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Selecting an IFS Solution Support Partner

by Dharam Atwal of Muzulu Ltd

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This white paper aims to provide some guidance on navigating the selection of your support partner, with seven tips for your selection criteria.

Selecting an ERP support partner can be critical to maximising the ongoing productivity and return on investment, in your Business Solution. It is increasingly important to make sure your partner can add real business value to supplement your ERP vendor's support.

Making sure you select the right partner can be a tricky process. How can you differentiate between the various suppliers and offerings? What are the key things you should look for?

Service Model

There are various models available form suppliers, ranging from flat annual fees to hourly charges invoiced each month. Of course, you should consider which model works best from a budgetary perspective, but it is also critical to ensure the process enables quick resolution of calls and requests to ensure your staff are able to work effectively and leverage the expert advice available. Solutions that offer both proactive maintenance and diagnostics, combined with reactive ticket-based support for technical and functional consultancy provide a holistic solution to help maximise system uptime and user productivity.

Single Source Provider

Having a partner who can support the full IFS implementation, from database to middleware as well as application consultancy is a big benefit. A single place for all call logging gives your users a straightforward process to adhere to. Triage of tickets, no matter what layer of the solution they relate to, can then be quickly achieved with cases passed smoothly to the correct team for resolution. Calls can often require investigation across multiple layers of the solution and there is regularly a crossover between technical and functional consultancy, so having this all in the hands of one partner greatly improves resolution times.

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Accreditations

It is important to understand the skillsets and accreditations of the team who will be manning the support desk and providing functional consultancy. Both first line and second line support staff should have the right level of experience to deliver a viable solution for you. Simple calls should be quickly triaged and passed to first line support to resolve, and more complex requests should be passed to technical of functional consultants with the right expertise. Vendor accreditations should also be considered; partner status with IFS demonstrates a partner's commitment to ongoing development of skills, ISO accreditations are an indicator of quality and best practice.

Project Capabilities

While the day-to-day support competencies are a focus, it is worth considering the capabilities a partner can offer around bigger projects. A partner who understands your solution and can assist in all areas is invaluable in delivering projects on time and on budget.

Can they assist with implementing new modules or processes?
Can they help with integration to best-of-breed third-party solutions?
Do they have the experience to deliver an upgrade or even a reimplementation?

Support Desk System & Process

However skilled a support partner is they can always be limited by an inefficient ticketing system and support desk too. A good partner should use a recognised, industry leading support tool.

Ask your potential partner which support tool they use for call logging and ensure they can put the right connectivity in place. Fast access to your system will mean faster investigation and resolution of calls.

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Scalability

Can the partner scale with you as you grow? Consider whether they can support your short-term growth plans, for example growth in number of users or use of additional modules/functionality. It is also good to bear in mind aspects like support for additional sites in other geographic locations, so you can have one partner consistently supporting all your users. They should also be able to help you roll out IFS to new sites or acquired companies wherever they might be.

Partnership-Based Approach

To foster the best relationship; the culture fit between your businesses is vital. An ideal partner is one who will immerse themselves in your business and develop a deep understanding of how it works. Sector specific knowledge is crucial, so your partner has a true understanding of the 'why' and not just the 'how'. This can be particularly useful in highly regulated industries, so solutions are tailored correctly to your business and best practice guidance can be offered.

About the Author

Dharam Atwal is an IT sales professional with over 10 years of experience working with Manufacturing, Construction and Engineering companies to help them select and implement business transforming solutions to drive efficiency and reduce cost.

About Muzulu

Muzulu are an IFS Silver Reseller and Authorized Services Partner, based in Oxford. We provide industry leading IFS Consultancy interwoven with best of breed additional products, ensuring high satisfaction rates for both our customers and IFS.

Our founding partners are all ex-colleagues from their time at IFS, but more importantly are good friends. The result is an excellent cohesive team who help businesses maximise their investment in IFS Applications, enabling growth, reducing cost and mitigating risk.