

THE
**10 CRITICAL
QUESTIONS
YOUR BUSINESS
SHOULD ASK
BEFORE
OUTSOURCING**



ABSTRACT

As the financial world grows more intricate, accounting firms are bearing the brunt of rising complexity and soaring expectations. Nearly 80% of UK firm leaders report a critical talent shortage, rising operational costs, tighter regulatory oversight, and growing client expectations. In response, over 60% of firms now outsource some core functions, not merely as a cost-saving measure, but a strategic approach to drive resilience, and scale operations efficiently.

This whitepaper presents a practical, insight-led framework designed to support accounting leaders in making one of their most consequential decisions: selecting the right outsourcing partner. . By identifying ten essential questions, it empowers firms to assess provider capabilities, mitigate potential risks, and align with partners who can truly add long-term value.

Alongside expert-backed recommendations, it illustrates how leading outsourcing providers, like IMS Decimal, consistently meet and exceed industry expectations, helping UK firms streamline operations, while safeguarding compliance and upholding client trust.

WHY ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS MATTERS

The modern business environment is at an inflection point. Amid digital transformation demands, increasing regulatory complexity, talent acquisition challenges, and pressure for operational efficiency-organisations must rethink how they manage their core and non-core functions.

Over 40% of firms considering outsourcing cite “concerns about data security and compliance” as their primary barrier to adoption.

Whether it's adapting to region-specific mandates like Making Tax Digital (UK), IRS compliance regulations (US), or Single Touch Payroll (Australia), firms globally are being stretched thin. The stakes are high: issues like data protection, process oversight, platform compatibility, and scalability now have direct implications for business continuity and client trust.

Decision-makers must evaluate providers through a structured framework, enabling them to compare offerings, identify potential risks, and choose partners aligned with their long-term strategic objectives.

THE 10 QUESTIONS FRAMEWORK

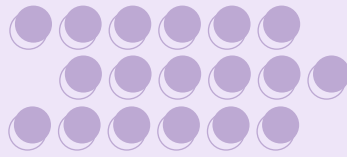
To induce a thoughtful, risk-aware outsourcing decision, this framework presents ten critical questions every firm should ask before selecting a provider.

Each question should be accompanied by four key components to guide evaluation:

- **Why it matters** – Explains the strategic importance behind the question
- **What a good answer looks like** – Highlights key quality markers of capable provider
- **Risks to avoid** – Flags potential warning signs of a poor fit
- **Best practice response** – Illustrates how leading partners typically respondShape



01.



What experience do you have working with accounting firms?

Why it matters: Industry-specific knowledge ensures your outsourcing partner understands regulatory requirements, market dynamics, and operational nuances unique to your sector.

What a good answer looks like: Demonstrated industry-specific experience with diverse businesses, including distinct examples of similar challenges solved, regulatory knowledge, and how they apply best practices tailored to accounting and financial services.

Risk indicator: Generic claims like “we work with international clients” without mentioning sector-specific expertise.

Best practice response:

- Extensive experience in dedicated industry verticals, certified professionals in your field, and case studies demonstrating successful outcomes for businesses like yours.
- Deep understanding of your regulatory environment, competitive landscape, and operational challenges.

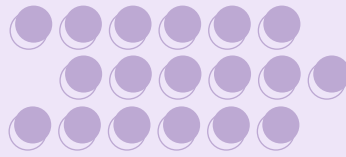
IMS Decimal's approach:

- With over 19 years of global experience, IMS Decimal supports 250+ businesses across multiple industries and jurisdictions.
- With deep sector knowledge and local regulatory expertise, we ensure compliance and operational excellence across industries.

Our proven expertise lies in:

Umbrella Companies | Factoring Companies | Accounting & Financial Services | Recruitment & Staffing Industry | Property Management | Student Accommodation | Care Homes

02.



What qualifications and certifications do your team members hold?

Why it matters: The qualifications of your outsourcing team directly impacts your service accuracy, compliance, and reliability. Certified professionals offer deeper insight into accounting standards, regulatory shifts, and industry-specific needs.

What a good answer looks like: Credentials such as ACCA, CIMA, or AAT, combined with ongoing training programmes, and audit-readiness aligned with your industry requirements.

Risk indicator: Lack of transparency, and vague references to "trained staff" without verifiable certifications.

Best practice response:

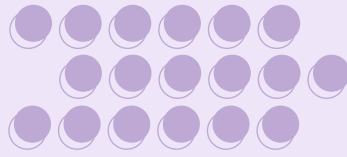
- Prioritise recognised certifications, regular upskilling, and specialised training programmes.
- Transparency about team qualifications, and a demonstration of commitment to maintaining & upskilling current expertise.

IMS Decimal's approach:

- Our team includes ACCA-certified professionals and seasoned accounting specialists with cross-sector exposure.
- We maintain a culture of continuous learning with dedicated L&D programmes, ensuring each team member is equipped with latest industry knowledge and best practices.

Our implementation team mirrors your processes and equips each resource with dos and don'ts of your operational process flow, facilitating seamless transition.

03.



How do you ensure data security and adherence to GDPR compliance?

