

Adapted from **PARTNERING WITH THE CIO**

Always deliver on your promises

*Peer recommendations are critical factors in |the purchasing decisions made by CIOs
— so don't risk your reputation*

By Michael Minelli and Mike Barlow

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Like all consumers, CIOs suffer buyer's remorse. Before the ink on the contract is dry, they begin wondering if they made the right choice. They begin worrying about whether you will deliver on your promises.

Their greatest fear is that after the deal is done and the sale is completed, your product will not perform as advertised. Yes, they've got your obligations written into the contract eight ways from Sunday. But all those legal niceties don't matter to the CIO.

After the contract is signed, all the CIO really cares about it is this: Will it work?

We're not making this up. This is a fact that you need to know, whether you're part of the account team or a consultant. A key question rolling through the mind of every CIO is: What happens after the sale?

So if you believe that delivery is someone else's problem, we're here to tell you that the CIO believes differently. The CIO believes that it's your problem.

A survey conducted by CIO magazine in 2006 shows that of the 10 vendor attributes considered most important by CIOs, the ability to deliver on promises ranks number one.

"96 percent of respondents chose 'vendor delivers on promises' as the most important vendor attribute," says Michael Friedenber, CEO of the magazine's parent firm, CXO Media. "But only 54 percent agreed that vendors keep their promises. That's a huge gap."

The survey results also showed significant gaps between the expectations of CIOs and their perceptions about how well vendors were meeting those expectations.

For example, 93 percent of the survey's respondents said it was crucial for vendors to meet deadlines and set realistic schedules. But only 50 percent believed that vendors actually met deadlines and set realistic schedules.

Another example: 93 percent of respondents said it was important for vendors to provide ongoing support through the post-sales phase. But only 54 percent said that vendors were providing such support.

“We found tremendous gaps,” says Friedenber. The survey also revealed “that CIOs won’t recommend a vendor unless the vendor lives up to its promises.”

That’s an absolutely essential piece of intelligence for vendors: If you don’t live up to your promises, CIOs will not recommend you to their peers.

Now consider this: CIOs typically rate peer recommendations as critical factors in their purchasing decisions. And CIOs talk to other CIOs – frequently.

In many respects, the IT industry is like a small village. Bad news spreads quickly. If you or your organization foul up, everyone knows. CIOs tend to have long memories. If you wrong them, they’ll take their sense of grievance with them to the grave.

That’s a compelling argument for keeping your promises.

The best way to ensure that all your promises are kept is by making a conscious effort to stay involved with the client after the sale.

Staying involved after the sale has several benefits:

1. The more involved you remain, the more you increase the odds of satisfying your client’s expectations.
2. Successful implementations will earn you the peer recommendations that are essential for winning new clients.
3. Good “word of mouth” from clients generates favorable PR and positive analyst coverage that moves you up the “Magic Quadrant.”
4. Satisfied clients are more likely to request your involvement in other projects or recommend you to others within their organization.
5. IT suppliers who keep their promises are invited into the CIO’s inner circle.



Michael Minelli and Mike Barlow are co-authors of “Partnering with the CIO: The Future of IT Sales Seen Through the Eyes of Key Decision Makers” (John Wiley & Sons, 2007).

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