

Communicating Your Requirements

Procurement Guidelines: the Open Brand for CORBA®

Throughout the business world many widely different formats are used to communicate Information Technology (IT) requirements to potential suppliers. Regardless of format, the goal is to communicate your requirements in a clear and unambiguous manner, while also being comprehensive yet succinct. The ultimate goal is for all supplier responses to fully address your defined needs.

Open standards greatly ease the initial phase of your procurement cycle by defining a comprehensive operating environment, simplifying your procurement documents. Instead of having to list individual interfaces and functionality in a procurement document, you can reference relevant standards. The Open Group has developed a mechanism that enables your business to obtain substantial business benefit - the Open Brand program. Products that display the Open Brand have been registered with The Open Group and the vendor guarantee that their products comply with the Product Standard that lays down strict conformance requirements. The vendor also guarantees that the product will remain conformant, giving you the assurance that through maintenance release, updates etc. the product will do the same job.

This guarantee makes the Open Brand a powerful procurement tool that delivers real business benefit.

Procurement documents tend to be large and complex, even with the simplifications that results from using the Open Brand. To ensure the best responses from your suppliers, when formalizing your requirements there are three questions to keep in mind:

- What is the business problem you are trying to solve?
- How do you best communicate your needs?
- How will you evaluate responses?

What Do You Need: The Open Brand for CORBA

The Open Brand for CORBA is one of the family of Product Standards from The Open Group. Mandating the Open Brand for CORBA in your procurement document significantly simplifies the technical requirements section. In a few simple sentences you can mandate all of the functionality defined in the CORBA Product Standard, be assured all required tests have been passed, while also being protected by the supplier's contractual obligations to maintain conformance. Thus, the Open Brand is the ideal procurement tool: a concise, yet specific way to specify required functionality and services in the products you buy.

To ensure that there is no misunderstanding about your requirements we suggest you:

- Mandate the Open Brand for CORBA by stating that:
 “The product must be registered with The Open Group and must carry the Open Brand for CORBA. It is required that all of the core functionality defined in the CORBA Product Standard is supported, along with the following optional elements:
 language mappings of: C, C++ and Java (List the languages which are relevant to your applications).

Every bid must include a copy of the product's Open Brand certificate and Conformance Statement."

- In order to ensure that your bid is as inclusive as possible, maximizing competition, you may wish to allow a product which is still undergoing development, conformance testing or has not yet registered for the Open Brand. If so, you should require that the suppliers warrant that they will obtain the Open Brand for their product within a prescribed period of time by using text such as

"The successful bidder warrants that any product that is not yet registered in the Open Brand for CORBA program will obtain the registration within XX days of the award of the bid and retain the right to use the Open Brand for CORBA on all products supplied under this contract".

- The Conformance Statement uniquely identifies the product, including the precise hardware and software in which conformance was tested, and provides details of the way that the product implementation meets the Product Standard - including any options included in the product and any limits, such as password length. If the Open Brand applies throughout a binary-compatible family of systems, the family is identified here. Conformance Statements are available on the web, www.opengroup.org/csq.

When procuring CORBA based applications, we suggest you:

- Mandate applications that will run on all products carrying the Open Brand for CORBA by stating that:
"The supplier must show that their software was developed using the services defined by The Open Group Product Standard for CORBA. The supplier further warrants that any software supplied will work on any product that carries the Open Brand for CORBA."

How to Communicate Your Needs

Experience has shown that the more structured your communication vehicle, the easier it will be to evaluate the bids you receive from the potential suppliers. Defining a standard format and numbering system for the requirements is very useful. For example, you may list your operating systems requirements, followed by your CORBA requirements, followed by your communications requirements, etc.

Require that the suppliers structure their proposals according to your format.

In addition to the functionality requirements, your procurement document should communicate key background issues to help the suppliers bid their most appropriate products. Background issues include:

- your business objectives in undertaking this procurement
- how this procurement fits into your overall information architecture
- corporate policies or constraints which may influence the IT decision

Your procurement document will have several other standard sections dealing with various contractual and costing considerations in line with corporate policies.

Evaluating Responses

When it comes to evaluating the proposals received and actually choosing a supplier, most companies will require you follow predefined corporate selection criteria and policies. Corporate financial guidelines, such as Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), knowledge of your business, etc. By requiring the Open Brand for CORBA you will be able to focus on competing solutions in a one-to-one comparison in the full knowledge

that your technical requirements are met in all bids. Thus, you will be able to recommend the best business solution to address your needs.

Example

XYZ Corporation Request For Proposal

XYZ Corporation, a worldwide discount retailer, has several object-based business applications within a distributed IT infrastructure. The company relies heavily on the interoperability of numerous vendor systems located in our numerous locations around the USA. In expanding our business to include internet buying capabilities the new applications that are the subject of this bid will use CORBA products.

XYZ Corporation is committed to open systems standards. Wherever applicable we require products that carry the Open Brand for CORBA:

1. All products supplied under this contract must be registered for the Open Brand for CORBA. The product must retain the Open Brand for the life of this contract. The following options are required: C++ language mappings and Java™ language mappings.
2. The supplier must provide a copy of the Brand Certificate and current Conformance Statement with their bid.
3. In order to ensure that as many qualified bidders as possible can respond products that are not yet registered for the Open Brand must the following text in the bid.

"The successful bidder warrants that any CORBA based product that is not yet registered in the Open Brand for CORBA program will obtain the registration within 180 days of the award of the contract and that the product will remain registered in the Open Brand program for a period of at least 24 months form date of supply.."

We will also be purchasing an off-the-shelf Widget software package.

1. The supplier of this application must show that their software was developed using the services, protocols and application programming interfaces (APIs) defined in The Open Group's Product Standard for CORBA. The supplier further warrants that the application will run completely and correctly on any system that carries the Open Brand for CORBA. Where other services, protocols and APIs have been used these must be listed in detail.

End example text

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The Open Group

The Open Group is a vendor-neutral, international consortium of over 200 members with combined IT budgets in excess of \$55 billion annually. It has been the technology industry's flagship specifications, test development and brand organization for over a decade and established many of the open technologies on which billions of dollars of IT systems rely today. The Open Group is working with suppliers and users establishing interoperability requirements across multiple platforms, today's new Internet-based technologies, and looking to tomorrow's investment decisions.

For information on joining The Open Group, please contact: sales-team@opengroup.org

About OMG

With the support of its membership of software vendors, software developers and end users, OMG's CORBA is "The Middleware That's Everywhere™." Since 1989, OMG has been "Setting The Standards For Distributed Computing™" through its mission to promote the theory and practice of object technology for the development of distributed computing systems. The goal is to provide a common architectural framework for object oriented applications based on widely available interface specifications. For information on joining OMG or additional information, please contact OMG headquarters at info@omg.org. World Wide Web: www.omg.org. _____

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