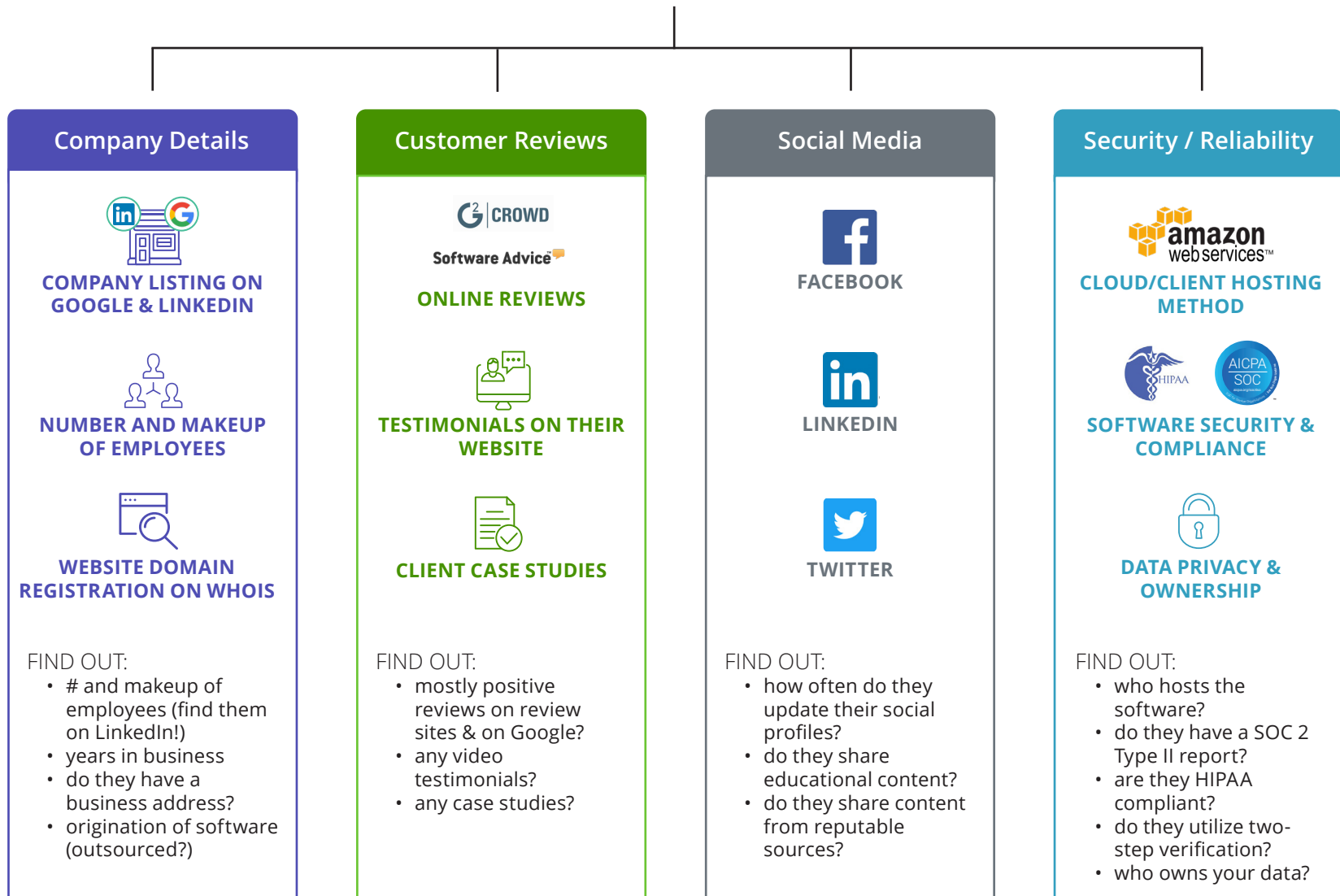


BEYOND THE PRODUCT RESEARCH TOOL

Are you buying software or investing in a partner? Your book of business is too valuable to risk the wrong choice. Use this tool to go beyond the demo and really know the company behind the software.



