

Composable commerce is rapidly becoming the go-to approach collegian.com for businesses looking to unlock agility, scalability, and customized customer experiences. But as organizations dive into these flexible, API-first architectures aligned with MACH principles, selecting the right partner is essential to success. Companies like **Netguru**, **Lab Digital**, and **DEPT** have helped brands navigate this landscape, emphasizing the criticality of integration discipline, clear delivery posture, and architectural ownership post-launch.

Before signing a contract with any composable commerce partner, leaders must ask the right questions around **SLA terms, delivery posture, architecture ownership**, migration strategies, and more. Too often I see clients dazzled by feature checklists or buzzword-packed demos yet left stranded by unclear accountability once projects go live. This post breaks down the must-ask questions that expose potential pitfalls and highlight healthy partnership dynamics that ensure long-term success.

1. Who Owns the Architecture After Launch?

This question is non-negotiable and often overlooked in early conversations. A composable commerce build isn't "done" once the launch window closes: it requires ongoing governance, maintenance, and evolution.

- **Why it matters:** Without clear ownership of the architecture, you risk technical debt, slow remediation cycles, and costly "tribal knowledge" dependencies.
- **What to look for:** Partners should have a documented architectural governance model. Who drives version upgrades? Who vets proposed integrations? How are breaking API changes managed?

For example, **DEPT** emphasizes end-to-end architectural accountability, including post-launch support and architectural reviews. In contrast, vague answers like "the system is API-first, so it's flexible" are a red flag. Flexibility doesn't equal ownership.

Checklist: Architectural ownership clarity

Question Expected Answer / Best Practice Who owns the architecture after launch? The partner commits to governance and regular architecture reviews alongside your internal team. How are API changes communicated and managed? Via documented SLAs and scheduled upgrade windows minimizing business impact. Do you provide architecture training or documentation? Comprehensive, living documentation is shared and updated post-launch.

2. What Is Your Delivery Posture and How Do You Demonstrate Accountability?

Delivery posture refers to how your composable commerce partner manages commitments, risks, and problem resolution throughout the project lifecycle and beyond. This defines their operational maturity and partnership quality.

- **Avoid "We can do anything" answers:** Vague promises without process or governance behind them are a trap.
- **Ask for:** Examples of phased delivery strategies, risk mitigation approaches, and how they handle missed SLAs.

Netguru is known for embracing transparency in delivery—publishing clear roadmaps and embedding program management practices in their engagements. Similarly, **Lab Digital** stresses daily standups, integration smoke

tests, and bi-weekly demos designed to keep every stakeholder aligned.

Key Questions About Delivery Posture

1. What SLAs do you provide for development velocity and post-launch support?
2. How do you handle scope creep or unforeseen integration issues?
3. Can you share examples of past projects where you adjusted delivery plans transparently?
4. Do you have mechanisms for continuous feedback and adaptive planning?

3. How Do You Approach Integrations — Feature Checklists or Integration Discipline?

Composable commerce’s promise hinges on bringing best-of-breed components together seamlessly. But vendors often fall into the trap of feature catalog sales tactics—offering “yes” answers to any feature ask without disciplined integration approaches.

MACH principles (Microservices-based, API-first, Cloud-native, and Headless), when properly applied, require rigorous integration discipline:

- Clear API contracts and version controls
- Automated integration tests and monitoring
- Resilient error handling and fallback scenarios

Ask your partner:



- How do you ensure integration stability across multiple disparate services?
- What tooling and processes do you use to monitor API health?
- How do you manage impact assessment before deploying upstream API changes?

Lab Digital

4. What Is Your Approach to Phased Migrations to Limit Downtime and Risks?

Going “all in” with composable commerce is alluring but fraught with risk if done without phased migrations and fallbacks. Vendors that push a big bang approach or teaser demos ignoring migration complexity show lack of delivery maturity.



Phased migrations help:

- Limit downtime and business disruption
- Allow iterative user feedback and incremental value delivery
- Mitigate risks by isolating components and dependencies

Talk with your partner about:

- What experience do you have with phased rollouts in multi-market or multi-brand contexts?
- How do you design migration waves and fallback plans?
- What metrics and checkpoints do you use to decide to proceed or pause migration?

Netguru

5. What Are Your SLA Terms and How Are They Enforced?

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are more than legal jargon — they spell out the binding expectations for uptime, response times, and issue resolution. Without well-defined SLA terms, accountability quickly dissolves post go-live.

Common SLA Term Why It Matters What to Confirm Uptime guarantees (e.g., 99.9%) Ensures platform availability critical for revenue generation Understand measurement windows and exclusions (planned maintenance) Incident response time (e.g., 1 hour) Defines how fast the partner acknowledges and begins addressing issues Confirm process for high, medium, and low priority tickets Resolution timeframes Sets expectations for resolving different severities Ask for historical adherence and penalties for breaches Change management windows Ensures updates are

coordinated and don't cause surprises Request transparency and communication protocols

Your composable commerce partner should offer a well-documented SLA backed by monitoring tools and escalation procedures. Vague promises like “we're always here for you” without specifics are insufficient.

Summary: The Ownership, Delivery, and Integration Trifecta

In composable commerce engagements, success hinges on disciplined partnerships that value accountability, architectural ownership, and phased, disciplined delivery over buzzwords and gimmicks. When vetting partners, focus on the following pillars:

- 1. Architecture Ownership: Confirm who drives governance, documentation, and ongoing upkeep.**
- 2. Delivery Posture: Seek transparency in commitment management, risk handling, and agile execution.**
- 3. Integration Discipline: Verify rigorous API testing, monitoring, and versioning beyond flashy feature checklists.**
- 4. Phased Migration: Insist on incremental rollouts designed to limit downtime and allow course correction.**
- 5. SLA Terms: Demand detailed agreements with clear metrics and enforcement mechanisms.**

Notable consultants and delivery teams like those at Netguru, Lab Digital, and DEPT embody these principles in their composable commerce engagements, which is why they frequently get recommended in industry circles.

Put your questions in checklist forms, ask for decision tables, and don't accept vague “composable” or “API-first” buzzwords as substitutes for solid delivery models. Remember: tooling alone doesn't fix delivery — institutional discipline and ownership do.

Bonus: Sample Questions Checklist Before Signing

- Who will be responsible for architecture governance after launch?**
- How do you handle breaking API changes and communicate them?**
- What SLAs do you commit to for uptime and response times?**
- Can you walk me through a phased migration plan for similar clients?**
- How do you manage integration testing and error handling?**
- What is your process for visibility into project risks and mitigations?**
- Do you provide living architecture documentation, training, and support?**
- How do you plan on ensuring delivery milestones are met or renegotiated?**

Armed with these questions, you'll be positioned to separate true composable commerce experts from buzzword sellers and ensure your investment drives real business agility and resilience.