertise in software like Sitecore, Kentico, Contentful, Dynamics and Salesforce we have built fan engagement platforms, eCommerce sites and mobile apps for clients in sectors such as sports, entertainment and FinTech.



TEC has skilled and **experienced digital specialists** who can work with you to **supplement your development team**, providing **essential resources at attractive nearshore rates**.

Whatever your digital challenge, we'd be happy to discuss how we can help.

## Contact us

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