Why it matters: Even when services are outsourced, you are still liable for safeguarding client data. Security breaches can result in legal liability, financial penalties, and reputational consequences.

What a good answer looks like: Clear compliance with relevant data protection regulations (GDPR, DPA, CCPA, etc.), robust cybersecurity infrastructure, regular security audits, and transparent incident response procedures.

Risk indicator: General assurance of "secure systems" without specific compliance frameworks or security certifications.

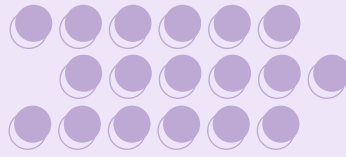
Best practice response:

- The right outsourcing partner always maintains multiple security certifications that undergo regular third-party security audits.
- Implement robust architecture, and provide detailed compliance documentation relevant to your jurisdiction.

IMS Decimal's approach:

- We operate with multi-layered security aligned to UK Data Protection laws and international standards.
- Our security framework includes encrypted systems, strict access controls, regular third-party audits, and 24/7 monitoring to protect your data regardless of geographic location.

04.



What accounting software do you support?

Why it matters: Technology alignment enables seamless integration, reduces implementation time, and minimises disruption to existing workflows.

What a good answer looks like: Support for your current technology stack with certified expertise, plus capability to recommend and implement improvements where beneficial.

Risk indicator: Claims of "we can learn any system" with no stated certifications or platform partnerships.

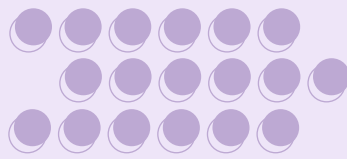
Best practice response:

Leading providers bring certified expertise in platforms like Xero, QuickBooks, Sage, and region-specific tools. They offer seamless integration, data migration support, and optimisation of your existing tech stack. Beyond usage, they apply deep platform knowledge to enhance reporting, automation, and overall efficiency through best practices.

IMS Decimal's approach:

- We are recognised implementation partners for Xero and QuickBooks, with expertise spanning a broad spectrum of business software solutions.
- Our team of 100+ certified technology advisors harnesses advanced analytics tools like Power BI, Tableau, and SQL to deliver enhanced insights and operational efficiency.

05.



How do you manage communication and workflow coordination?

Why it matters: Clear communication protocols and defined workflows are essential for maintaining operational transparency. Lack in coordination can derail timelines, and diminish trust.

What a good answer looks like: Defined communication channels, established SLAs, dedicated points of contact, and proactive reporting mechanisms.

Risk indicator: Unclear roles and responsibilities, delayed responses, no structured communication protocols, and lack of time zone consideration.

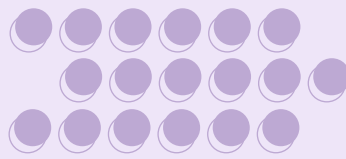
Best practice response:

- Leading providers offer dedicated account management, multiple communication channels, real-time project visibility.
- Regular performance reviews with clear escalation procedures.

IMS Decimal's approach:

- We provide dedicated client teams supported by onshore advisors and SMEs.
- Our 24/7 operations ensure availability across global time zones, with seamless communication, and shared performance dashboards offering real-time project visibility and updates.

06.



Can you provide relevant case studies and client references?

Why it matters: Real-world examples validate outsourcing provider's expertise, and offer insight into their problem-solving capabilities, and track record of success.

What a good answer looks like: Detailed case studies with measurable outcomes, client testimonials, and willingness to provide references from similar engagements.

Risk indicator: Reluctance to share any examples, citing confidentiality without measurable outcomes to showcase.

Best practice response:

- Reputable providers should offer anonymised case studies demonstrating quantifiable improvements, client testimonials.
- Wherever possible, direct references from satisfied clients in similar sectors.

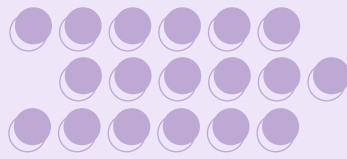
IMS Decimal's approach:

- Our track record includes measurable outcomes such as reducing month-end close cycles by 30%, and achieving 100% accuracy in critical business processes.
- Our success stories are for the world to see on our various platforms and channels, and we connect you with relevant client references upon request.

Here's the detailed case study.

[Click here to read.](#)

07.



What is your onboarding and transition process like?

Why it matters: A smooth execution sets the tone for the entire engagement. Structured transition process minimises disruption, reduces operational risk, and accelerates value realisation.

What a good answer looks like: Documented steps for transition, risk mitigation strategies, parallel processing capabilities, and dedicated support.

Risk indicator: No onboarding framework, or expecting clients to manage the transition independently.

Best practice response:

- Professional providers follow proven methodologies with clear milestones, risk assessments, testing phases, and comprehensive documentation.
- Ensuring smooth transitions with minimal business disruption.

IMS Decimal's approach:

- Our onboarding follows a structured methodology including comprehensive needs analysis, detailed roadmap, process walkthroughs, parallel test runs, and weekly check-ins throughout the implementation phase.
- Facilitating a low-risk, high-confidence go-live with minimal disruption to your business operations.

