

## SERVICE DESCRIPTION

# Avoiding the Pitfalls of Product Selection

One of the most important, long-term business decisions a company makes is the selection of a business software solution to address the needs of a key company function. This process is commonly done by issuing a Request for Proposal through a competitive bidding process. Although the Request For Proposal (RFP) concept is a well-known best practice, many organizations lack the experience or the tools to execute a complete solution selection process effectively.

With the best intentions, organizations start an RFP initiative in order to get comprehensive information to support sound decision-making, and to get the best deal by making use of the company's purchasing power. Through competitive bidding, a company can consider a range of solutions it might not otherwise know about. In the steps to building an RFP, the organization gains a better understanding of its requirements, business needs, environment, and its anticipated Return On Investment (ROI).

## WHAT CAN GO WRONG

But many potential pitfalls stand in the way of any organization that finds itself "re-inventing the wheel" for every solution selection project it takes on:

- Inadequate requirements documentation results from a **misalignment of business and technical priorities**, or the lack of an experienced business analyst well-versed in requirements management.
- Delays and mistakes occur when the **solution selection effort is not managed as a real project** with a project manager, stakeholder engagement, scope definition, a project schedule, milestones, a budget and regular progress reports.
- An **inadequate RFP** is produced with too much or not enough detail, the wrong type of questions, an emphasis on features instead of use cases or poorly written background information or vendor instructions.
- The **bidding and selection process falters** because of vendor confusion, inadequate scheduling, poor vendor/buyer communications or an organization infrastructure that can't respond well to vendor questions or contract negotiations.

## EFFECTIVE PRODUCT SELECTION

The best protection against these problems is to leverage internal or external resources with practical experience in solution selection, and support them with a well-established library of reusable methods and materials built from past efforts and best practices.

But small or mid-sized companies often don't have all of these yet. They need to partner with a team that provides not only the tools but also the education to build up their capabilities and enable them to conduct solution selection on their own in the future. Typically, companies looking to improve their internal expertise need to learn about:

- How to plan and manage a complete solution selection project, setting up stages for project initiation, scope definition, requirements gathering, RFP composition, vendor identification, bid management, vendor selection, negotiation, procurement, and deployment.

- How to internally elicit and document use cases and requirements that provide long-term benefits all the way through final deployment and beyond to other projects.
- Which tools to use for a particular situation, such as a Request For Information (RFI) or Request For Tender (RFT) instead of an RFP.
- How to produce a top-quality RFP or RFI that includes all of the questions required for decision-making, promotes detailed and relevant vendor responses, and clearly conveys instructions to vendors.
- How to identify candidate vendors, publish an RFP, and set up a Web-based communication platform to streamline interactions with all bidders.
- How to benefit from planning early for the deployment of the selected solution into the organization's infrastructure and workforce.

## OUR EXPERIENCE

For more than 15 years, IT Evolution, Inc. has been the go-to partner for mid-sized companies looking to select a technology solution while simultaneously expanding their own solution selection capability for the future. Our experience ranges from handling smaller-scale point solutions - such as help-desk platforms and asset management systems - all the way to global ERP solutions.

- For a non-profit arts consortium, IT Evolution led and executed a project to search for and select an enterprise-grade accounting system that now serves the unique needs of nine separate grant-making programs.
- For a regional transportation and energy company, IT Evolution managed the RFP-based selection project for a multi-state truck-based long-distance communication and workflow management solution.
- For a national law firm, IT Evolution conducted the requirements stage, and coached the client on the RFI and selection stages, for a successful effort to select a long-term software development outsource partner.

Whatever kind of solution you're looking to acquire, we can help your organization find the right product or solution at the best price, and prepare your people to succeed on their own with future solution selection projects.

## ABOUT IT EVOLUTION

Serving Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware companies for more than 15 years, IT Evolution is a leading provider of information technology services. The firm provides a full spectrum of IT services including IT management, data management, IT operations, and project management services. IT Evolution has experienced local resources, with proven results delivering solutions that are right sized for their clients' needs. The companies motto is, "We can help" and they are recognized as one of the fastest growing companies by the Philadelphia 100 and the South Jersey 25. For more information visit [www.ITEVcorp.com](http://www.ITEVcorp.com) or call toll-free at 888-464-1845.