

Spotlight on procuring document conversion services

Getting the most value in the procurement process



In dogged pursuit of excellence in document conversion

Established in 1979 to help the rapidly expanding information-based economy manage the growing volume of documentation, today FNTI provides full spectrum document conversion services to the title insurance, mortgage and banking, healthcare and government industries.

FNTI offers comprehensive document conversion services that include document receiving and preparation for conversion; scanning, indexing

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and data abstraction, and document hosting and delivery.

Since 1979, FNTI has converted more than three billion images for government and commercial clients in 1,700 conversion projects.

Conversion capabilities include both back-file and go-forward scanning, and are provided at the client's location or in regional production centers located throughout the United States.

There is a funny scene in the movie *Pink Panther Strikes Again*. Inspector Clouseau, played by Peter Sellers, sees a dog lying near a hotel door. He asks the desk clerk, "Does your dog bite?" The clerk answers, "No." When the inspector reaches down to pet the dog, he receives a growl and a bite in return. Snatching his hand back he asks the clerk, "I thought you said your dog does not bite!" The clerk answers, "Monsieur, that is not my dog."

It pays to ask the right question.

If you're considering getting a bid on a document conversion project, asking the right questions can have a dramatic effect on the project's outcome.

Many conversion processes are subject to an open procurement process, which involves soliciting responses from vendors capable of providing conversion services. The question is, what format should you use? Request for Bid, Proposal or Information? The format you choose sends an important signal on how you're treating the project.

Request for Bid or Quote

If the item or service you are procuring is a commodity, say pencils or cleaning services, the Request for Bid is the appropriate mechanism. There is little differentiation between products and services, and the vendor community is sensitized that the award will likely be predicated on price.

Request for Proposal

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If you have a clear understanding of what you're looking for but you want more than pricing information, the Request for Proposal, or RFP, is a good approach. You may be interested in knowing whether vendors have the financial strength to see a project through to completion; accordingly, you'll want to review financial information.

You may also want to know about the vendor's technical capabilities, particularly if there is more than one approach to meeting your needs.

You may want the assurance that vendors have expertise in your industry or have successfully completed a similar project in the past, so ask for references and case studies that are relevant to your project.

Request for Information

If you have no clear direction or strategy on how best to execute a project, but you want input from the vendor community on your options, a Request for Information, or RFI, may be the best approach.

Using an RFI, you can request information about vendor capabilities and how vendors may go about solving a particular problem or ap-

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proaching a challenge. You may also ask for vendors' interpretation of a specification or requirement.

The responses to an RFI should help you on two levels: they should help you understand your options in how to best approach a document conversion initiative, and identify which vendors demonstrate the best technical competency or creativity in formulating a solution for your initiative.

Often, the RFI is used to "thin the herd" of vendors who receive the next request (which is usually an RFP).

Seldom are conversion services a commodity

In our experience, there are multiple ways to approach and complete a conversion project. Services can be performed remotely or on site. Quality review methods vary, which can affect the legibility and retrievability of digital records. Document preparation and classification strategies can determine whether your records can be produced at appropriate times during your organization's workflow, contributing to – or degrading – productivity.

So don't get bit on your next conversion project. Look beyond price to ensure you're getting the right technical solution from a vendor most capable of producing it.



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