Your Step-by-Step Guide to Confident Partnerships

Target State Consulting
Smarter Technology Decisions

In today's fast-paced business world, where technology underpins virtually every operation, having a reliable Technology Partner isn't just a bonus - it's a must-have for any business that wants to grow.

This guide will walk you through the important stuff to consider when you're picking a partner who really gets your vision and can help you see some real results.

Outcomes of Using This Guide

- [ ] **Stronger Technology Partnerships**: Build reliable, long-term alliances with technology vendors.
- [ ] **Smarter Decision-Making**: Make informed, data-backed choices when selecting a technology support partner.
- [ ] **Smoother Operations**: Improve the efficiency and seamlessness of your core technology.
- [ ] **Aligned Technology Strategy**: Find a technology partner whose expertise and vision perfectly match your business objectives.

- [ ] **Better Return on Technology Investment**: Strategically use technology to meet your business goals and gain a competitive edge.
- [ ] **Reduced Risk**: Identify partners who offer proactive solutions, significantly lowering potential disruptions.
- [ ] **Protected Business Data:** Implement advanced measures to safeguard your critical information.
- [ ] **Quantifiable Business Results**: Partner with vendors who deliver measurable and impactful outcomes.

Essential Considerations when Choosing a Partner

1. Location & How They Operate:

- First off, can they help you wherever you are? If you have multiple offices, do they cover those areas? Are they in a similar time zone? Can they come to your office if needed?
- Make sure they have the setup and team to handle your specific need.

Local vs. National: Here's a thought - should you go with a local partner or a bigger, national one? National partners might have lots of resources, but they might not have that personal touch or really understand your business environment. Their support might be mostly online.

Local partners can often offer more personalised service, understand the local rules, and get to you faster if you need someone on-site.

They might also have a team that knows the local tech landscape better. If your business must follow local regulations, a local partner with that know-how can be a big help. Consider what's more important for your business: a national reach or a local connection,

2. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) & How Quick They Are to Respond:

- You need to know they're serious about fixing problems fast. Check out their SLAs - these are like promises about how quickly they'll respond and resolve issues. What are their response time goals? What's their plan if things go wrong?
- Ask for examples of times they've really come through for clients and see what other clients have to say about their service.
  - **Key SLA Metrics:** When you're looking at those SLAs, don't just focus on response time. Also look for things like:
  - **Uptime Guarantees:** How much of the time will your systems be up and running?
  - **Response Time:** How fast will they get back to you when you report a problem? This might vary depending on how critical the issue is.
  - **Resolution Time:** How long will it take them to fix the problem? Ask how well they perform with **other clients**
  - **Recovery Time Objective (RTO) and Recovery Point Objective (RPO):** If there's a major problem, how quickly can they get your systems back up, and how much data might you lose?
- Don't forget to ask if what's going to happen if they don't meet these SLA targets.

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3. Being Proactive & Staying Ahead of the Curve:

- A great partner doesn't just wait for things to break – they see potential problems coming and help you use new technologies to your advantage. Find out about their proactive services, like:
    - Checking your security and looking for threats.
    - Helping you plan your IT strategy and figure out your technology roadmap.
    - Keeping an eye on your systems and making sure they're running their best.
    - Suggesting new technologies and ways to improve your processes.

A proactive partner keeps an eye on your systems to catch problems early, does regular maintenance, and has strong cybersecurity and data backup plans. This can save you money and headaches in the long run.

4. What Services Do They Actually Offer?

- Make sure their list of services matches what you need now and what you might need in the future. This could include things like:
    - Managing your network.
    - Handling cloud services (like AWS, Azure, etc.).
    - Keeping your systems secure (detecting threats, responding to incidents).
    - Backing up your data and helping you recover if something goes wrong.
    - Providing help desk support.
    - Managing software and devices.
    - Handling phone systems (VOIP).
    - Helping with compliance (privacy, health and safety, GDPR, etc.).
- Make a detailed list of what you need and see how it matches up with what they offer. Think about any special IT needs for your industry or anything specific to the "Target State." Also, as you grow, will they be able to handle your changing needs and help you with new tech?

