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Consultants Hired By Clients Tough on Bidders, Make Site Visits

Consultants hired by corporate clients to help select relocation vendor's services aren't likely to sit in their cubicles and review RFPs—or rely on client presentations to gauge the quality of services. Bidders can expect site visits from consultants who want to see for themselves how the technology candidates boast about works.

Corporations pay for advocates to give them advice on what to look for when selecting vendors to handle relocation contracts.

High-tech systems that can ensure data protection, for instance, are a must-have for third-parties to be considered for the job. "Some clients may claim they have the technology," Don Fisher from Fisher & Sons tells *Relocation Report* "I go to their offices and say, 'Show me what protection you have, I want to see how it works. Some people (say they have) great technology but won't let you see it.'"

"Others," he continues, "have a demo model that appears to work but in actuality they know it doesn't work. The ones that are good love it (site visits). The proof is in the pudding. I have to say that anybody who offers to let us take a look at their facility deep down inside must feel good about what they offer."

Technology is just one facet of the relocation program Fisher is interested in looking at during

visits. In his travels to Asia, Europe and the US for site visits, he asks bidders to see "things that will peak our interest in the RFP. If they say, 'this is the team that will work on the account,'" he explains, "We want to see the team and how busy they are."

Vendors Get Tips on Enhancing Services

Some vendors, for instance, offer good services, but only in smaller markets. Fisher tells them they aren't big enough to qualify for the job but he also offers suggestions on what they can do to be more competitive in a bigger market—and have better luck at winning the contract next time around. "I want to stimulate competition," he says. "If there are competitors out there who are willing to invest money to better compete, that's better for me and my client."

Asking the right questions is key to producing answers corporations need to determine the best candidates. Many third-parties have repeatedly complained that some RFPs include too many general or irrelevant questions to generate useful answers—a sign that the process may be rigged because the client already has the winner in mind. Fisher sympathizes with their complaint.

But badly crafted RFPs, he explains, reflect lack of understanding about the kind of information necessary to select vendors rather than malicious intent. He works with procurement and

HR to develop RFPs. But sometimes even his best efforts aren't enough to put out a good product. Some companies feel compelled to ask irrelevant questions no matter what.

"We have a massive RFP out on e-sourcing," he says. "We are working with three different departments including procurement, supply chain management and e-sourcing. I told them that I didn't understand the questions...because so many have nothing to do with transportation, domestic or international. My goal was to delete these questions." Many of the questions, however, are still included in the RFP.

For the most part, however, companies listen to his advice because that's what they hired him for.

Why Bidders Fall Short

Many companies responding to RFPs simply don't have the capability or know-how to handle the relocation account. One company, for instance, controls international relocation out of the west coast office and domestic out of the east coast. "That's sloppy," he says. "I want all of it under one roof so domestic can talk to international as it pertains to relocation."

He'd prefer to work with a company that has staff meetings in a conference room down the hall to settle immigration questions than with a third-party that

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resolves problems over the phone or via email. Other companies are so spread out that their technology platforms don't intermix—causing discrepancies over data and delays.

Household goods shippers often lack sophisticated communications technology, creating a different set of problems. They need to invest in GPS so they can get through to their crew wherever they are at the moment. Many drivers can't be reached if their cell phones are turned off or if they are driving through an area with lousy cell phone reception. But information transmitted through GPS is likely to pop up on the dashboard no matter where they are.

Many van lines also fall short because they haven't switched to bar code systems to tally inventory. Drivers end up taking inventory by hand—making the lists difficult for others, especially international counterparts, to read. "That's a good way for drivers to inflate the loads," Fisher says. "You can't

tell what's in the barrel. I want to see what's in the barrel.

"This way (through bar codes)," he adds, "you can be more specific, identify what's in the box." If the china in one of

the barrels breaks, Fisher wants to know who broke it, and who packed it. Bar codes can provide that information. "The real quality drivers out there want it. But not everybody has it."

Rumor Has It—Contracts Won, Bids Lost

(Companies who would like to have their contracts listed can email Editor Marcela Kogan at marcykog1@aol.com.)

- **Gillette** gives contract to **SIRVA** under the **Procter & Gamble** policy.
- **HomeServices Relocation, LLC** wins **Amarr Garage Doors** account, formerly handled by **Altair**.
- **Schreiber Foods** in Wisconsin left **Cartus for Corporate Relocation Service**, Green Bay.
- **Ace Hardware** dropped **RE/MAX** for the **Relocation Center**.
- **Graebel** wins the **Denny** restaurant account from **Paragon**.
- **Cartus** takes over international relocations for **Eaton Corporation** from **Prudential**.

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