The main title of the document, "The ultimate guide to bespoke software for SMEs", is written in a teal, sans-serif font. It is positioned on the left side of the cover, partially overlapping a large, white, arrow-shaped graphic that points to the right. The background of the cover features a blue and purple gradient with abstract white lines and dots, suggesting a network or data flow.

**The ultimate guide
to bespoke software
for SMEs**

Making the right
decision and
maximising ROI



Bespoke Software: A nice-to-have or a transformative game-changer?

Bespoke software, custom-built to meet the unique needs of a business, is often seen as a luxury reserved for large corporations. However, the truth is that it can also be a game-changer for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Off-the-shelf software, while convenient, regularly falls short of SME requirements, leading to inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and ultimately, a lower return on investment (ROI). On the other hand, Bespoke software offers the potential to streamline operations, enhance customer satisfaction, and drive significant growth.

But what does ROI truly mean in the context of bespoke software? How can SMEs measure its impact and ensure they get the maximum return on their investment? This guide will provide the answers.

Defining the Project Scope

Once you have a clear understanding of where bespoke software can be most beneficial to your business, you can then begin to build a project scope around your objectives.

So, what is a 'software project scope' and why is it so important to have one?

Your project scope outlines the specific objectives, features and functionalities of your new software. Think of it as a detailed roadmap that guides the development process. A well-defined scope is crucial for several reasons...

- **Cost Control:** By clearly outlining the project's boundaries, you can get a more accurate estimate of development costs. Unexpected features or changes can significantly inflate the budget.

- **Timeline Management:** A clear scope helps in setting realistic deadlines. Unforeseen elements can lead to delays and impact your business operations.
- **Focus:** A defined scope prevents 'scope creep', where the project expands beyond its initial objectives. This keeps the development team focused on delivering the core value.
- **Communication:** A shared understanding of the project's goals ensures everyone, from developers to stakeholders, is aligned.

It's important to be realistic about what is technically achievable. While it might be tempting to create a software solution that rivals industry giants, the cost and complexity of such a project can be prohibitive for most SMEs. It's essential to balance ambition with practicality but that's not to say you need to limit your vision - it might just mean you need a phased approach. And, a clear scope can help set expectations and make sure everyone's on the same page throughout.





Maximising ROI from Your Bespoke Software

Bespoke software offers the potential to revolutionise your SME's operations. However, to truly maximise its return on investment (ROI), careful planning and execution are essential.

Firstly, identify the specific pain points your current systems are causing. Are there recurring tasks that needlessly consume your team's time? Does your software require complex workarounds, hindering productivity? Perhaps disparate departments struggle with incompatible systems, creating data silos that impede collaboration and insight.

Next, consider your unique selling propositions (USPs). Does your business offer a niche service or product? Are there specific features your competitors lack that could significantly benefit your customers? Your bespoke software should be a tool to amplify these strengths.

Equally important is evaluating your data and analytics needs. To make informed, data-driven decisions, robust reporting and visualisation tools are crucial. If your current software falls short in this area, a bespoke solution can provide a competitive edge.

Scalability is another key factor. Can your current software accommodate future growth? Will it support new features and functionalities as your business evolves? Your bespoke system should be designed with flexibility in mind to ensure it remains a valuable asset.

A common question is the lifespan of bespoke software. While technological advancements are rapid, well-designed software can serve your business for many years. Regular updates and maintenance can extend its useful life.

Measuring the software's success against your initial project objectives is crucial. Factors to consider include:

- Employee satisfaction: Has the software improved job satisfaction and efficiency?
- Reduction in workarounds: Has it streamlined processes and eliminated unnecessary steps?
- Time saved: Quantify the time saved through automation and improved workflows.

By carefully considering these factors and implementing effective strategies, you can significantly enhance your SME's performance and profitability through bespoke software.

Understanding your business needs

Before diving into the world of software solutions, it's crucial to have a clear understanding of your business's unique needs, goals, and challenges. This section will guide you through a self-assessment process to help you scope your project so you can brief your development team better and avoid wasting money and time. Pinpointing your specific requirements also helps you to make informed decisions about the software that will best support your business growth.

Let's start by taking a closer look at your business...

Business Needs Assessment	Your annual turnover and current number of employees	
	Your business goals for this year	
	KPIs this software will help achieve	
	The top 3 problems this new software needs to solve	
	Expected financial and operational benefits	
	Metrics to measure the ROI of this software (e.g. employee retention)	
	Key stakeholders and their top expectation for the software	
	Alternative solutions we've considered (e.g. off the shelf softwares)	

Software Requirements

The essential features and functionalities this software needs to meet

Of these essential features, which is the top priority?

The top functionalities that need to be met from your users perspective

Your change management process

Key takeaways from your feasibility study

Goal Setting

SMART goals for the project

List the resources (e.g. budget, time, personnel) required to achieve these goals

KPIs for the project

List all the stakeholders these goals need to be shared with

Method for tracking goals

Clearly defined objectives will enable you and your development team create a strategic roadmap for your project, helping to maintain focus and prevent scope creep. By outlining your desired outcomes, you can also measure the success of your new, bespoke software and its impact on your business. This clarity also facilitates effective communication with the development team, minimising misunderstandings, ensuring the final product meets your requirements, and giving you that competitive advantage.

