

CASE STUDY

EDUCATION SECTOR

Intelligent Technology Selection Management



Executive Summary

«The platform is extremely easy and intuitive to use. The requirements and vendor research definitely provided us with an enhanced approach to the evaluation and selection process.»

Sourcing Manager

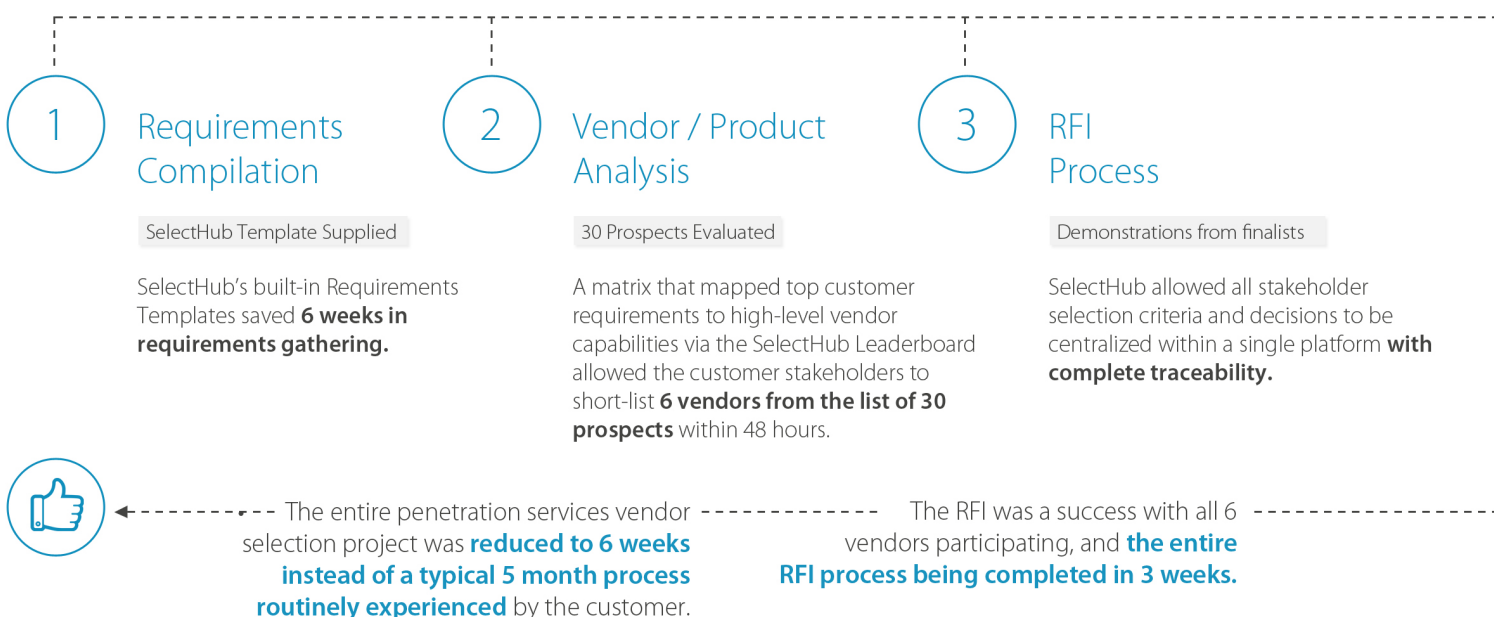
Large public school district uses SelectHub for managing their IT vendor selection process including:

- Requirements compilation and prioritization across various internal stakeholders
- Vendor / product / services analysis and comparisons
- Running an RFI process followed by a 30-day pilot with the finalist

Challenge

Selection of an **IT security audit and penetration testing service provider** to assess vulnerabilities or security gaps within their network infrastructure. This required evaluating over 30 vendors while segregating pure-play security software tools vendors from full-fledged managed service providers to find the right partner within a tight timeframe that the customer leadership team had imposed on IT and Procurement especially in the light of recent data hacks and DoS security attacks from overseas.

Results





INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY
SELECTION MANAGEMENT

EDUCATION SECTOR

Customer profile

A public school district, one of the largest in the State of Colorado, with more than 60,000 students and over 70 campuses. The district was formed in the 1950s and is led by a seven-member Board of Education.

Business / Technical Background

In order to better assess network security on an ongoing basis, the customer was looking for a managed service provider that offered network penetration services (“pentest”) and associated security audits. The vendor was required to provide advanced attack variants from geographically dispersed locations to ensure there was no apparent weakness that could compromise access to the school’s servers and applications or potentially expose confidential data such as student enrollment records or test results. Both black box and white box test capabilities were required. The leadership team had specifically tasked the IT and procurement departments with getting this project completed in an expeditious manner, especially due to concerns from recent cyber attacks on prestigious US-based institutions.



SelectHub's Role in the Technology Selection Management Process

The customer used the SelectHub cloud-based platform to manage the pentest vendor selection process. This comprised gathering a formal set of requirements from various internal stakeholders, along with a Request for Information (RFI) submitted to multiple vendors, followed by vendor scoring and a pilot.

The network penetration service provider selection process was led by the customer's IT Infrastructure team with participation from various stakeholders including their network security personnel, IT Architecture, legal and finance groups. An IT project manager was assigned to lead the project internally.