Company Details

Forget about the software product for a second, and dig into the company itself. A simple Google search can yield a lot of results, but also seek out their company's LinkedIn page.

Consider: Who are their employees? How many employees of theirs can you find on LinkedIn? What is the makeup of the employees (job titles)? Are there contracted or outsourced employees? What is the history of their company? What's their story? What is their mission; what are their values?

Why this is important: Understanding the makeup of the company can help you identify the type of relationship you'll have with them ongoing, who you might be in contact with, and what backgrounds the employees come from. You'll also be able to identify any potential conflicts of interest (like employees who also own an agency that might compete with yours, for example).

Understanding the company's history and their story helps you identify if they fit with your agency culturally and whether their values align with yours.

Customer Reviews

Online reviews are almost as important during a purchase decision as peer referrals.

Consider: How many testimonials do they have on their website? How many reviews do they have on online review sites? Do they have any video testimonials? Any case studies that reflect your agency?

Why this is important: What others say about a company you're considering doing business with is usually one of the most unbiased ways to get opinions and answers. Pay close attention to the number of reviews and testimonials they have. This can give you insight into the experience level they have when you consider volume and the years of reviews and testimonials they have.

Video testimonials are a plus to look for because this means their clients are pleased enough to spend a few minutes and a little effort creating a video to speak about the company and its product. Not to mention, it's easier to see a client's emotions about the company through video than it is through a written testimonial.

Lastly, case studies allow you to visualize what your agency might accomplish with the company and its software. Obviously, you'll be looking for evidence of increased productivity, saved resources, and your other goals you have, but don't forget to look for what the clients say about working with the company. Do they mention if customer support (or Client Success, as we at AgencyBloc call them) were helpful and responsive?

Bottom line: seeing the experience others have had with the product and its people are both important to consider before you purchase.

Social Media / Online Presence

How a company talks to its clients and prospects on social media is how you can expect to be conversed with. Not to mention, how much they pay attention to their social media and online presence and how active they are with it gives you an insight into how proud they are of their product and their people and how much they care about showing you, as a prospect, how they can help.

Consider: Do they regularly post updates to their social media profiles (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.)? Do they share others' content that is relevant to you? Does their tone on social media reflect people you'd like to partner with?

Why this is important: Like I mentioned, how attentive a company is to their social media could be a strong indicator of how attentive they'll be to you as a client. Though Marketing and Client Success are separate teams, a company's overall culture is often reflected across all teams.

Security / Reliability

Once you've vetted the people behind the software, look at their security and compliance practices and measurements in place.

Consider: What levels of software security and compliance are in place? What provider does the vendor use to host the software and data? How often is the data backed up? In what ways can you retrieve your data as a whole? Who owns your data?

Why this is important: For insurance agencies who work with confidential data, independent audits of software partners are an important step to review for vendor management. The SOC 2 Type II report verifies that internal controls and processes meet or exceed the security requirements.

Remember: You're Investing in a Partner!

If you're still questioning why any of this matters, ask yourself: Are you buying software or investing in a partner?

Now more than ever, relationships matter. As technology evolves and becomes a part of every single thing we do, we cannot overlook the importance of the people and the support behind the technology.

Use the next few pages to take notes on all of these areas as you research software vendors you're thinking of doing business with.

VENDOR:

Company Details

COMPANY LISTING ON GOOGLE & LINKEDIN - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

NUMBER & MAKEUP OF EMPLOYEES - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

WEBSITE DOMAIN REGISTRATION - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

OTHER NOTES:

Customer Reviews

ONLINE REVIEWS - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

TESTIMONIALS ON THEIR WEBSITE - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

CLIENT CASE STUDIES - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

OTHER NOTES:

Social Media

SOCIAL PROFILES THEY HAVE - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

SOCIAL POSTS & UPDATES - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

SOCIAL SHARES - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

OTHER NOTES:

Security / Reliability

Keep in mind that some of this information may not be online. You may learn this information during a demo with the vendor, instead.

CLOUD / CLIENT HOSTING METHOD - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

SOFTWARE SECURITY & COMPLIANCE - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

DATA PRIVACY & OWNERSHIP - WHAT DID YOU FIND? NOTES?

OTHER NOTES:
