

Every trainer will at some point face the same challenge of picking a training vendor. Asking the following questions will help you make an informed decision that can save you time, money, and ultimately your project.



1 Experience Matters

Make sure that the vendor has the necessary content expertise for the project.

- How many projects have they developed in your therapeutic area?
- Have they developed training for competitive products?
- Can they clearly and simply describe the key therapeutic challenges and market conditions in the disease state?
- How many people at their company have this content knowledge?
- Do they have access to subject matter experts in the medical community?

2 Vendor's knowledge level of training and instructional design?

It is one thing to produce content, and it is another thing to produce content that representatives can learn from and want to learn from. Your vendor needs to create materials that are based on established principles of adult learning with a creative approach that keeps learners interested. The materials also need to be well-written, and one of the ways to judge that quality is by the writing quality of the vendor's proposal, especially a preliminary content outline.

- Are the objectives of the training clearly defined?
- Do the content and its organization match the objectives?
- Can they explain how and why the materials are structured to meet your needs?
- Depending on your training need:
 - Can they devise an overall curriculum that addresses a range of training issues?
 - Can they develop one or a few pieces that fit seamlessly into your existing curriculum?

3 What are the vendor's technological capabilities?

Today, most training solutions are blended; that is they have at least some component in a medium other than print. Many training solutions are entirely e-based, and technology is moving at an ever increasing pace.

- Can your vendor offer a solution that will work not only now, but in the future?
- Have they asked questions about your system to make sure their solution is appropriate for you?
- What do they do to ensure that their solution works on your system?
- Can they show you demos of the type of materials they produce and explain the training situations each can address?

4 What range of products can the vendor provide?

Today's training solution often encompasses multiple components to address a range of training needs stretching from disease state to product to sustainability training. A vendor that can develop solutions for each phase of training provides a continuity of content and approach that ensures consistency and facilitates learning. You may already have decided on the media for your training materials. On the other hand, you may want to hear what your options are for a training solution.

- Does this vendor commonly use the media you have in mind?
- Does this vendor develop a range of different products, for example, different types of electronic and print materials?
- Can the vendor explain why one medium would be a better choice than another for your particular project?
- What is their range of product services?
- Do they develop all the components in house?

5 Do they work well with other vendors?

If you are facing a product launch, it may seem risky to choose a single vendor to do everything from developing initial training to producing the launch meeting. In these cases, you'll probably want to have more than one vendor, each focusing on their area of expertise. That said, in order to end up with consistent and coordinated training materials and events, the vendors you select must work with each other as well as with you, exchanging information and synchronizing time frames.

- What is their experience in working with other vendors?
- Can they explain how they coordinate their work with other vendors?

6 Does the vendor have established project management practices and well-defined operating systems?

Even if the content is superb and the medium is dazzling, snags and snafus in the development of a project can result in training that doesn't meet its target, creeps out of scope, or misses a crucial deadline.

- Is there an identified project manager?
- How do they choose the team members for your project?
- How easy is it to get in touch with the project manager and others on the vendor team?
- Can the project manager explain the tools and techniques that will be used to keep your project on track?
For example:



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- How will they keep you up-to-date?
- How does their team work together internally?
- Are the roles of each team member well-defined?
- What is their approach to:
 - Handling feedback from your team?
 - Quality control?

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Have they successfully developed projects of a similar scope in the past?

This question is particularly important for larger projects that encompass a range of training materials.

- Can they describe projects of similar scope that they've developed?
- Can they explain the challenges involved in a project such as yours, and how they have met these challenges in the past?

8

What is their company history?

The last thing you want is to be in the middle of a project and to have your vendor go out of business. Before you sign the contract, find out:

- How many years has the company been in business?
- How many of their clients are long-standing clients that return to them again and again for training materials?
- Can they supply relevant references?

9

Do they know your business?

Training is training, right? *Wrong.* Pharma and medical device training face significant training challenges due to medical and regulatory constraints. It is vital that your vendor understand these issues to ensure that your training materials are built correctly from the ground up.

- Is pharma and medical device training a focus for your vendor?
- What experience do they have with review committees and with electronic review and referencing systems?
- Do they understand the time frame involved in a product launch?
- Do they understand fair balance and the constraints around product claims?

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What is their cost structure?

Although cost is important, it is also important to put cost in perspective. If costs differ among the proposals you receive, it may be a clue as to each vendor's definition of the scope of the project and/or the services they plan to provide.

- Are the costs clearly outlined, as well as procedures for potential increases in scope?
- Can they explain the basis for each cost component?
- How do the costs balance with the time frame of the project?

Getting answers to these questions will help you choose a training vendor that you'll be glad to make your partner.



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