Our implementation process includes:

Step 1:

Evaluation of actual business activities

Step 3:

Establish workflow, delivery scope, and client training

Step 5:

Set up IT other required infrastructure

Step 2:

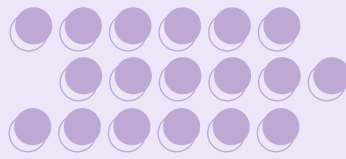
Understanding volume of work

Step 4:

Training and hiring of dedicated staff

Step 6:

Set up of communication and reporting structure



How scalable and flexible are your service offerings?

Why it matters: As business needs evolve, your outsourcing partner must adapt to changing requirements, seasonal variations, and growth trajectories.

What a good answer looks like: Modular service offerings, flexible engagement models, rapid scaling capabilities, and adaptable contract terms.

Risk indicator: Rigid, one-size-fits-all service models with limited flexibility to accommodate shifting needs, or unexpected demand spikes.

Best practice response:

- Offering modular services, flexible engagement models, and rapid scale-up or scale-down capabilities with their contracts adapt to evolving business needs, whether project-based or long-term.
- Ensuring capacity planning, resource agility, and operational continuity without compromising service quality during periods of growth or fluctuation.

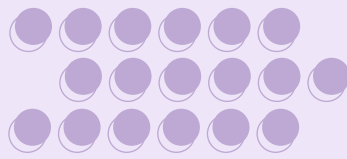
IMS Decimal's approach:

- Whether you need short-term project support or long-term operational partnership, we offer flexible contracts, rapid scale-up capabilities, and modular service offerings that grow with your business.
- Our adaptable engagement models ensure you only pay for what you need, when you need it.

Our key services include:

Bookkeeping | Business Tax Return | Payroll & Pension | Year-End Accounts
| Self-Assessment Tax | VAT Returns | Management Accounts

09.



What does your pricing model look like?

Why it matters: Transparent pricing enables accurate budgeting, prevents cost overruns, and establishes alignment between service scope and financial expectations.

What a good answer looks like: A clear, well-defined itemised pricing structure, no hidden fees, and predictable cost structures aligned with business value.

Risk indicator: Vague pricing discussions postponed until after contract signing, or complex fee structures.

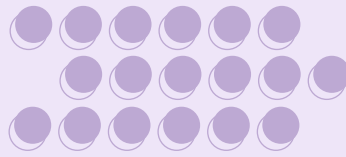
Best practice response:

- Trusted providers offer transparent pricing models with detailed breakdowns, clear scope definitions, and predictable billing cycles.
- Value-based pricing that aligns costs with business outcomes.

IMS Decimal's approach:

- We offer transparent, no-hidden-cost pricing with detailed scope definitions and predictable billing cycles.
- Our value-based pricing model makes sure you receive maximum return on investment, with no additional charges for reviewer time or subject matter expert consultations.

10.



How do you ensure quality control and service accountability?

Why it matters: Consistent service quality delivery protects your reputation, and ensures reliable business outcomes. Clear accountability mechanisms provide confidence and control.

What a good answer looks like: Defined quality standards, regular performance monitoring, SLAs with consequences, and continuous improvement processes.

Risk indicator: Informal quality controls or accountability measures that rely solely on client feedback after issues arise.

Best practice response:

- Excellence-focussed providers implement comprehensive quality management systems with proactive monitoring, regular audits, and real-time performance dashboards.
- Continuous improvement embedded through structured client feedback loops, and corrective action protocols.

IMS Decimal's approach:

- Our 360-degree performance framework includes standardised operating procedures, multi-tier review processes, KPI tracking, and real-time performance dashboards.
- This comprehensive approach ensures full accountability and continuous improvement in service delivery, giving you complete visibility and control over outcomes.

Outsourcing: The Growth Engine You Deserve

The **Deloitte Global Outsourcing Survey 2024** identifies "improved access to specialised talent" (42%) and "operational cost optimisation" (34%) as the prime drivers for outsourcing worldwide.

However, modern outsourcing extends far beyond cost reduction. It's a strategic tool for accessing global expertise, enhancing operational agility, and focusing internal resources on core competencies.

By applying this 10-question framework, you go beyond generic vendor selection. It helps in identifying right outsourcing partners who share your business values, understand challenges, and deliver measurable impact.

An effective outsourcing partnership acts as a catalyst to drive transformation, driving efficiency, compliance, and competitive advantage.

Explore The IMS Decimal Difference, Where Expertise Meets Execution

Transform these questions as your due diligence toolkit. . Utilise this structured approach to assess potential partners, and make informed decisions that align with your strategic objectives. Connect with our experts to discuss how the right partnership can accelerate your business goals, while maintaining the quality and control you require.

FENIL SHAH

Vice President - Operations

NICOLA GRAY

Head of Sales - Financial
Service



Contact details available upon request.

info@imsdecimal.com | www.imsdecimal.com

This framework has been developed based on global best practices and industry research to help businesses make informed outsourcing decisions that drive sustainable growth and competitive advantage.