IT Solutions Advice and Guidance

Choosing an IT Supplier

Some useful guidelines

Choosing an IT supplier is a minefield but there are measures you can take to help ensure that your expectations are met and your investment protected. This guide gives you help in asking the right questions when talking to potential IT Suppliers.

Who do they partner with?

It is often said that a man is judged by the company he keeps. This nugget of wisdom stands true in the world of IT. Often the value of partnership is rubbished by suppliers who do not have strong partnerships in place.

Membership of these partner programs often gives the supplier access to additional technical support resources and best practice guidelines. It may also mean that the supplier gets product updates and information in advance of public release enabling the supplier to be better prepared when it recommends solutions.

In many cases partner programs require staff to have passed technical and sales exams before membership is approved.

Perform a credit check

Credit checking a supplier is as important as credit checking a customer. UK Credit Ratings can be measured in two ways, Credit Rating and Suggested Credit Limit.

A credit rating is scored from 0-100 (with 100 being the best). This figure reflects the behavior of the company in paying bills.

The Suggested Credit Limit is the amount of financial exposure recommended per month. This may be a good way to assess how much you are willing to spend with that supplier. Would you spend £10,000 with a company that has a recommended credit limit of £2,000 with their suppliers?

A credit check will also reveal if the supplier has any CCJ's issued against it and enable you to check if they are part of a group.

What is the size and turnover of the business?

This is another piece of information that will be revealed by a Credit Check (unless the company is too small to publish these figures).

How long have they been in business?

IT companies have a habit of appearing and disappearing overnight, you will often see a company go though a "management buyout" or sudden name change. These are often a sign of underlying financial problems. This information is available when you perform a Credit Check.

What support options are available?

OK, so your supplier has delivered your new kit but can they support it and what does that support cost?

You may want a fixed price contract or to "pay-as-you-go". Either way it pays to look at your choices up front.

It is advisable to check that your supplier has dedicated help desk staff because nothing is more frustrating than being cut off from an engineer who is helping you on his mobile phone as he drives through a tunnel.

Ask for staff qualifications

Even if the supplier you are considering has all of the accreditations and partnerships you would expect to see they still may not be sending out staff who are qualified to do your specific job.

Ask who is going to be project managing the work you are having done, look for industry or vendor certifications such as Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer, Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator and Microsoft Certified Professional.

Check if the supplier has Professional Indemnity insurance

What happens if your solution does not meet expectations or you the advice you are given is unsuitable.

Talk to local business organisations such as Chambers of Commerce and Business Link

These organisations can often provide valuable insight into your potential suppliers and can often offer advice on many IT related issues.

Talk to reference sites

If your supplier is experienced and confident in what it does talking to a range of reference sites will not be a problem. Just ask

Ask for a demonstration

Your supplier may talk the talk, but can they walk the walk. Asking for a demonstration will sort the men from the boys.

Make sure they are not contracting out your work

Many businesses claim to offer a full service but in reality they contract out elements of what they do, whilst this is not usually a problem, you may find difficulties if there is a problem with the work undertaken.

Check out their own IT systems, do they practice what they preach? If not, why not?

If it is so good your supplier will use it themselves! Although sometimes technical limitations or requirements may mean this is not the case.

Ask to see any case studies

Case Studies can give you an idea of the real life solutions provided by your potential supplier. It is even better is these are endorsed by the vendor of the products involved.

Further Information

For further details please call one of our sales team on 0800 668 1934 or by visiting our website www.axisfirst.co.uk