

7 challenges to throw down to prospective reporting partners (and how they should respond).

Choosing a reporting software provider isn't a checklist exercise. It's not about who promises the most features on a glossy slide deck. It's about finding a partner who can handle the complexity of client and fund reporting under pressure — and one who won't collapse when the scrutiny intensifies.

Too many vendors hide behind pre-recorded demos and vague assurances. The real test is asking the questions they would rather avoid.

Here are seven challenges you should throw down to prospective reporting partners during any procurement process or beauty parade and, most importantly, what to look for in their answers, or hear directly in their responses.

1. Can you show me where my data really comes from?

Reports are only as reliable as the data that powers them. If your vendor cannot demonstrate a clean, automated flow from upstream systems to output, risk levels remain high.

Ask for a clear explanation of integrations, APIs, and workflows. The best vendors will be able to show you, step by step, how data is ingested, validated, and locked against manual tampering.

2. How do you handle last-minute changes?

Reporting never happens in a vacuum. Market moves, client requests, or compliance interventions can all happen hours before deadline.

The best vendors are agile, and should be able to demonstrate rapid template updates, rules-driven components and the ability to publish revised outputs in hours, not weeks. Ask them to demonstrate this to you in a live environment, it will separate those with flexible workflows from those who rely on manual fixes.

3. What happens if we scale — fast?

Many systems are fine for ten reports a month, but what happens when it's 100? Or 1,000? Or when your firm expands into multiple regions and languages?

Ask vendors for evidence of scalability. Those who already support large and complex clients will be proud to share turnaround times and volume benchmarks. If they have client testimonials and are happy to put you in touch with those customers, even better.

4. Where are the bottlenecks in your process?

Every vendor has constraints. If they claim there are none, dig deeper. Their bottlenecks become your bottlenecks once you sign.

Honest acknowledgement of pressure points, backed by workflow tools and monitoring to minimise risk, shows a vendor is confident in their systems and they should be transparent here. Nothing is perfect – if it sounds too good to be true...

5. How do you protect my brand?

A factsheet or client report is not just a compliance obligation, it's a reflection of your brand. Poor formatting, amateur design, and outdated data sends the wrong signal.

Vendors who take design seriously will be able to show live examples that mirror client guidelines exactly. There's no reason a supplier shouldn't be able to deliver pixel-perfect templates, brand-lock features, and flexibility across formats. A serious vendor treats brand fidelity as carefully as they treat data accuracy.

6. Can I speak directly to your team?

When deadlines loom, the last thing you want is to be stuck in a helpdesk queue or only be able to submit an online ticket that could disappear into the ether.

During the most stressful times, access to experienced specialists, not just generic support lines, is critical for peace of mind and stress-free resolutions. The right vendor sees themselves as an extension of your team and should behave as such.

7. Tell me about a time when a process went wrong

Mistakes happen; it's how you deal with them that counts. If a vendor tells you that nothing has ever gone wrong, that should raise suspicions. Even if they are genuine, it raises the question of how would they cope with it when it does eventually happen?

Again, honesty and transparency build trust. No matter how established, efficient or robust a process or system is, things will go wrong at some point. It's important to know what safety nets are in place, and what kind of response you can expect from a prospective provider.

In summary

Choosing the right supplier to build your reporting partnership with is tough. But, like all the strongest relationships, the best ones are built on trust, honesty and transparency, and these questions are designed to help you start any new partnership on the right footing.

A reliable, confident, trustworthy supplier won't dodge these questions, they'll welcome them. It gives them the perfect opportunity to demonstrate how they handle tricky situations, and how open and honest they will be during any potential partnership. If they can demonstrate they can handle your toughest challenges, and know how to react to and resolve problems, you can be confident they'll handle your everyday reporting with ease.

Vendors who cannot (or will not) answer these questions, provide real-life examples or testimonials, and are unwilling to do live demonstrations, should be approached with caution or, safer still, removed from the selection process altogether.