

A vendor's style has to mesh with the company culture if management is to get buy-in from internal knowledge workers. A compatible style is also necessary for effective training and support. For example, a vendor with a laidback approach may be incompatible with high-powered knowledge workers who value their time above all else. For these workers, a vendor with a slow, methodical, and complete style of teaching and product support may be intolerable.

Many vendors and developers work in concert with a client. For example, the vendor may provide sales and account management, while the developer provides training and ongoing support. The common factors related to vendor and developer assessment focus on parameters that define the business relationship and the likelihood that the vendor and developers will continue to exist in the long term. Bank references regarding financial status, breadth and depth of the client base, and management structure and experience are good indicators of vendor and developer stability.

The reputations of the vendor and the developer, references, and history provide a subjective measure of what the company can expect in terms of adhering to time lines, cost, and service. Finally, location may be a practical concern, especially the relative location of the vendor. Off-site training at the vendor's facilities is much less expensive when the vendor is local. Similarly, it's a bonus to be able to drop by the developer's main offices to discuss product issues. At the other extreme, developers located overseas often present a considerable risk, even when there is a local vendor. If the developer folds, enforcing contractual obligations may be impractical.

Evaluate the Technology Solutions

With the proposals from viable vendors and developers in hand, the next step is to evaluate the technology solutions. This phase of the evaluation