Buyer’s Guide for Enterprise Software Support

Maintaining up-time of your business-critical enterprise systems is essential because, if those applications stop working, so does everyone who uses them. You need responsive, expert support at all times to ensure stability, security and interoperability across your ERP environment.

Traditionally, IT organizations have addressed that need with a maintenance contract provided by the original software vendor — with annual maintenance fees averaging 22 percent of the software license cost. Those fees are a major reason why, according to research by Gartner, approximately 90 percent of companies’ overall IT budgets are spent on ongoing operations, leaving only 10 percent to invest in technologies that can truly impact business outcomes. With all of the pressure on IT teams to do more for the business, that ratio is no longer sustainable.

CIOs are exploring ways to shift resources from routine operations to innovation. To that end, they are increasingly moving to third-party support which, in addition to costing less, promises superior support. Making that choice, rather than the default choice of vendor-provided support, can have a powerful effect on your bottom line.

This buyer’s guide provides you with some important factors to evaluate whether third-party support is an option for your organization.
Start with a Simple Assessment

Before considering third-party support, determine how satisfied you are with the support and software updates you get from your vendor maintenance.
IT operational resourcing

Rate each of the statements on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 means you strongly agree).

Day-to-day IT operations are not consuming the majority of your resources, and your enterprise software maintenance contract does not consume or represent an excessive portion of your budget.  

You have sufficient resources to apply to pilots, technology evaluations and technology-enabled business innovation.

Existing systems requirements

Rate each of the statements on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 means you strongly agree).

You have a manageable upgrade/update cycle, and understand the costs and risks involved in staying current on new releases.

You need the innovation that comes with each major upgrade. Your vendor is delivering capabilities necessary to your business and use cases.

Most of the updates and fixes supplied by the vendor are important and critical to your environment.

Even with the need for testing and validation, your staff implements updates and patches on a regular basis, without getting backlogged.

Your vendor provides prompt and meaningful support when you need it. You rarely or never find yourself resorting to “self support” — solving problems with your own staff or consultants because of a slow or inadequate vendor response.
You are a prime candidate for (and may already be evaluating) third-party support. This guide will give you critical criteria to look for in a vendor.

While you see value in some of the benefits of a maintenance agreement, you have concerns about the cost and quality of support you are receiving. Use this guide to make a short list of things to look for when evaluating third-party alternatives.

You are very satisfied with your existing vendor support. Put this evaluation guide down and get back to business!

**Customization Support**

Rate each of the statements on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 means you strongly agree).

You are satisfied that your business needs can be addressed with the standard functionality provided by your vendor, without the need for customizations and integrations which they may not support.

If you have custom code that the vendor does not support, you have adequate capabilities to support it with internal staff or consultants, without straining your budget.

**Tax, Legal and Regulatory updates**

Rate each of the statements on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 means you strongly agree).

Tax, legal and regulatory compliance updates from your ERP vendor are specific to, and relevant for, your business. They are delivered in a timely fashion, and you don’t have to spend much time getting your system updated.

**Add up your score**

- **0 – 40**: You are a prime candidate for (and may already be evaluating) third-party support. This guide will give you critical criteria to look for in a vendor.
- **40 – 90**: While you see value in some of the benefits of a maintenance agreement, you have concerns about the cost and quality of support you are receiving. Use this guide to make a short list of things to look for when evaluating third-party alternatives.
- **91 – 100**: You are very satisfied with your existing vendor support. Put this evaluation guide down and get back to business!
The Case for Better Support

What makes third-party support better? In general, third-party support vendors have a singular focus: support. Therefore, they focus far more on delivering exceptional service than enterprise software vendors, for whom the maintenance contract is a profitable, recurring revenue stream that is simply an add-on to a software sale.

To maximize profits, software vendors have an incentive to minimize the labor, expertise and other resources invested in delivering support while keeping their fees high. In contrast, to win and retain clients, third-party support organizations must deliver consistent, high-quality support at a reasonable cost.
What to Ask Support Vendors

Before you renew your maintenance contract with your ERP vendor, or consider any other source of ERP software support, ask both your vendor and third-party support companies these questions to evaluate who offers the highest quality of service and at what price.

How much should we expect in savings?

- How much of our IT budget will be spent if we stay with our vendor’s maintenance contract? How much will we save by switching to third-party support?
  - Most third-party support firms offer considerable discounts compared to vendor’s maintenance contracts. Use this as a negotiation tactic.

- How much will third-party support save us over time by supporting our custom code and eliminating some or all of our self-support costs?

- How many case studies does a third-party support provider have to illustrate potential savings?
  - Can they prove the ROI of switching to their support model? Make sure any vendor you speak to can provide hard numbers and references.

- What do the service packages cover and what types of support will incur surcharges?

- Is performance-tuning support provided at no additional cost?
What to Ask Support Vendors, continued

Q Is interoperability support provided at no additional cost?

Q Is vendor-neutral security guidance provided at no additional cost?
  — The range of support that’s available through a vendor and through certain third-party support companies varies greatly. Make sure you understand what’s covered in a standard maintenance contract and what will cost extra.

What is the total cost of software maintenance?

Q How does each different vendor plan to maintain our system and for how long?
  — You’ll find that by switching to third-party support you can get off the vendor-dictated upgrade path many feel forced to follow simply to maintain vendor support, without significant business benefit. Many organizations use only a fraction of the ERP functionality they already own. Forced upgrades may make that ratio worse.

Q Will you guarantee 15 years of support for our current product version(s)?
  — As secondary questions, ask vendors if they will actively manage an archive tailored to your scope using ISO 9001-compliant processes to protect your ability to apply desired archived updates. Ask them how many archives they have completed for clients, as well as references who have upgraded under their support using an archive for your particular application.

Q How does each support provider plan to help us craft an ERP roadmap that works with our business-driven timeline?
  — When and if you do want to upgrade to new releases available, a third-party support firm can help you do it at a pace that works for you, along a timeline of your own choosing, to a package that makes sense for your business.
How will a vendor plan to innovate our existing products to better suit our business objectives?
— By switching to third-party support, you can avoid getting locked in to any one vendor’s roadmap. Avoid forced updates as positioning moves in order to be ready for the next-generation solution. A third-party support firm doesn’t have incentive to pressure you to adopt new products in order to “stay current,” because what’s the value of staying current if it doesn’t move the needle in terms of improving the business or reducing the cost of operations?

How will a support vendor help us choose the correct technology for our company’s specific needs?
— Third-party support can give you the time to shop around for the next-generation solution that is best for you. With vendor support, high-profit maintenance contracts subsidize the vendor’s R&D. That means you are paying them to develop their products, which may not meet your needs. In contrast, when you switch to Rimini Street, your dollars deliver actual support.

Will we receive responsive, personalized service?

What is your guaranteed response time for P1/Critical issues? What is the SLA for that 24/7/365? What is the average time for a senior engineer to begin working an urgent issue?

How long should we expect to wait to receive responses to service requests; what kind of timing is guaranteed?
— With third-party support, expect faster response times, particularly for critical issues.

Will the vendor support our existing ERP customizations?
— Third-party support vendors may offer support for ERP customizations, which are typically 65 percent of the issues most customers experience.
Q Will you provide the direct line to an assigned Primary Support Engineer who will take responsibility to resolve our problem?

Q Will we have a named, Global Account Manager who will be responsible for all business aspects of our account, including customer satisfaction and periodic account reviews?

Q How many engineers do you have as full-time staff, and how many years of experience does each one have on average?
   — Third-party support vendors’ main focus is on providing support, not selling software, so their staff may be better qualified to solve your ERP issues.

Q Are you able to provide high-touch support by engineers who are already familiar with our deployment?

Q How will you help to ensure that our highest-priority issues will be worked outside of normal business hours by people with the requisite skills?

Q Will you provide periodic reviews of internal customer satisfaction and supplier performance if requested?
   — With third-party providers, you should expect full-service support, instead of a “self-service” web support portal or a call center staffed by low-level technicians who take your information and may or may not eventually connect you with someone possessing the expertise you know you need.

Q How will a support firm plan to provide targeted fixes for our specific issues?
   — Vendors often suggest a generic “apply this patch bundle” or “you need to upgrade” response, which may or may not solve your problem (or may even create more issues).
How will we stay ahead of the curve in security?

- What specific services do third-party support providers offer to alert us to potential threats, and what kind of expert advisory services can we expect?

- Is your company ISO 9001:2015-certified to help with consistent quality processes?

- Is your company ISO 27001:2013-certified to help keep my data secure?

- Does your security support extend beyond following and responding to vendor patches and announced vulnerabilities?

Will we receive timely Tax, Legal and Regulatory updates?

