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How to Select a Service Provider

When it comes to selecting a service provider, there are a few things to consider. While most properties have a set list of preferred vendors that they like to work with, there will come a time, for one reason or another, when you'll need to add more vendors to your roster.

With so many vendors out there, it can be hard to decide who would be a good fit for your property. Not all companies are created equal, and you want to be sure that you're choosing the best company when you're considering letting them bid on your annual or one-off contracts.

There are some standard best practices to consider for the procurement process, and we will look at those here. But just as important, we will take a look at some additional things that should be considered when adding vendors to your preferred list.

To start, let's take a look at some of the

standard considerations when looking for a service provider.

Ask For Recommendations

When looking for a vendor, the first step is to do your due diligence and complete some simple research online. A quick google search will find you everything you need. Do they have a website? Reviews? Existing clients?

Another option, if you can, is to ask your colleagues or other property managers in your area if they have any preferred vendors that they could recommend. Or, if there is a directory with reviews and comments, this can be very helpful when initially picking vendors for a chance to work with you.

Hire a Licensed & Insured Company

When it comes to liability, a property management company must carefully

supervise renovations, construction, and maintenance. If anything happens due to negligence on a job, the property management company could be held liable.

Ensure that the vendor you are working with is licensed (if applicable) in your area. Some cities require specific licensing to work within their jurisdiction. Along with licensing, you will want to ensure that they have an insurance policy and bond that is adequate to cover any damage to the property and/or injuries that could occur. In other words, you will need to make sure that these companies are compliant, and you will want proof of their license and a copy of their insurance claim for your records.

Also, it is important to make sure that they follow standard health and safety practices. Are they Workers Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) certified? Depending



on the province, different organizations may be responsible for advocating for workers' safety. Does the company being considered have procedures and protocols for ensuring safety?

Having adequate minimum insurance coverage is essential and is required by law. However, depending on the scope of work, you may want to ask for additional coverage. As the saying goes, "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Experience Matters

Typically for a vendor to complete their job professionally and safely, we would expect them to have the necessary skills and experience. While this isn't always the case, because everyone must start somewhere, it can give peace of mind when awarding a contract.

Before hiring anyone or even sending out a Request For Proposal (RFP), make sure to check a company's credibility, qualifications, and level of experience. Do they hold any industry certifications? Do they undergo any extra training or qualifications

that make them stand apart from their competitors? Conduct an online review by checking their website and customer feedback. You can usually get a sense of their work quality and service by checking online.

Consider Your Budget

While budget is crucial, price shouldn't be the only factor when deciding on a vendor.

When it comes down to dollars, you can look at this two ways. First as the price, and second as the value. At first glance, these can be seen as the same thing, but they are, in fact, quite different. In the world, price is arbitrary, and value is fundamental. For example, suppose you receive two quotes for a given service at \$10,000 each. The price for both companies is just that, \$10,000. However, the value can be very different. Company one is a brand new startup with no previous customers, whereas the second company is an established business with 20 years of experience and a list of high-profile customers. It may be

that the more established company can bring additional non-monetary value to the project.

Although the standard considerations cover the basics of the work itself, there are more nuanced aspects that you can choose to consider when sourcing a vendor.

Environmental Responsibility

Whether they realize it or not, businesses are inextricably linked to environmental sustainability. A wide range of building maintenance services—including facilities management, property management, cleaning and janitorial services, and pest control—can contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

For example, establishing green initiatives in your building maintenance and operations plans is an excellent way to meet your Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) objectives and improve the quality of life of your employees and tenants. As you look for building services vendors, consider those aligned with your organization's ESG goals that can help with your efforts. Here are some green considerations to keep in



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mind when choosing your partner.

Building Maintenance Certifications

There are several green certifications that building maintenance vendors can earn. To ensure your vendors' green initiative is legitimate, check for accreditation from The Green Business Certification Inc. or e-Standards and Certifications Institute (eSCI). Also, ask if their products contain recycled materials and if they use non-toxic chemicals. Remember—the more you know about how your vendor works toward sustainability, the better chance you have at creating an eco-friendly building!

Follow the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

As agreed upon by all United Nations member states in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals are a plan for global development. Follow them religiously to hire building maintenance vendors that support your green initiatives. In order to achieve these goals, countries worldwide must cut their carbon emissions and green their economies—all while providing a high quality of life for their citizens. Clearly, there's much more at stake than just paper-pushing or hitting quarterly targets! As you're reading this, you may be wondering what you can do to help reach these lofty goals. The first step is hiring building maintenance vendors that align with sustainable practices.

Though you can't necessarily control what your vendors do in their day-to-day operations, you can weigh their commitment to environmental sustainability when deciding who to use for building maintenance. It's important to understand that not all vendors will be able to meet every green initiative, so it's up to you and your team to prioritize and choose wisely based on your company's priorities and resources.

Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is on everyone's mind, from political figures to commercial building owners. But what does it mean to be socially responsible? And how does this impact the average business owner?

In its essence, social responsibility means that individuals and companies have a duty to act in the best interests of their environment and society as a whole. You can make sure your business is doing its part by hiring socially

responsible vendors. These vendors aren't only doing what they can to help the community, but they are also adding to your building's social responsibility initiatives.

Does It Really Matter?

Yes, it really does matter. Your organization's well-being depends on a long list of factors—some of which are out of your control. But one thing you can control is who provides your business with goods and services.



Although the standard considerations cover the basics of the work itself, there are more nuanced aspects that you can choose to consider when sourcing a vendor.

Why not support those organizations that share your values? A socially responsible vendor will treat you as more than just another source of income; they'll invest time in understanding your business.

They have a stake in making sure your success is tied to theirs. This makes them more engaged and committed to quality, service, and meeting deadlines – something every organization wants from its vendors.

How Can I Tell if They Are Socially Responsible?

You can usually find information about whether a company is socially responsible in one of two places: on their website or on their social media accounts.

If they have an About Us section on their website, look there for mentions of social responsibility. Most companies are proud to promote doing good work in these areas, so it shouldn't be hard to find.

It would also be worth looking at their corporate and CEO/founder's social media accounts—that's often where many companies get involved with promoting their brand and offering glimpses into how they operate. In some cases, you might even get a bit of insight into what kind of company culture they have, which can give you some clues as to how things might go if you worked with them.

Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Diversity and inclusion are important because they are essential for a

workplace that supports people from all backgrounds and because they are good for business. Diversity increases engagement, leads to greater innovation, and increases retention by improving employee well-being.

If your company is committed to hiring diverse talent, finding a vendor partner who shares your values can seem daunting. But doing so is well worth it—not only for your business but also for society as a whole.

Overall Company Alignment

It's safe to say when it comes to choosing vendors for your buildings, there are many questions to consider. Do they have safety training? Is their staff well-qualified? What about how they treat clients? And then there's that one question that often gets left out of consideration: Are these people suitable for our community?

Vendor selection should not be solely based on price and standard considerations. It should also take into account other factors such as corporate culture, their commitment to ESG and their willingness to create a mutually beneficial partnership.

Today, there are digital services that can help you make informed decisions regarding vendor selection. Such systems can streamline efficiency at the site level while providing centralized control to the head office in planning services, requesting quotes, finding new vendors and vendor compliance (insurance, WCB, service requirements, etc.), and eventual selection. ■

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