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The Value of a Thought Partner in IT

When choosing vendors for IT projects, it's important to rely on people you can trust.

by Karen D. Schwartz (/author/karen-d-schwartz)   posted **Apr 04, 2012**

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When something isn't broken, it doesn't pay to try to fix it. That's the adage Jeffrey Groff goes by. Groff, IT manager at the Campbell Group (http://www.biztechmagazine.com/article/2012/04/big-data-needs-push-firm-explore-storage-options) , started working with his account manager at CDW nine years and three jobs ago, and still relies on her today. He brought the CDW relationship from his past two companies to the Campbell Group, and says he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I have built a relationship with CDW and my account rep, and I trust that they will do what's best for our company and point us in the right direction," he says. "That's not always the case with vendors, so I really value the relationship."

Groff says he talks to his CDW account manager at least three times a week. Because of that ongoing dialog, it's a natural progression of events when an idea moves to the project stage and then to implementation.

"We talk about the ideas I have and what we plan to do in the future, and it snowballs from there," Groff says. "When we start getting serious about a new project, my account rep already knows a lot about where we are, and she knows what questions to ask to get us pointed in the right direction — both in terms of price and equipment."

> "I have built a relationship with CDW and my account rep, and I trust that they will do what's best for our company and point us in the right direction," says Jeffrey Groff, IT Manager for the Campbell Group.
>
> Credit: Robbie McClaran

Getting an Upfront Assessment

For the Campbell Group's latest storage project, for example, CDW suggested, based on the company's needs, that Groff look at equipment from EMC (http://www.cdw.com/content/brands/emc/default.aspx) . Groff also chose to interview two other vendors with offices near Campbell's main campus in Portland.

Although the other two vendors made convincing presentations, CDW went a step further and arranged for EMC engineers, sales associates and technical support personnel to visit the company and fully examine the environment. While there, EMC personnel assessed the data center's workload, projected future needs and determined how equipment would scale.

When it came down to it, that attention to detail and the equipment recommendations won Groff over. "We went with EMC because the technology is modular and expandable, because it can load balance between the drives or RAIDs, and because it offered support that seemed to surpass other vendors," Groff says.

Once chosen, CDW managed the entire process, including shipping, sending technical staff for installation and configuration, and training. "It was the whole package," Groff says. "I knew I could really rely on them to manage all of the details I didn't have the resources or time to manage."

Time and convenience are critical, but value — getting the best price — is also important. In this case, Groff says, he didn't have to sacrifice one for the other.

"We compared the proposal to the other players we met with, and CDW came out very competitively," he says. "They were able to get me the best price on the best product. We really appreciated that, but in the end, a relationship you can trust is even more important."

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