ThinkSource Q&A

What is ThinkSource?
ThinkSource is a comprehensive e-procurement system for processing the complete lifecycle of temporary and contingent labor – from requisitions to supplier payments. It is also a division of Think Resources, supplying energy professionals, engineers and technical skills worldwide since 1988.

How does the ThinkSource model work?
ThinkSource is an electronic marketplace where your employees can transact all of the business associated with finding and hiring temporary workers and contractors. Requisitions created by your managers are available to your suppliers online and at the same time. You control the suppliers who participate in the marketplace and at what level (preferred, tiered, etc.) your suppliers participate. Suppliers respond electronically and the system makes their "proposals" available to the appropriate managers. (The system filters and ranks responses based on preset controls).

Every part of the process is handled by the system: requisition, approval, responses, interviews, compliance requirements, contractor starts, time and expense, management, feedback, invoices, reconciliation, and payments.

Is ThinkSource new?
The name is new, but the software was developed in 1999. Release 6 of the software came out in February of 2005 and right now there are about 80 companies (clients and suppliers) using the system.

What technology does ThinkSource use?
The architecture is based on open standards and is platform independent, which means it can work in a variety of operating system and database environments. The platform is highly scalable and IBM awarded our partner company ASP Prime status. One client has over 4,000 users and 1,400 active projects and assignments using 4 gigabytes of space.

Can you integrate ThinkSource with other software applications?
Yes, it can be integrated with a variety of applications and systems, including time and expense tracking, payroll, enterprise resource planning (ERP), as well as interactive voice response (IVR), and personal digital assistants (PDA) systems. Creating standard feeds to customer systems is part of normal implementation.

Can we modify ThinkSource to fit our business?
ThinkSource is modified by setting various controls and parameters available to a "superbuyer" with administrative permissions. We will review your business with you before implementation and many of the controls will be set at that time. The level of control is extensive. For example, with approvals:

- You can allow requisitions to be released with no internal approvals
- You can set a dollar limit on requisitions that will trigger approvals
- You can require approvals for certain types of requisitions (project work vs. time & materials)
- You can require multiple levels of approval (local manager, division VP, etc.)
- You can require approvals when budgets or billable rates are exceeded

Modifications can be made to the software for a fee, but it usually is not necessary.

How much does it cost?
We do not charge our clients for using ThinkSource. Generally, we do not charge for implementing ThinkSource unless your company requires changes beyond the typical feeds we create. We will create standard feeds to communicate with purchasing, accounting, payroll and human resource systems at no charge. There are no hosting fees, license fees or annual maintenance fees. We will also provide training and user manuals to your users and suppliers, a consultant to assist in the transition process, and a full-time vendor administrator.

Why do you give it away?
We want to be one of your suppliers. In exchange for the use of our software, your company agrees to allow Think Energy Group, a staffing arm of Think Resources, to participate as a supplier. Think Energy Group will not have a special status and they will compete just like your other suppliers (we are very confident in our recruiting abilities). The software is truly vendor neutral.

We also take a small piece (usually 2 to 4 percent) of what each supplier bills to help offset the cost of hosting and maintaining the system. Minority and women-owned businesses are charged less.

Is that fair to our suppliers?
The initial reaction of many suppliers is negative, but when explained to them, most realize it is an opportunity. Suppliers currently spend about 3% of their revenue dollars on sales. Salespeople call on the customer's hiring managers looking for new opportunities, but the best they can do is see only a small slice of the entire enterprise. Under this model, there is no need for a salesperson because the suppliers will see all of your open requisitions. They also have use of the software to conduct business with your company. The software lowers their administrative costs and automatically submits reconciled invoices to the client. Clients pay pre-reconciled invoices quicker. The suppliers:

- No longer need to pay a salesperson,
- See more of the opportunities,
- Have lower administrative costs,
- Get paid quicker.

What steps are involved in implementing ThinkSource?
- We first conduct our due diligence. We would look at your current process and the various systems where we need to create feeds.
- We would map out the new process jointly.
- We would assign a vendor administrator from ThinkSource.
- We would create a transition plan covering communication, training, and implementation. The plan would address the supplier transition, too.
- Communicate, train and implementation
- Perform post-implementation walk-through

What is John Moore's background?
John has worked in information technology for 28 years and for various technical staffing companies since 1984. In the last decade, he focused on vendor management and managed services programs, specifically on creating and managing programs for large, multi-site companies. He served as an operational vice president for two international staffing organizations and recently joined Think Resources as VP of Vendor and Workforce Management. He holds a BS in Society & Technology and an MBA with a concentration in global technology management.

In the early 1990s, he consulted with a global IBM procurement team to help them develop a regional vendor management model and later, a national program. He designed a new business model to support a large-volume, multi-location national customer with up to 1,000 requisitions each month. All requisitions passed through a centralized group for cataloging and distribution to geographic fulfillment teams. Centralized control allowed for quality measurement and reallocation of resources when necessary. This was the first technical services group to be certified nationally under ISO-9000.

John also developed a methodology to analyze the processes associated with acquiring temporary services. The methodology involved facilitated sessions with essential client personnel representing different organizational functions. User participation in the analysis *and* the development of new processes increased the acceptance of the new processes immeasurably. A completed analysis (and process map) was a prerequisite for installation of any automation. The methodology was used to study procurement at Mutual of Omaha, Eli Lilly, Corning and other corporations.

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