How to identify areas where bespoke software can offer a competitive advantage



Bespoke software, tailored specifically to your business needs, can be a powerful tool for gaining a competitive edge. To identify areas where custom software can deliver the greatest impact, conduct a thorough analysis of your operations. Look for processes that are inefficient, error-prone, or hinder growth. Consider areas where your competitors might have advantages that could be replicated or surpassed through tailored technology.

By pinpointing these areas, you can begin to envision how bespoke software can help to streamline operations, enhance decision-making, and ultimately differentiate your business.

Got Questions?

Should I start with an MVP?

For a lot of SMEs, a Minimum Viable Product, or MVP, is a great place to start. An MVP is essentially a version of your software that only contains the core features needed to solve your specific problem. It's about launching quickly and gathering real-world feedback to inform future development. By focusing on essential functionalities, you can reduce development costs and time-to-market. This allows you to test your product idea with real users, gather valuable insights, and improve based on their feedback. Ultimately, an MVP helps you de-risk your investment by validating your concept before committing your resources to a larger development.

Is bespoke software affordable for SMEs?

Ah, the golden question! Unfortunately, there's no simple answer. For a basic CRM development project, you can expect starting prices to be around £10,000+. However bespoke software is like a tailored suit; the price varies greatly depending on the complexity, features, and size of the development team. When you're looking to invest in bespoke software, you'll come across 3 different pricing structures:

- Fixed price - for projects with well-defined scopes.
- Time & Materials - for projects requiring a bit more flexibility.
- Dedicated team - for new or ongoing projects that need our full attention.

Check out our [pricing page](#) for more info.

How long does it take to develop bespoke software?

The development time depends on the same factors as cost. It's like asking how long is a piece of string. Some key factors influencing your timeline however are:

- The complexity of the software.
- The size of the development team required for the project.
- How the project will be managed.

Understanding technical feasibility is crucial. Just because you want to recreate Instagram doesn't mean it's possible within your budget or timeframe. A good software provider will be honest about what can and can't be achieved.

When is the right time to invest in custom CRMs?

Investing in a custom CRM is a significant decision. It's worth considering when your current system struggles to manage growing customer data, hinders sales and marketing efficiency, or fails to adapt to your unique business processes. If you find your team spending excessive time on manual data entry, lack visibility into customer interactions, or struggle to meet customer expectations, a custom CRM could be the solution. Evaluate your business growth, the complexity of your sales cycle, and the need for data security. If off-the-shelf options don't align with your specific requirements, a custom CRM can provide a tailored solution to drive business success.



Choosing the Right Software Development Partner

Choosing the right bespoke software development company is an important decision - no matter how big your business. The right partner can be transformational for your business operations, so, to make sure you make the right choice, it's important to keep an eye out for the following factors...

Experience

One of the most important things to pay attention to is experience. A proven track record indicates the company's ability to navigate challenges, deliver on time, and produce high-quality solutions. Look for a partner with a history of working on projects similar to yours, demonstrating their understanding of your specific needs.

Expertise

Equally important is the development team's expertise. Technical proficiency, coupled with a deep understanding of your business goals is essential so don't be afraid to ask about this. Assess the team's skill set in relation to the technologies required for your project. A strong technical foundation will ensure the software is robust, scalable, and secure. To gauge a software company's capabilities and cultural fit, delve into their previous client experiences. Request references and case studies to understand their approach to projects, problem-solving, and client satisfaction. Positive testimonials from businesses similar to yours offer valuable insights into potential outcomes.

Understanding

Your chosen development company should also be good at translating technical complexities into understandable terms so, if you're ever unclear on anything, be sure to ask so you're confident in your next steps. Open and transparent communication prevents misunderstandings and ensures your vision is accurately captured by the software.

By meticulously considering these factors, your business can increase its chances of finding a development partner that aligns with your business objectives and delivers a software solution that drives growth and success.



Bespoke software development, while promising significant benefits, can also present unique challenges for SMEs, such as...

Scope Creep

Scope creep, the gradual expansion of a project's goals beyond its original parameters, is a common culprit. To mitigate this, nail down your software requirements before development begins. A detailed project scope can be your best tool as it can be regularly reviewed throughout the project's lifetime and can identify potential scope expansions early on. Remember, while it might be tempting to add new features during development, evaluating their necessity against the project's primary objectives is vital.

Budget Overruns

Budget overruns often stem from underestimated project complexities or unforeseen costs. Creating a comprehensive budget from the outset, allocating funds for potential contingencies, and establishing clear payment milestones can help prevent financial surprises. Regular budget reviews and transparent communication with the development provider are also very important. Consider breaking down the project into phases with defined budgets, allowing for more granular control.

Communication Gaps

Misunderstandings between you and the development team can lead to delays, errors, and increased costs. Effective communication is paramount. Regular meetings, preferably involving key stakeholders from both sides, should be scheduled and all project documents should be easily accessible for all. Building a strong rapport with the development team encourages open dialogue and helps prevent misunderstandings.

