

Next Generation Networks Programme Vendor Selection to Support Cloud Strategy.

The Challenge.

One of our large multinational, FTSE 100 Clients was looking to implement its agreed and approved Infrastructure strategy across its global network.

The existing legacy network had grown organically and was supported and run internally with a number of network suppliers. Their network was based on traditional architectures to support their current physical data centres

and hybrid connectivity to their worldwide offices and remote workers. Our Client had already embraced Cloud opportunities and was now ready to expand and align their networking to their Cloud adoption strategy.

Aim was to provide a Cloud networking capability that was agnostic to the underlying service provider and could adopt to change as the business transformed with both speed and agility.

One of our Client's key goals was to remove dependency on traditional, expensive data centres. Our Client wanted to gauge the expertise and thinking in the market and to assess suitability of vendors who they could work closely

in partnership with to provide a suitable approach to their future connectivity needs. This needed to be flexible and future proofed to meet existing and yet to be defined strategies. Selected vendors needed to be able to contribute to and support our Client's forward thinking aspirations and be able to recommend how to move forward from Current State to Transition State and ultimately End State.

Our Client was keen to consider a range of service approaches with potential vendors – fully provided service, managed service or a hybrid approach.

The Solution.

ECS were approached because of our existing relationship and expertise in both Cloud and Software Defined Networking to provide challenge and direction and underlying support to move through a Commercial Selection process with our expertise.

Initially, we met with our Client to understand the high level direction and component based approach of their Network Strategy and understand how best we could work to support and help them move forward. ECS's assignment was to support our Client through the Vendor Selection process from RFI to POC.

We worked in a virtual way with our Client's key Networking team who were located in UK and USA. We provided technical and commercial expertise along with underlying support to move the initiative forward in a collaborative fashion.

The client was keen to take a structured and fair approach to vendor assessment to enable incumbent suppliers to be fairly assessed alongside potential new players to ensure that the optimum solution could be achieved and also the most profitable partnership for the future.

Working closely with the Client's Global Commercial team, ECS co-ordinated the following selection processes:

- RFI (Request for Information) – 20+ vendors initially invited to take part in RFI. We took a unique approach of providing a number of high level building blocks that focused on key areas of the overall solution that was to be delivered. Utilising Agile methodology each building block set the context for the solution, the expected capabilities and Use Cases. We asked vendors to describe their proposed solution in support of each building block. If vendor could not directly provide a full solution they were invited to work with a partner to deliver the overall solution. Client's network specialists and ECS technical team reviewed each solution and scored each building block which was captured into an overall model, enabling us to short list preferred vendors for the next stage.
- RFQ (Request for Quote) – as the RFI stage was well structured and provided a good level of detail we then invited 6 vendors to provide a quote to support their solution outlined at the RFI stage. We held separate Briefing Sessions with each vendor and outlined to them how we wanted them to respond, providing a matrix for them to capture their quote for each of the building blocks. The RFQ responses were collated into a Cost Scenario Planning model, enabling us to consider the high level costs associated with each solution and type of service offered. Enabling us to identify gaps in solutions and to follow up specifically with vendors to better understand their offerings.
- Demo – 4 vendors were then invited to demo their solution enabling our Client to gain a better understanding and to explore proposals in-depth. User Stores provided at RFI were expanded upon and tailored to enable each vendor to show case their areas of expertise. Our Client now had a good understanding of the strengths and areas of expertise each vendor could offer.
- POC (Proof of Concept) – was the opportunity for the shortlisted vendors to demo and show case their solution on our Client's environment.

The final stage which the Client performed internally was contract negotiation with their final selected vendor(s) based on the agreed service offering.

The benefits.

Our Client was supported and guided through a vendor selection process which was equitable and fair on their incumbent suppliers, while at the same time enabling them to gauge the expertise and thinking of other vendors in the market.

Our Client benefited from the networking, cloud and commercial expertise of ECS – whereby we could bring appropriately skilled individuals into the discussions at the relevant stages in the process.

Our Client relied on ECS to drive the vendor process, having was achieved. ECS co-ordinated and produced:

- All the necessary vendor meetings/briefings
- Client's internal discussions and meetings
- Activities with the Client's Global Commercial team
- Produced the packaged documentation for each stage of the process
- Built and populated the scenario cost models used during the short listing discussions
- Collation of all vendor returns
- Prepared and contributed to executive presentation packs
- Enabling our Client to focus on the proposals and challenge and probe as appropriate.
- Our Client was very happy with the progress made and the support ECS provided.

