

Table 1: Overcoming obstacles in the PACS selection process

Obstacle	Considerations and potential solutions
<p>“We MUST get the latest and greatest!” A key stakeholder is fascinated with new technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors of technology-enabled products may actively seek these people and sell them heavily on the “sizzle” of their latest offering. • Always remember: With technology, the “leading edge” can sometimes become the “bleeding edge.” • Create a selection and acquisition committee composed of all stakeholders; include those who are tech savvy, those who run the business, those who will actually use the PACS every day, and those who control the purse strings.
<p>“This is THE guy!” A couple of senior office staff like only one vendor and are driving the selection and acquisition process to a premature ending.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors may attempt to curry favor with those whom they believe will be vocal and favor their solution. • Try not to let a small number of people make the PACS selection and acquisition decision; do not let the decision be made in a vacuum. • Make it clear to vendors whom they should contact within the practice (and how) regarding the PACS acquisition and what role each participant has in the selection and acquisition process. • Ensure that vendors know who will actually make the purchase decision and—just as importantly—who will not. • Focus on the outcome—a useful PACS, installed correctly, within your budget, from a vendor you trust. Don’t stop the process until you reach that outcome.
<p>“This isn’t what I asked for.” A vendor submits an incomplete response—one that does not meet your criteria or one that does not give you the information you need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors may try to cast a proposal so the practice fits the product, not the other way around. The proposal may be incomplete or only close to what you had originally requested, to give the vendor’s product or solution an edge. • Compare, compare, and compare again. Compare each vendor’s response to all others you receive. Look for the key elements of each response, track them in a spreadsheet, and compare them. • Provide vendors with exact specifications, including how you want to receive responses, take questions, and clarify expectations. • Advise vendors that they must respond exactly as you require or their proposals will not be considered. • If responses from a vendor representative are unsatisfactory, ask to speak with other vendor personnel, such as managers or technical staff. Your representative may not be accessing the internal resources necessary to respond in the most meaningful manner.
<p>“I’ll just talk to Joe.” A vendor tries to manipulate decisions by “going around” the selection and acquisition process your practice has established.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors sometimes try to steer negotiations to individuals less suited to negotiating. They may try to approach a senior physician not involved in the process, meet separately with a “select” group of employees who support their product selection, or try to pressure the process by putting artificial time limits on their pricing. • If a vendor attempts to go around the process once, make it clear that such behavior is unacceptable, and if it is attempted again, the vendor will be eliminated from further consideration.

<p>“I’ll get it to you tomorrow.” A vendor fails to supply you with detailed information about his or her company during the selection and acquisition process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some vendors are small companies, and some are part of very large companies; some are start-ups, and some have been in business for years. When assessing PACS vendors, company information is important. The decision you are making is not a short-term one but a 7- to 10-year commitment. You want to be confident that your vendor will be with you for the long haul. • Do not waiver from your requirement for detailed information about the company and gather as much information as possible on your own for all vendors you are considering. • Any vendor that declines to provide information should be eliminated from consideration.
<p>“Let me call for you.” A vendor supplies no references or only a few selected references.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References are important. No references should mean no deal. • References should have similar practice settings. A multispecialty clinic reference with one orthopaedist isn’t appropriate for a large single-specialty orthopaedic practice with 10 orthopaedists. • Go beyond the supplied reference list and ask other sources who might provide a perspective on the vendors you are considering.
<p>“Is that a deal breaker?” Negotiations become stuck on some point (eg, price, service, maintenance, implementation).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess how important the point, whatever it may be, actually is and consider what you may be willing to give up to get the deal done. • Look at things through the vendor’s eyes. What does the vendor want and what would the vendor give up to get the deal done? • Never do a deal just to do a deal—make sure it is the right deal, at the right price, at the right time.