



602.265.9003  
fax 602.467.3289

**Data Site Consortium, Inc.**  
*Insightful Client Service, Our Differentiator for the New Millennium™*  
**Since 1986**

3411 N 5th Ave, Suite 303  
Phoenix, Arizona  
85013

Date Printed: 1/21/2011

## CARRIER SERVICES PROCUREMENT SERIES

# Telcom Request For Proposal Cycle

## ... Put it in writing

The RFP is the template for your vendor's contract with you. If the vendor doesn't know what you expect, a long contract negotiation is a certainty. In fact, a less-than-solid RFP could ultimately result in both parties throwing their hands in the air and deciding it's just not the worth the effort to do business together.

## Step 1: Before writing the RFP

Describe your enterprise network and determine your business requirements. Focus on these key areas and answer the following questions:

- Applications and business processes the network supports. Are some services more mission-critical than others? What is your organization's geographical reach? Are there critical periods when the network must be particularly stable?
- Current network service levels. What are the current goals and performance in such areas as availability, mean time to restore, utilization and latency? How are these metrics gathered and reported? Are there areas in which improvements could be realized through investment in automation?
- Network topology. Are there any long overdue network design changes? Which protocols are supported? Do you plan to add, remove or change locations, protocol support or speed? Have you experienced any major problems with the topology?
- Technology. What hardware and software are running on the network? Has any equipment or software been modified to support nonstandard protocols or systems? Do you plan to migrate from routers to switches or ISDN to broadband?
- Help desk. Does a single group handle application and network problem calls? What are the help desk's problem resolution responsibilities?
- Current budget. How much are you spending on people, hardware, software, telecommunications, network management, etc.? Take time to understand the components that will not be reduced or changed by outsourcing, such as your salary.
- Contractual obligations. Do any contracts have exclusivity clauses? What are the term commitments? Contract terms and conditions are important regardless of whether you end up choosing a new carrier or staying with your current service provider.

After you document your enterprise, it's time to think about the portions of the network you can outsource. Most companies that provide network outsourcing have defined capabilities in areas such as service levels, reporting, supported technologies and processes.

## Step 2: Drafting the RFP

The most important thing to remember when you draft an RFP is "garbage out, garbage back." In other words, if your RFP is

comprehensive and honest, the proposals you receive are likely to be comprehensive and honest, too. But outsourcing fails miserably when the customer and vendor are discovering information about each other during the term of the contract. Share as much information as you can with prospective vendors.

## Step 3: Preparing for evaluations

While you're waiting for vendors to submit their proposals, spend time constructing your evaluation assessment matrix (you should have already stated the criteria in the RFP).

The criteria might be cost, reliability, management capabilities and account support.

The easiest and most comprehensive method is to construct two spreadsheets to perform side-by-side comparisons. Use one for quantitative assessments and the other for qualitative assessment.

Again, make sure your prospective vendors understand the evaluation criteria. The quantitative assessment spreadsheet should include every section and question you've asked along with a rating system weighted by your criteria. This matrix is useful for tracking vendors' scores.

## Step 4: Evaluating vendor offerors

Compile a list of questions for the vendor as you read through each bid. Did the vendor commit to 100% availability on the WAN? Doesn't that seem to be just a bit of an exaggeration? If an answer doesn't make sense, the vendor may have misunderstood the question.

Give vendors a chance to clarify their proposals, either in print or in person. You may choose to submit your questions to each vendor and request a written response, or you may choose to submit your questions and have vendors address them at their proposal presentation.

The vendor presentations should be the icing on the cake and used as a final qualitative assessment of the candidates.

## Step 5: Final choices

- Review the processes - Take a final look at your vendor's implementation, escalation, management, ticketing and billing processes. Make sure these meet your needs.
- Meet the people - Visit the outsourcer's management center and meet the people who will manage your network. Do they seem overworked? Are they trained to support your specific network configuration?
- Get it on paper - Review the contract, paying special attention SLAs and how the vendor's reporting will indicate compliance or noncompliance.
- Ask questions - Keep asking questions until you're satisfied.
- Look for quality - Look for quality in the outsourcer's systems, tools and personnel. If the vendor hasn't made the required investment, your service will suffer.

**Call Data Site for the best Telecommunications RFP support  
.... 602.265.9003**