The End-to-End Selection Process

SelectHub offered a prescriptive workflow to manage the entire vendor selection process. Stakeholders were able to use a pentest requirements template within SelectHub that helped them get a jumpstart on requirements compilation. It gave them an easy way to choose which of the 100+ requirements within the template were relevant for them, while adding their own specific requirements. Each stakeholder was also able to prioritize the requirements based on their role within the customer organization.

The team was able to gain consensus within 2 weeks while significantly reducing the amount of meetings and paperwork clutter (especially Excel spreadsheets) in the process. In the past, this process had taken them as much as 2 months to get through the requirements gathering process – with SelectHub, it only took 2 weeks.

Researching Pentest Options

The customer had access to major industry analyst reports via an annual subscription. While the requirements were being finalized within SelectHub, the Network Security and IT Architecture teams downloaded and reviewed the analyst recommendations in the pentest space. Two of the key reports together featured over 30 vendors and compared them in a handful of high-level functional areas. However the report mainly covered pentest software tools vendors and not necessarily managed service providers. Some of the latter were included due to proprietary tools



they offered, however it was not easy to do an apples-to-apples comparison across all the vendors. Also, the report did not go into a detailed requirement-by-requirement analysis per vendor, requiring the Network Security and Architecture teams to go into that level of analysis on their own – primarily using resources such as Google searches and extrapolating ad-hoc information from the various vendor websites. This was proving to be painstakingly slow.

The customer's Sourcing team encouraged the stakeholders to review the SelectHub Leaderboard as a "starting point" guide. The SelectHub Leaderboard saved weeks of research time by mapping the top 10 pentest vendors to the customer's high-priority requirements. The customer stakeholders were able to separate software tools vendors from genuine managed service providers, and quickly short-list the number of vendors from 30 to 6 within a course of 48 hours.

The ratings and associated explanation built into the SelectHub Leaderboard helped the Network Security personnel explain to the other stakeholders the logic behind the finalists. However there were still a number of open questions that the stakeholders had, as well as a number of areas that needed further vetting of both the vendor organizations and their services. Some of the preliminary questions were addressed via the SelectHub Vendor Enquiry capability. However for the more advanced questions, including getting a price quote, the stakeholders agreed to issue a formal Request for Information (RFI) to the 6 short-listed vendors.

The RFI Process

The customer had a generic sourcing platform that they normally use for soliciting vendor bids, however given the abstract and highly technical nature of this RFI (as most IT-specific RFI/RFP events tend to be), the customer decided to conduct the RFI directly within the SelectHub RFX Module. The SelectHub RFX Module centralized and streamlined the ability of the stakeholders to create and manage the distribution of the RFI questions. A few of the vendors participating in the RFI were already registered and active in the SelectHub vendor portal due to previous RFX events done for other customers. The remaining (new) vendors were onboarded within 2 days.

The questions were finalized and submitted to the vendors by the customer within a 2 week period via the SelectHub RFX Module, while an extra week was made available to the vendors to post their queries prior to submitting their response to the customer. Each vendor query, and the associated response from the customer were posted on the SelectHub RFI's "Public Q&A" section. The Public Q&A section within the SelectHub RFI enabled the customer to effectively communicate to all the participating vendors with additional information without manually having to communicate with each and every vendor. Once the vendor responses started coming in, the stakeholders were notified via SelectHub.



The stakeholders could rank each of the individual vendor responses from 1 star (“poor”) to 5 stars (“excellent”) which helped the stakeholders attain consensus during the vendor comparisons rapidly. The ratings report was very valuable as it also quickly identified any negative responses and potential concerns that the stakeholders had. The SelectHub RFI’s “Private Q&A” section was effective to seek clarification from each vendor on a one-on-one basis and address any follow-up questions. The notifications emails generated by SelectHub was valuable in allowing both the customer stakeholders and the vendors to know when updates were made within the RFI. Usually this entire RFI process would have taken at least 2 months, whereas using SelectHub to coordinate the submission, consolidate the responses and facilitate the entire process was a huge time saver.

The RFI resulted in a pilot with a set of 12 use cases and associated success criteria being submitted to one of the vendors. The chosen vendor could accept / reject the pilot use cases, and over the course of a month, worked onsite with the customer team on ensuring they could meet all the pentest requirements and use cases presented to them.

The paper-trail of the entire selection process within SelectHub was invaluable for the procurement and finance personnel to reference as they conducted the contract negotiations with the finalist.

Summary

The SelectHub cloud platform enabled the customer to reduce the pentest vendor selection and RFI process from the typical 4~5 months to approx. 6 weeks. This led the Project Manager that led the selection project to quote “I cannot imagine going back to the manual way of compiling requirements, short-listing vendors and attempting to glean enough information from various websites to do a thorough apples-to-apples comparison. SelectHub has been a huge time-saver for this project!”



Intelligent Technology Selection Management

SelectHub's online platform allows you to make smarter, faster technology selections at a lower cost.

The SelectHub technology selection management platform provides collaborative requirements management and vendor evaluations as part of a guided best practice workflow for the entire selection process going from requirements compilation to vendor shortlists, and finally to RFX processes—greatly reducing time and errors—and allowing all participants to contribute efficiently.

Contact Us

Contact us for a personal demo
or 30 day free trial:

sales@selecthub.com



SelectHub
Denver, Colorado

www.selecthub.com
contact@selecthub.com
877.692.2896

© SelectHub. All rights reserved.