



## How Do You Know Which Hotline Vendor is Right for Your Organization?


Richard P. Kusserow | September 2024

### Hotline Vendor Considerations

Many organizations are faced with the decision to outsource their hotline. This is an area unfamiliar to most people charged with making the decision. How can someone be sure he or she is making the right decision? What should he or she be looking for in companies that offer employee hotline services? What questions should he or she ask of prospective companies? What should he or she watch out for in contracts? All of these are valid questions. The following tips are offered to assist you in making the right decision.

There are many companies available from which to choose. These hotline services usually base their fees on the service population (i.e., number of employees, workforce members). Price is always a major consideration in selecting any service. Take bids from several vendors, and compare the results. Price, however, is not everything. You need to be sure you are getting value for your expenditures. As such, there are many other factors that should be considered when selecting a company to handle your hotline operation.

The most important consideration is that the company provides services that meet your needs, as opposed to making you accept what they want to give you. The old adage of the customer always being right should apply to this business as well. Find the company that will give you what you want, not what someone wants to give you.



Want to learn more about Compliance Resources?  
Book your demo with one of our business solution specialists.

[BOOK A DEMO](#)

# Tips on Making the Right Selection

These tips can assist an organization in their selection process for a hotline vendor.

- By outsourcing the answering of the hotline, you sacrifice some control over the operation; therefore, proper qualification of a service is critical to a solid decision that will alleviate potential problems.
- Ask for biographic information on the top principals of the companies being considered and look to their experience in providing this type of service and expertise in understanding the issues and regulatory environment in which you have to do business (i.e., are they credible?).
- Determine how long they have been providing this type of service; the greater the experience base, the less likely errors will be made.
- Ask for at least three references, and check them out.
- The hotline service should provide operating protocols, policies, and procedures tailored to your needs to ensure that risks of error (by the organization or the hot line service) are reduced to the lowest possible level.
- You would be entrusting sensitive corporate information to a third party; thus, you should ensure that your contract contains a strict confidentiality agreement.
- The contract should have an explicit file record retention (or rather, record destruction) policy so that the third party does not become a repository of corporate information.
- To avoid losing good information, or possibly avoid aggravating a serious problem, obtain evidence that the service operators have been trained and have sufficient expertise in your sector of the health care industry to recognize implications of caller information.
- Call reports is provided the same day of the cal
- The report formats is standardized for proper completion and taking action.
- Logs of all calls taken should be prepared by the service (without identifying data as to callers or subjects of the calls).
- The company should have a method by which callers could call back using a caller number, rather than identifying themselves.
- Staff taking the call should take all the time necessary to debrief callers; therefore, there should be no incentives to staff based upon call volume.
- Call services should be willing to provide posters without additional charge to help publicize the availability of the hotline. Call services should be able to provide service time according to the needs of the client, whether that is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or specified daytime service.

- Avoid hidden fees such as carrier charges, toll fees, processing fees, et cetera.
- It is desirable that your call patterns be compared to a national database for your industry in order to assist you in identifying emerging problem areas.
- Make sure that any agreement with a hotline service permits you to cancel without penalty if you are not fully satisfied with the service. (Any contract designed to lock you up should be questioned.)

Interested in learning more about hotlines? Contact Shelby Cole at [scole@complianceresource.com](mailto:scole@complianceresource.com).



#### **About the Author**

Richard P. Kusserow established Strategic Management Services, LLC, after retiring from being the DHHS Inspector General, and has assisted over 2,000 health care organizations and entities in developing, implementing and assessing compliance programs.