Writing a Switch RFP

"All we want is everything we can get."

John Webster
Senior Analyst and Founder
Data Mobility Group

RFP Platitudes

- **Get as much decision-point data as possible at the beginning of a project (rather than at the end).**
- **Be aware of all project phases up front so that you can gather data for each phase *during* the RFP process.**
- **You don't get what you don't ask for.**

The SANcycle

1. **Business Problem Assessment**
2. **Information Gathering and Synthesizing**
3. **Build the Architectural Model**
4. **Select the Vendor(s)**

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The SANcycle (continued)

5. **Build a Test Model**
6. **Roll-out and Stabilization**
7. **On-going Maintenance**
8. **Change Management**

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Business Problem Assessment

- **Whose problem is it?**
  - **IT only**
  - **Business Unit**
  - **Enterprise**
- **Who will you have to sell the solution to?**
  - **CxO**
  - **Business Units**
  - **Others within IT**
- **When the ROI won't cut it…**
- **Ask vendors for help with the internal selling process via the RFP (or any other means)**

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Information Gathering and Synthesizing – the RFP Process

- **Do**
  - **Be detailed and specific.**
  - **Be as descriptive of the IT environment and the business need as is prudent in the RFP.**
  - **Know the standards.**
  - **Put yourself in the vendor's shoes. (Ask a confusing question, get a confusing answer.)**
  - **Be as vendor-neutral as possible.**
  - **Give vendors a reasonable time to respond.**
- **Don't**
  - **Create a "vendor bias" impression.**

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Building the Architectural Model: Relevant Standards

- Switch interoperability
  - FSPF
  - FCSW-2
  - FSPF-BB
- MAN/WAN
  - FCIP
  - iFCP
- Management software
  - Switch vendor or ISV
  - SNMP vs. SMI-S vs. WideSky
- Would a SAN design/modeling tool help?
- And...don't forget to ask about security

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Can Interoperability and Security Co-exist?

- **Is today's SAN security enough?**

- **Data "on the fly" vs. data at rest**

- **IEEE: Searching for a standard encryption method**
  - Proposed solutions now on the table
  - One method: Use open source-developed code with unique user-created keys to "unlock" the data.

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Can Interoperability and Security Co-exist?

- Investigate potential conflicts with existing SAN security features (i.e. Zoning and Masking).

- Investigate impact on data life cycle management infrastructure and strategy (i.e. exposure to data loss long term).

- Investigate potential for vendor lock-ins.

- Whatever you do, don't lose the keys.

Preparing for Negotiation

- **<u>Buying the switch</u>: Bundled in SAN solution or stand-alone?**
- **Whenever possible, get a line-item cost for everything.**
  - **Switching hardware**
  - **Add-ons and upgrades (even if you don't need them right now)**
  - **Management software**
  - **Implementation services**
  - **Maintenance service (when out of warranty) and support**

Building a Test Model

- **Will your architectural model scale?**
  - **Can the bidding vendor demonstrate scalability?**
  - **Labs are a great resource to ask for.**
- **Get performance data.**
- **Get the relevant interop data.**
  - **<u>Caveat</u>: Vendors usually publish only the good news.**
- **Ask for the relevant certifications:**
  - **Vendor-sponsored**
  - **Third party-sponsored**
    - **FCIA SANmark**
    - **SNIA ICTP**

What Do These Terms Mean?

…to you *and* the bidding vendor

- **Compatibility**
- **Qualification**
- **Conformance**
- **Compliance**
- **Certification**

Roll-out and Stabilization

- Switch vendors commonly sell through OEMs and channel partners.
- Use the RFP to understand the bidding vendor's problem resolution process.
  - Be a "pleasant pest" on this issue.
  - The experience of others can be a valuable resource here.
- Ask for references.
  - Important indicators of success during this phase

SNIA Supported Solutions Forum (SSF)

- Configuration and testing of multi-vendor "registered solutions"
  - Presently 10 registered solution sets
  - Multi-vendor Support Agreements
  - Cooperative support for tested solutions
  - Contact information and problem escalation procedures known to and endorsed by all members
  - Support available 24x7, worldwide.
- Get the details via the RFP

Ongoing Maintenance and Support

- Understand the Warranty.
  - What's covered and what isn't?
  - How are upgrades and modifications addressed?
  - Under what conditions can the warranty be voided?
- Understand the maintenance agreement.
  - *Same as above*
- Get reliability data.

Change Management

- **Know if/when a switch needs to be taken offline.**
  - **Port adds/changes**
  - **Microcode load/reload**

- **How do you scale beyond the original boundaries?**

- **Ask for a roadmap.**

i Want to iSCSI Too

- **Is the switch protocol agnostic?**

- **Is the vendor protocol agnostic?**

- **Do all of the caveats for FC apply to iSCSI as well?**

When a Switch Isn't Just a Switch

- **Virtualization is passé.**
  - **….Don't say the "V" word.**

- **The "smart switch" is cool.**
  - **….But, where is it?**

- **Do you want a smart switch or an appliance?**
  - **….I dunno. What's the difference?**

Giving the Scarecrow a Brain

- **What does the surgery look like?**
  - Rip and replace?
  - Add-on or add-in?

- **Many vendors approaching opportunity as a "solution" sell**
  - Who owns the solution after the sale – you or the vendor?
  - Who owns the support?

FAIS – The Intelligent Switch Standard

- **Fabric Application Interface Standard (FAIS)**
  - ANST T11.5 Working Group
  - **Goal**: Create a standard set of APIs for use by developers writing *software management applications that take advantage of intelligence in the storage fabric.*

- **Question 1: Is the fabric a good place for intelligence?**

- **Question 2: Should you even care enough about FAIS to specify it in an RFP?**

Thank you. Questions?

John Webster

Data Mobility Group

jwebster@datamobilitygroup.com

www.datamobilitygroup.com

Mr. Webster is unable to attend the Ask-the-Expert booth in the Exhibit Hall. Please send additional questions to jglossner@techtarget.com.