Working closely with a team of senior managers, middle managers, and representatives from various communities of practice, the CKO crafts a request for proposal (RFP) that reflects a consensus on what types of technologies are needed to move KM practices in the corporation to the next level. The CKO then mails the RFP describing the ideal content management system to the top content management vendors based on published rankings and magazine advertisements. The CKO also posts notices of the RFP on the company's web site and on several of the online KM newsgroups.

About three months later, at the proposal deadline, the CKO and other team members who contributed to the RFP read the dozen proposals in hand. They create a short list of developers and vendors that seem most likely to succeed in the field, based on reputation, client base, and references. Products from the selected vendors and developers are evaluated in terms of the potential synergies between the current KM process and their fit with CGF's culture. Since CGF's culture is relatively open and unconstrained, proposals that describe content management systems that impose a strict control hierarchy over the KM processes are avoided in favor of solutions that allow flexibility in control.

Vendors and developers also are evaluated from a business perspective, on issues such as price, functionality, likely ROI, and compatibility with the current information system infrastructure. An overall risk score is assigned to the top three solutions, and the composite analysis of each solution is graphed to highlight the relative strengths and weaknesses of each vendor's proposal (see Exhibit 6.1).

As a result of the comparative analysis, including the risk to CGF in the event of vendor failure, investing in the wrong hardware and/or software standards, or investing in a solution that proves to be unworkable, senior management decides that the risk is too great to implement a company-wide KM system in one step. Instead, management elects to