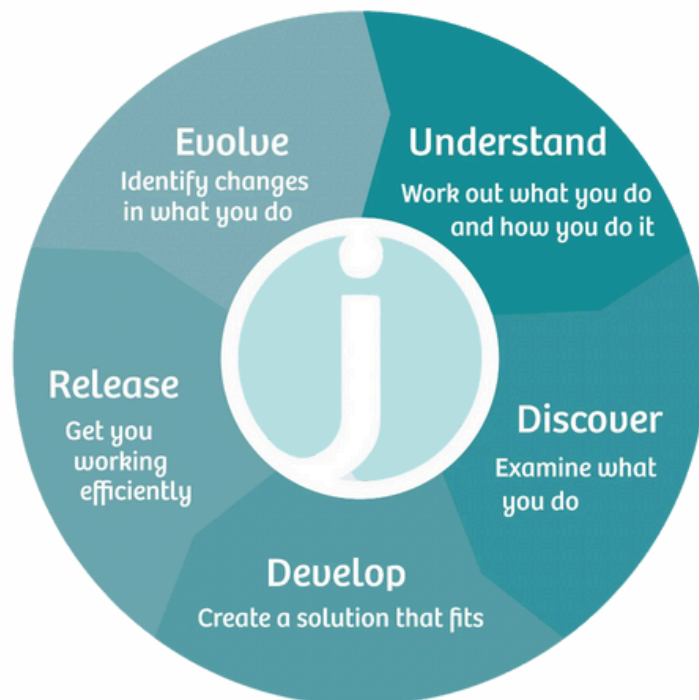
Delays

Delays in software development can disrupt business operations and impact revenue. A detailed project timeline with clear milestones is crucial for tracking progress. Regular status updates and risk assessments can help identify potential delays early on. Build buffer time into your project schedule to account for unforeseen challenges. Consider using agile development methodologies, which allow for flexibility and adaptability. Collaborate closely with the development team to prioritise tasks and ensure critical functionalities are delivered on time.

By proactively addressing these challenges, you can increase your chances of a successful bespoke software development project.

The Bespoke Software Development Process

Creating bespoke software is a collaborative journey that involves several interconnected stages. Understanding this process is crucial for SMEs looking to invest in custom software solutions.



The process typically begins with requirement gathering. This involves a deep dive into your business operations to identify specific needs, pain points, and desired outcomes. Effective communication is paramount at this stage, as the software provider needs a clear picture of your goals to create a solution that truly fits your business.

Once the requirements are understood, the design phase commences. Here, the software provider translates your needs into a blueprint for the software. This includes outlining the software's functionality, user interface, and architecture. Your input remains vital to ensure the design aligns with your vision.

With a solid design in place, development starts. This is where the software takes shape, with programmers writing the code that brings the design to life. Regular communication and collaboration are essential during this phase to address any emerging challenges or required adjustments.

Testing is crucial to guarantee that the software functions as intended. This involves rigorous checks to identify and rectify any bugs or errors. User testing is often incorporated to gather feedback on usability and functionality.

Once the software is thoroughly tested and refined, it's ready for deployment. Deployment strategies vary depending on your project. For example, a web platform might require deployment to a web server, while an internal Windows app would need installation on individual machines. iOS apps often involve a review process by Apple before being released to the App Store. The specific deployment methodology will be tailored to the project's unique requirements.

The journey doesn't end with deployment. Maintenance is an ongoing process that involves providing support,



updates, and enhancements to the software. Regular communication with your software provider ensures the software continues to meet your evolving business needs.

Throughout the entire process, open and honest communication is key to a successful project. By working closely with your software provider, you can ensure that the final product meets your expectations and delivers the desired business benefits.

Remember, building bespoke software is a partnership. Your involvement and insights are invaluable at every stage

If you're interested in finding out how bespoke software can support your business development, get in touch with our team today at info@jatech.co.uk.





PLANNING DONE

IN PROGRESS

To-Do

REDO

CLIENT

Jojo Marketing

A Marketing Proposal

Retouching Set cost MINIMUM

International

3/5 done

15 days

Section B Part 1

Online

Marketing Strategy + Culture

↑

OZZI Samples

Integration

Web -> Online =

DYNAMIC MARKET

OZZI Logo

APPROVED

REJECTED

→

↑

↓

←

→

↑

↓

←

→

↑

↓

←

→

↑

↓

←

→

↑

Due Date 27.10.2021

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

Sticky note

**More than forty years
experience at your service.**

We're a long-standing bespoke software development company, focused on delivering value for our clients through digital innovation. We excel in crafting solutions that are efficient, fast, and reliable, perfectly suited to handle the diverse and evolving needs of modern business. With a wealth of experience serving organisations of all sizes, we're capable of meeting the needs of any client, regardless of scale.



01278 588672



info@jatech.co.uk



The Forge Enterprise Center,
Church Road, West
Huntspill, Somerset, TA9
3RN