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6 Things to Look For in a Third-Party Maintenance Provider

Maintenance contracts are a critical component of your IT infrastructure.

Lifecycle planning, determining when and what to upgrade, avoiding downtime, and managing costs are all issues to be considered. Even with all the options on the market today, the search for a third-party maintenance provider can be an overwhelming one. First, ask yourself this question: are you looking for a third-party vendor or a maintenance strategy partner? Many vendors exist, but it can be difficult to find a true partner with solid experience who also understands your business goals. As you conduct your search, take the time to consider the requirements in more detail and what you're really looking for in the partnership.

This paper discusses six key things to look for in your search to find the perfect third-party maintenance partner for your business.

1 Global Delivery & Support
Everywhere, all the time.

Whether you have locations domestically or all over the globe, it's important to find a partner that's truly global. Ensure your provider has FSLs (Forward Stocking Locations) and sparing depots placed to meet your SLAs globally and access to round-the-clock support every day of the year. Ensure that multiple languages are supported if that's what your business requires. If you have locations in difficult countries, confirm your provider has the necessary certifications and capabilities to provide the support you need in each region.

2 100% Sparing
Ask the right questions.

A provider's sparing 'philosophy' is important. Ensure that all hardware parts under contract are tested and spared at a location close enough to meet your SLA. Ask potential providers to explain their sparing process in detail – Do they own the part? Has the part been tested? Can it be deployed fast enough to meet your SLA? Also, ensure that a provider will grow with you, even if that means adding FSLs around the globe to continue to meet your needs.

3 Certifications
Require recognized excellence.

It's always a good idea to validate potential partners with industry-recognized certifications. Ensure that your provider is adhering to the highest quality and security standards internationally.

A few certifications to be aware of:

- **C-TPAT** (Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism) certification is led by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and is focused on improving global supply chain security with respect to terrorism.

- **ISO 9001:2015** is a comprehensive quality management system (QMS) that requires robust controls for organizations involved in telecommunications. The International Standards Organization is the governing body for these certifications. Only an elite class of networking equipment providers have achieved this level of quality control.

- **ISO 27001:2013** is for Information Security Management Systems and is one of the most widely recognized and prestigious security standards available. Organizations with this certification are confirmed to be ISMS compliant and in line with the latest industry standards and best practices.

- **R2 Responsible Recycling** certification provides a standard, a common set of processes, safety measures, and documentation requirements for businesses that repair and recycle electronics.

4 Flexible Contracts
Multi-vendor management is a must.

Ensure that all equipment you have in your IT infrastructure can be managed in one place. Your provider should be able to accommodate multi-generation, multi-vendor and multinational support contracts and make them accessible to you through a centralized portal. Ask for a detailed demonstration of the contract and ticket management system to ensure it can deliver the level of service you require for your complex, multi-vendor network.

5 Engineering Resources
Quick resolution is key.

Access to high-level engineers who are empowered to diagnose and resolve your issue immediately is critical. No one likes to be bounced and call transferred multiple times. Ask potential vendors to provide documentation that outlines their ticket flow process from first call to complete resolution with clear SLAs along the way. Pick a partner whose mission is to provide consistent premium customer service and technical support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. TACs should be structured with a 'follow-the-sun' approach, utilizing service centers strategically around the globe.

6 Testing
Expect the best.

Require that your provider conduct full line rate testing on all equipment that can be stress tested before it is deployed to you or a designated FSL. Specifically, the supplier should use a Spirent® or Ixia test bed for all testing and be able to prove a 0.5% or less failure rate. Furthermore, verify your provider utilizes ultra-protective packaging to avoid any damage during shipping.

