



TOP **10** TIPS

Supplier Management

If you need to work with IT suppliers, then it's essential to ensure that they work with you and to the benefit of your business.

1

Choose wisely

Don't choose the first supplier that comes along. This is a serious decision, so make it a proper selection process.

2

Get references

Always request references — two at the very least. Talk directly with the referrals, and don't be afraid to ask awkward questions.

3

Remember that relationships are crucial

If you don't like the supplier's CEO or service manager then don't use them. Because once you sign a contract, you're stuck with them, and good personal relationships are key to success.

4

Share the upside

Understand how they make a profit to ensure the deal works for them long-term. Are they selling plentiful commodities, such as software licenses, or rare and valuable skills?

5

Let the supplier in

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

6

Have a contract with benchmarks

Always have a contract with service benchmarks. For instance, if you want something done within a certain timeframe, get it in writing — and include which missed benchmarks will void the contract.

7

Insist upon regular reporting

Don't expect it to just happen — get it in writing.

8

Insist upon regular communications as well

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

9

Challenge them!

Don't allow the supplier to become complacent. Keep them engaged by challenging their pricing and service. Demand innovation. Regularly compare their services to comparable suppliers and let your guys know what you've turned up.

10

Be a good client

Always be positive and engaged. Look after your supplier's people when they're on-site. Don't be stingy with compliments when they deserve them, and pay on time.

Freeman Clarke is the largest and most experienced team of part-time, or fractional, IT leaders. We work exclusively with organizations looking to use IT to grow their business. **For an informal conversation, contact us and we'll be in touch.**