



# 4 Critical Questions for Your Project Management Integrator

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SHAW SYSTEMS WHITE PAPER

How secure are you in selecting the correct project management integrator? Do you rely on instincts to define project roles? How confident are you that planned project outcomes will be realized? Have you completed an accurate cost/benefit analysis?

Choosing a project management integrator is a critical decision that shouldn't be taken lightly. Corporate stakeholders usually expect integrators to oversee project details, provide in-depth industry expertise, execute targeted business strategies, and transform project expectations into operational capabilities. In the perfect scenario, integrators play a vital role in helping a company deliver a successful solution while protecting the project from an unresponsive vendor. In a less-than ideal scenario, they can increase project expenses, hinder project communication, and harm the client-vendor relationship. Answering the following additional questions can help you define the parameters of the integrator's involvement and fulfill your responsibility to the project and your organization.

## 4 Critical Questions for Your Project Management Integrator

1. HOW WILL THE INTEGRATOR AFFECT PROJECT COSTS?
2. WILL OUR RESOURCES GAIN THE NEEDED EXPERTISE?
3. WHO WILL MANAGE THE PROJECT?
4. HOW WILL THIS AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VENDOR?

### 1. HOW WILL INTEGRATOR AFFECT COSTS?

The truth is that success for third-party consultancies is often defined by billable hours generated. Their business model defines their people as their product and the means by which they earn revenue. This doesn't mean they're not honorable and determined to deliver the best results possible; that's how they earn repeat business. It's just that what's bad for you -- a delayed conversion date, scope creep, or missed requirements -- isn't necessarily bad for them.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To mitigate this juxtaposition of goals, negotiate a fixed-bid contract with progress payments based on performance and deliverable milestones. Incorporate bonus payments for achieving defined quality thresholds and timelines. Project delays not instigated by mutually agreed upon change control should result in financial penalties in the form of withheld or reduced payments until the integrator's obligations are acceptably delivered.

### 2. WILL OUR RESOURCES HAVE GAINED THE PRODUCT AND INDUSTRY EXPERTISE NEEDED TO SUPPORT AND EXPAND FUTURE OPERATIONS?

The fact is, in most situations, the vendor owns the product and industry knowledge the client needs. In many instances, however, the integrator's resources become the on-site product experts. The client actually pays the vendor to train the integrator. The integrator gains the knowledge needed by the client, and post-production, the client is forced to contract ongoing product expertise from the integrator's resources. The unintended consequence of this activity is a continuing dependence on the third-party integrator with unending project costs until the client is confident enough in their ability to support the product in-house.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** The vendor should work hand-in-hand with the client's key business and IT decision makers. Key business and technical decisions should always be determined by the vendor and the client. No middle men. Unless your model is a turnkey hosted solution, client self-sufficiency should always be a mutual goal. Studies have proven that the level of satisfaction with the new product is commensurate with the amount of knowledge gained by users prior to actual production.

### 3. WHO WILL MANAGE THE PROJECT?

Let's be honest here: sometimes the client doesn't have the in-house project management and architecture expertise required to deliver a large, complicated project. If that's the case, then the necessary resources should be engaged. The mistake is that in many instances, the client hands over control of the process and future product to the integrator. This may be good for the project, but it won't be good for the business. Without an engaged client, the integrator will determine how and when information is communicated to the business and IT groups. That will lead to more change control, more scope creep, more money, and an unhappy user community.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Contracting project management with experts whose goals are definitively aligned with the client is an essential element of attaining a cost-effective, high-quality result. Never relinquish project control or decision making, and seek to involve parties that will be prospering equally from your desired results.

### 4. HOW WILL THIS AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VENDOR?

The integrator can quickly become the client to the vendor. If the integrator is the channel through which information, knowledge, and options are communicated to the client, filtering and confusion can ensue. The result? At a minimum, a lost opportunity to build the vital relationships and institutional knowledge with your vendor partner. Best practices in utilizing the vendor's product are more effectively shared directly from the source - the vendor! A strained relationship with the vendor could take years to repair.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Remember, you bought the vendor's product and industry expertise, not the integrator's. The client/vendor relationship should be a partnership, not a battle. The more cognizant the vendor is of your environment, needs, and challenges, the more responsive the vendor will be as your organization moves forward post-production.

The vendor and its product remains an integral part of your organization long after the project is completed. While project management integrators can be used for effective project management and staff augmentation, they should never be given total control of the project. The client wants a successful project; the vendor wants a reference and a long-term client. Decisions made during the project will impact both parties for years to come. Maximize your success with the product by ensuring that the integrator serves in the proper ancillary role as a strong client-vendor partnership is born.

#### About SHAW RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

Raleigh deShazo manages **SHAW RESOURCE SOLUTIONS**, Shaw Systems' consulting division. The group has successfully delivered hundreds of projects for companies across the country, including some of the nation's largest banks and finance companies.

From Project Managers to Developers to Subject Matter Experts and everything in between, **SHAW RESOURCE SOLUTIONS** has the critical resources your project needs. Proficient in your industry and systems, these consultants will address your business and technical challenges and deliver the results you expect. The group's services span the complete solution lifecycle, including project management, strategic planning, integration strategy, operational assessments, reporting, conversions, upgrades, training, systems enhancements, and more.