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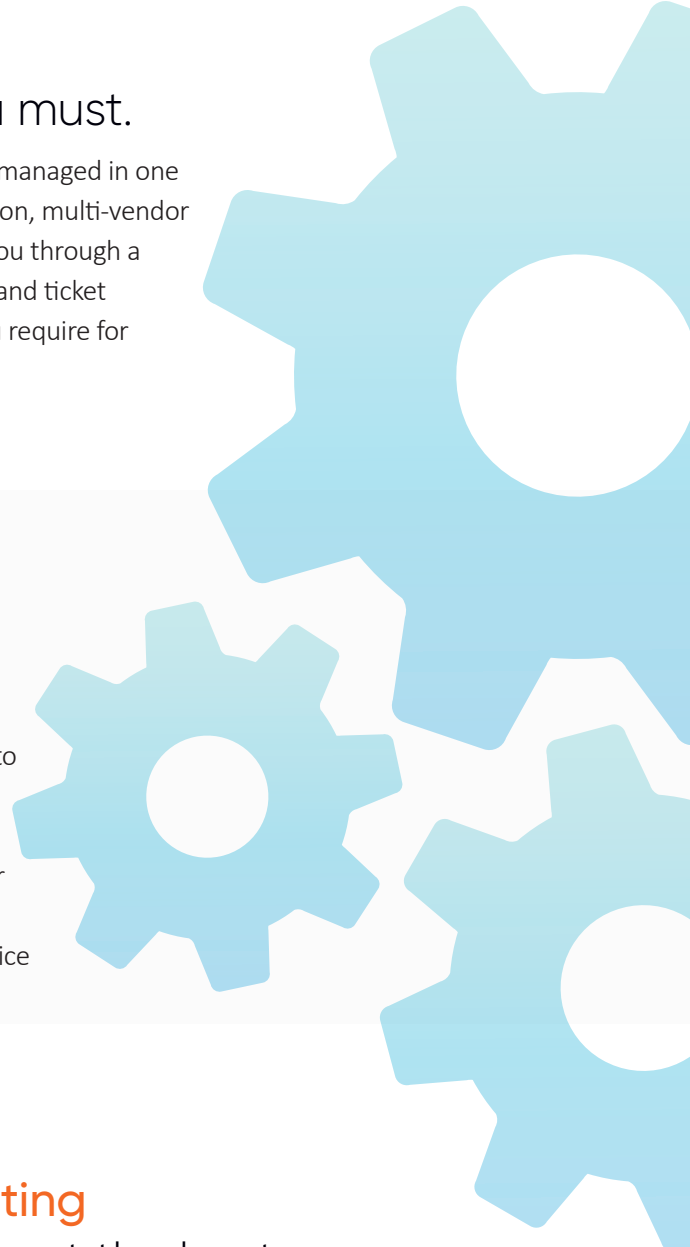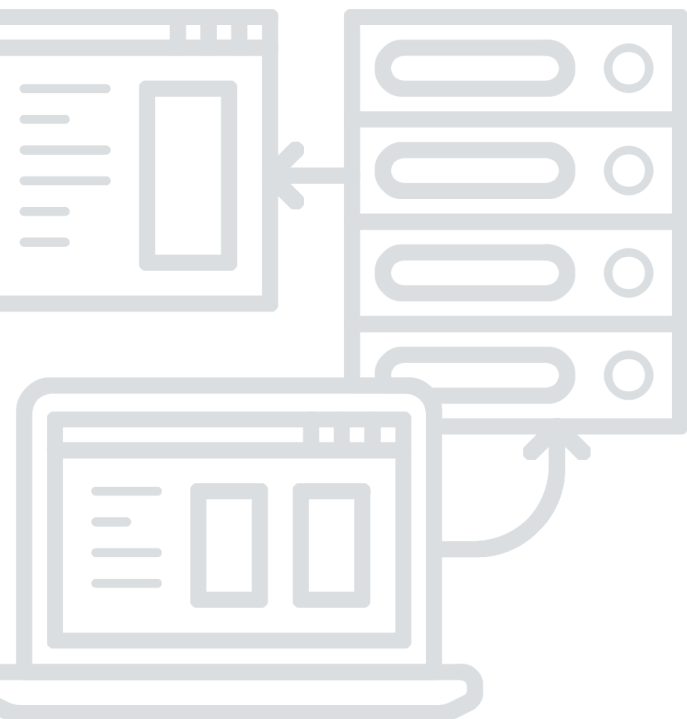
Conclusion

There's no time like the present to explore how the ever-increasing role of third-party maintenance (TPM) is helping organizations around the world get a better return on their support investments. Take time to thoroughly evaluate potential providers by asking the right questions and requiring them to demonstrate their capabilities. The health of your IT infrastructure and your business depends on having a reliable partner. Choose a provider that has demonstrated experience, third-party validation and truly understands your business needs.

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About Curvature

Curvature is transforming how companies manage, maintain and upgrade equipment and support for multi-vendor, multinational networks and data centers. At a time of competing IT priorities, companies need to be nimble, efficient and smart with their spend. Putting budget toward technology upgrades that give you a significant increase in performance while maintaining assets that are working is a winning strategy for your IT Infrastructure and your bottom line. A strategic partner for more than 15,000 organizations globally, we specialize in delivering 24/7 global technical support, advanced hardware replacement, and complete lifecycle management of networking and data center equipment under one global contract from locations in the Americas, Europe and Asia.

For more information visit www.curvature.com/third-party-maintenance/