

Another developer issue is market share, in that it's safer to go with a developer that controls a significant share of its market. Product reviews, especially independent reviews in magazines or journals, are another source of information about developers and their products. They should be consistently positive. The willingness of a developer to provide a software escrow is also a critical assessment factor. Software escrow can lessen the likelihood that a developer will leave the corporation stranded with a dead-end product if the development effort fails or falls behind the development schedule.

A major vendor-specific evaluation criterion is whether a vendor is developer certified. Not only should vendors be certified by the developers they represent, but the certification must be meaningful. It should represent, for example, the fact that the vendor regularly receives training on the specific product. Lack of official certification may mean that the vendor either didn't take the time to attend the requisite classes or failed the certification process. Certification is especially relevant when the solution must be customized to fit the corporation's needs. Customization performed by a noncertified vendor may not be supported by the developer.

The availability of the vendor for internal marketing efforts may be critical for a successful implementation. Integrating a Knowledge Management product into an organization involves much more than simply installing a software package and plugging in the associated hardware. It takes a concerted internal corporate marketing effort to achieve buy-in from the knowledge workers and managers the technology is intended to empower. Vendors should be ready and willing assist with the buy-in process by participating in an official kickoff event and by providing management and knowledge workers with additional information. For example, vendors should be prepared to share successes stories and, more important, accounts of failures in similar companies.