



TOP **10** TIPS

Supplier Management

If IT suppliers are unavoidable, then making sure they work with you and to the benefit of your business is essential.

1

Choose intelligently

Get it right in the first place, don't choose the first supplier that comes along. For serious decisions use a proper selection process.

2

References

Always take up references, at least two. Talk directly with the reference sites, don't be afraid to ask awkward questions.

3

Share upside

Understand how they make a profit and ensure the deal works for them long-term. Are they selling plentiful commodities (eg s/w licenses) or rare and valuable skills?

4

Let the supplier in

Make time to explain to them how your business works and what matters to you. Ask them to suggest how they can do more to help your business prosper.

5

Contract & Service Levels

Always have a contract and demand break clauses. Agree service levels – if you want something done within a certain timescale, tell them and get agreement.

6

Reporting

Set up regular reporting, don't expect it to just happen. Insist that it is included in the service levels in the contract and ask for it if it doesn't arrive.

7

Communications

Constant communication is essential. Without it, the relationship will fail. Get agreement on the way your company and the supplier are going to interact. Have regular, structured meetings - not just when things are going wrong.

8

Be a Professional Client

Always be engaged, and positive. Connect with your supplier's people when they're on your site and look after them. Be complimentary when appropriate. Be a prompt payer.

9

Relationships

If you don't like the service delivery manager or the supplier's CEO then don't use the supplier. Personal relationships are key to success.

10

Challenge

Don't allow the supplier to become complacent. Keep them keen by challenging their pricing, their service levels, and demand innovations. Regularly compare their services with others and provide feedback to them.

Freeman Clarke is the largest and most experienced team of part-time (we call it "fractional") IT Directors, CIOs and CTOs. We work exclusively with SME and mid-market organisations and we frequently help them improve services from their suppliers.

Contact us for an informal conversation.