5. Who Else Have They Worked With?

- Ask about their current clients and if they have experience in your industry. Do they have a history of success with businesses like yours?
- Get references and case studies to see how they've helped similar companies.

- Who are their current clients, and do they seem like the kind of companies you want to be associated with? Choosing a partner with experience in your industry can be a big plus because they'll likely understand your specific challenges and regulations. Look for case studies that show how they've solved problems like yours.

6. Their Tech Connections:

- See who they partner with in the tech world. These partnerships can mean they have access to better tools and expertise.
- Ask about their certifications and relationships with big names like Microsoft, Cisco, or Amazon Web Services.

How do these partnerships benefit their clients? And do the technologies they use fit with your current and future plans? Strong partnerships often mean the partner has close ties with major tech companies, giving them early access to new tech and expert support. Also, check what level of partnership they have – higher levels often mean more expertise.

7. Do You Click with Them?

- Think about their company culture, values, and how they communicate. Do they seem like a good fit for your company?
- Consider things like if they're open and honest, how quickly they respond, and if they're committed to working with you for the long haul. Pay attention to their onboarding process and how well they try to understand your needs. It's also a good idea to ask if you'll have a dedicated point of contact.

8. The Money Side of Things (Pricing & Value):

- Understand their pricing model. Is it clear and easy to understand?
- Don't just look at the total cost. Figure out how they charge – is it per user, per device, or a fixed fee?
- Watch out for any hidden fees – get everything in writing!
- Think about the long-term value, not just the initial price. Common pricing models include per-user, per-device, flat-rate, tiered, and block hours. Consider what gives you the best value, like less downtime and better security.

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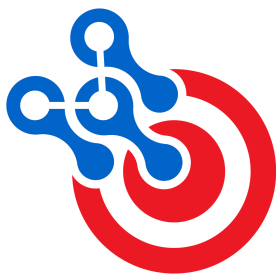Smarter Technology Decisions

Don't Forget About:

- [ ] **Cybersecurity:** This is huge! Make sure the partner has strong security measures in place, like threat detection, incident response plans, data encryption, and multi-factor authentication. Ask about specific security services and if they comply with relevant regulations in your area of business.
- [ ] **Cloud and Multi-Cloud Strategies:** If you're using cloud services (like AWS, Azure, etc.) or thinking about it, make sure the partner knows their stuff when it comes to managing and securing these environments, including hybrid and multi-cloud setups.
- [ ] **Getting Started (Onboarding):** How will they get you set up? What's their plan for assessing your current IT, moving your services over, and training your team?

- [ ] **AI and Automation:** More and more partners are using AI and automation to work more efficiently and provide better service. Ask if they're using these technologies for things like monitoring, threat detection, and automating tasks.
- [ ] **Compliance and Data Privacy:** With all the rules about data privacy, especially in the "Target State," make sure the partner can help you stay compliant with regulations through things like data protection and backup plans.
- [ ] **Sustainability:** It's becoming more important for some businesses. Does the partner care about using energy-efficient tech and green practices?

Wrapping Up:

Choosing a partner is a big deal that can really affect how well your business runs, how secure you are, and how competitive you can be. Take your time with this decision! Pick a partner who not only understands what you need right now but also has the vision and skills to help you navigate the ever-changing world of technology.

Make sure they focus on being proactive, always improving, and really understanding your unique business challenges in the "Target State." By finding the right partner, you can unlock the full potential of your technology and set your business up for long-term success. Use this guide as a starting point and do your homework before making your final choice.

Need help selecting the right Partner? [Book time today for a consultation](#)

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About Target State Since 2018, Target State has been dedicated to helping organisations achieve digital maturity through expert guidance and support. Our services include building and delivering sustainable roadmaps that align with strategic objectives, empowering clients with a clear digital vision for long-term success.

Target State aims to enable smarter technology decisions. We offer guidance to businesses looking to form confident partnerships with technology vendors, helping you navigate the complexities of IT and leverage technology for long-term success.

Contact us: info@targetstate.co.nz

Or find out more at www.targetstate.co.nz