

to contact the corporation for a copy of the RFP. This nonspecific approach has the advantage of attracting vendors that would otherwise be unknown to the corporation. The disadvantages are that some major vendors in the Knowledge Management market may not take notice of the RFP and that the corporation may be inundated with time-wasting, generic proposals that don't address its specific needs.

A second approach is to target specific vendors, based on the advice of a consultant, the results of a web or magazine search, or by interviewing several experts in the KM field. The advantage of a targeted approach is that vendors contacted directly are more likely to respond in a way that addresses the RFP.

One challenge in using the directed approach to issuing RFPs is that vendors must be identified for each class of tools required. As shown in Exhibit 6.3, certain companies specialize in a variety of KM products as well as general, industry-standard products can be used for Knowledge Management. In identifying specific technology vendors, the experiences of the CIO and CKO are particularly relevant. For example, every CIO will have experience with or at least be familiar with standard database products from Microsoft, Oracle, Sybase, IBM, MySQL AB, and InterSystems.

Another approach, as illustrated in the story of the Custom Gene Factory, is to use a combination of shotgun and directed approaches. The downside of this hybrid approach is that a potentially large number of proposals may have to be evaluated very carefully.

### **Assess the Proposals**

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As the deadline specified in the RFP nears, proposals from vendors will begin filtering in. In assessing these proposals, it's tempting to turn first to the solution and ignore the peripheral information that has a direct bearing on it—information on the vendor and the developers of the