- How will a support firm plan to keep our ERP system up to date and compliant?
  - You can remain compliant with all tax, legal and regulatory updates without having to implement vendor updates, which can consume tons of time and manpower to implement.

- Will you tailor tax, legal and regulatory updates based on our business locations and requirements?

- Is your tax, legal and regulatory update process ISO 9001-compliant?
Do you prepare those updates and packages in-house, supervise contractors to build them or do you buy off-the-shelf packages that intended to match the clients’ needs?

How many tax, legal and regulatory updates have you delivered to clients?

Please state the number of internal full-time employees associated with tax, legal and regulatory updates.

How viable is your business?

If you are a public company, can you provide your current and last year’s annual report? If not, please provide audited financial statements from the last three years.

What is the total number of clients you are supporting for the applications we are considering for third-party support?

How many clients do you have where you are supporting software from multiple vendors and integration between multiple software platforms and cloud services — client where you’re actively involved with holistic business issues rather than just following tech tickets?

— Third-party support can be too specialized; if all the support firm does is fix one thing, they may be great at it, but if your problems don’t conveniently follow vendor boundaries, they may never receive proper attention. The left hand should know what the right is doing!

What is the total number of full-time support engineers (not subcontractors or outsourced resources) available to support our application?
About Rimini Street, Inc.

Rimini Street is a global provider of enterprise software products and services, and the leading third-party support provider for Oracle and SAP products. The company has redefined enterprise support services since 2005 with an innovative, award-winning program that enables licensees of IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, SAP and other enterprise software vendors to save up to 90 percent on total maintenance costs. Clients can remain on their current software release without any required upgrades for a minimum of 15 years. Global Fortune 500, midmarket, public sector and other organizations from a broad range of industries rely on Rimini Street as their trusted, third-party support provider.
How Rimini Street supports your business

Rimini Street, Inc. (Nasdaq: RMNI), the leading third-party enterprise software support company, fuels business-driven IT roadmaps for thousands of organizations by reducing the total cost of operating internally deployed or cloud enterprise applications. Our client-first culture is driven by expert engineers who deliver premium support and strategic services powered by a platform designed for global, on-demand service delivery 24x7x365.

At Rimini Street, our whole business has been software support since our founding in 2005. More than 2,700 clients have saved more than $3 billion combined in ERP maintenance costs. In fact, our clients see an average saving of 75 percent, or as much as 90 percent, off the total cost of support. It starts with an immediate 50 percent off the price of a vendor annual maintenance contract. Then, we eliminate forced upgrades/updates, support custom code and reduce the need for self-support labor. We’ll also consult with you on your business priorities and how best to meet them.

We deliver exceptional support for less, giving you the ability to apply your precious resources to designing your Business-Driven Roadmap and delivering results.

Responsive, personalized service

Our experience and support services are unmatched. Only at Rimini Street will you be assigned a Primary Support Engineer with an average of 15+ years of experience. They will get to know your ERP implementation, configuration and customizations, eliminating the need to be “brought up to speed” in a crisis.

We guarantee 24/7 support with a maximum of 15-minute response times and with an average response time of less than five minutes.
Responsive support for tax, legal and regulatory updates

You can remain compliant with all tax, legal and regulatory updates without having them packaged with other nonessential software updates. Our tax, legal and regulatory team follows an ISO 9001-compliant process, monitoring approximately 2,700 government resources and 3,300 other databases to identify, analyze and deliver updates for 200 countries. All updates will be tailored to your specific deployments. Often, they are delivered ahead of the vendor’s updates for the same issues.

Ahead-of-the-curve security response

Stop depending on vendor-issued security patches as the center of your security strategy. Rimini Street engineers can advise you on a layered security (“defense in depth”) strategy that offers more comprehensive protection, based on your specific environment.

With solutions such as Rimini Street Advanced Database Security, you can protect yourself against software vulnerabilities without waiting for the vendor to issue a patch.

Support on your terms

The “support window” lasts longer at Rimini Street. We will support you on your current ERP version for up to 15 years, guaranteed, and advise you when it makes sense to upgrade or integrate other software and cloud services. You decide, based on your Business-Driven Roadmap plan, not the vendor-dictated technology roadmap.

With 30,000 cases solved and a client satisfaction score averaging 4.8 out of 5, we’re positive that no one matches the service Rimini Street provides. Make the switch and we’ll prove it.