



## ***VENDOR QUALIFICATIONS***

***TECHNOLOGY:*** Are you presenting the best solution available? While you want something that is proven, it must be current technology and evolve. Are you presenting old technology because your organization is rooted in the old technology?

***BEST OF BREED:*** Am I getting the best of each type of system I'm buying? Manufacturers sell their product only. Independent dealers have the advantage of being able to utilize only the best product and manufacturer in each category.

***CORE BUSINESS:*** Is what you are selling me your core business?

***PARTNERSHIP:*** Are you the type of vendor who will partner with me or are you just interested in making a hardware sale? In the past, telecommunications systems were a buy-and-forget proposition. Today, it is important to "team" with a vendor to build and maintain a customized solution.

***TOTAL SOLUTION:*** Are you experienced in all aspects of telecom or just selling equipment? A total solution includes placing orders and managing the local phone company, hardware installation, design, maintenance and 24 hour support.

***POST-SALE SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE:*** How do you provide support after the sale? Do you have support via your website? FAQ's? Access to downloadable documents? Do you have a fully-staffed Help Desk? Will I be assigned a dedicated Account Manager?

***VENDOR VISION:*** Do you have a good grasp of the industry and its future? If your vendor is not keeping up on the rapid changes in the industry, there is no way that they can adequately serve your long term needs.

***TRACK RECORD:*** Are you stable and will you be around in three years? Companies are in and out of the industry all of the time. Remember this is a relationship that will last for years – that is....if the vendor is still in the business.

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### *WHAT'S NOT IN THE QUOTE?*

When you get the quote from your vendor it can be an incredible challenge just to understand the various items that are included, let alone understand what's been left out. To help you make sure you're getting everything you'll need, here are questions you should ask when you receive the quote:

- Is this a turn-key system?
- Who is doing the ordering of third party work (T1 lines, cabling, etc.)?
- Who is doing the project management?
- Who will train the end users?
- Who will be there on cutover day?
- Will I need any Infrastructure upgrades (LAN, WAN, Cabling, Power) to get this working reliably with good voice quality?
- Core LAN capacity?
- Policy management system?
- Do I have to pay for additional training for my staff and is this included in the quote?

You don't want to be left holding the bag if your supplier cannot deliver on the key issues of standards and manageability or forces you to over-provision (either because of system shortcomings or proprietary requirements). Some of the best-known VoIP systems are merely cobbled components that were never designed to work together.