
12.1.2 Selection Criteria

What qualities do you look for in a contractor for environmental engineering consulting services? Do you have preferences with regard to origins of the contractor?

- The top selection criteria always revolve around the issue of reliability and competence. Managers comment that there are a lot of new firms in this business and they need to separate the true specialists from those that are only marginally competent.
- Some firms have standard hiring practices which are set by their purchasing department and incorporate a variety of requirements. These may include proof of insurance coverage, financial capacity to complete the project, listing in business directories such as Dun & Bradstreet Directories, etc.
- None of the firms contacted placed competitive *price* before *quality of work* or *company reputation* in their selection criteria. However, competitive costs were usually ranked among the top three criteria.
- Another notable manufacturers' selection criteria that arose in our discussions was the opinion of local, state and federal agencies regarding the consultant's competence. Manufacturers often consult regulatory officials for their opinions. One firm stated that they meet state regulatory officials once per month. While state and federal officials cannot formally recommend one firm over another, they do present their views and knowledge regarding the capabilities of particular firms. "Most regulatory agencies will suggest companies who have done similar work or give a list of firms that do certain types of work, but they tend to shy away from recommending someone".
- Lawyers and insurance firms also play a role in some instances in recommending a particular engineering firm to their client. All interviewed manufacturers have legal counsel to help interpret legislative requirements. (Industry associations were also mentioned in some instances as the relied-upon source to "turn regulations into English"). All interviewed manufacturers have insurance firms to guard against liability concerns.
- Another key selection criteria was *mobilization rate* or response time. Managers who expressed a preference for using local consultants explained that this was because "out of state" firms could not respond as quickly and would have to be a great deal more competitive in order to justify travel expenses. There may also be a concern with after-sale service. In this regard, respondents suggested that Canadian firms might wish to open a local office or buy a small state firm in order to demonstrate the ability to be responsive.

12.1.3 Perceptions of Canadian Capabilities

What are your views regarding Canadian engineering capabilities?

- Very few of the interviewees had any previous experience with Canadian consultants. Those who did commented that their perception of Canadian environmental engineers was that they were as sound and technically competent as their American counterparts but that they lacked a fundamental knowledge of the regulatory environment south of the border (and specifically how it affects the industry they are working in).
- Receptiveness to Canadian firms, as stated earlier, varies from firm to firm. Most expressed the views that "a competent, competitive Canadian firm who has quality work experience is as appealing to us as any American firm".