

DO WE LIKE VENDOR CHANGES?

How difficult has it been for your organization to adapt to new vendors, especially when there has been one that your office has used for several years?

I have been through numerous vendor changes over the past 15 years working in the Purchasing Department of Harford County Public Schools. Everything has been going along smoothly with your current vendor, then the bid goes out for pricing, and multiple vendors try to take away your easy life! When a new vendor finally is awarded the contract, it can be very uncomfortable for you and other employees.

There will always be hurdles to overcome whenever a new vendor wins a contract. When the new ordering information is distributed to various members of your schools and departments, it can be quite confusing for personnel. Employees have become very content using an existing vendor, and they don't like the change!

There will always be individuals who will fight change, which is "human nature." However, we must adapt to the "new" and let go of the "I don't want to change" behavior. Once this is achieved, the process usually works very smoothly.

In today's market, most vendors have web sites to make the ordering process easy and our ordering personnel hold a purchasing card which makes the process very efficient. With this in mind, there will be some type of training for the end users. In my situation, it is training custodians in our school system, and sometimes, facilities personnel. When training is not available on an individual basis, a training packet is made which contains screen shots and steps to complete orders. In most cases this works, but there will always be some employees that need additional support. This is usually accomplished through a phone call, and, after a period of time, everyone becomes familiar with the new vendor ordering process.

It is very important to monitor new vendor usage by the school personnel. Whenever there is an issue, follow-up immediately with the individual, and guide them to the new vendor and the specifics of using the new ordering system.

In the world of Purchasing and today's economy, there will always be companies that are "hungry" for business. If a new vendor has good pricing, and they can comply with our specifications, changes will be made. ***Change is something everyone must accept.***

Janet C. Sites
Purchasing Assistant
Harford County Public Schools