

# News from... VIRA Technology Group

**By:** Alan Rabinowitz, EVP Sales Engineering  
VIRA Manufacturing, Inc.  
VIRA Technology Group

It seems that technology is everywhere; all vertical markets are capitalizing upon the benefits and value propositions technology brings to the table. The old arguments against technology integration and implementation are no longer valid.

- Technology is complex; virtually everything these days is “Plug ‘n’ Play
- Technology is expensive; prices plummet soon after technology is introduced to the marketplace
- Technology breaks; we all have had t.v.’s that are 10 years old and still playing!

Manufacturers and technology providers are cropping up like never before. For the most part, they are “piece parts” suppliers. As such, they offer components of a total solution, but not the solution itself. This forces the end user to seek multiple sources that hopefully can complete the puzzle using the pieces in hand. The inherent danger lies in the fact that these “piece parts” suppliers never communicate amongst themselves as they often see each other as competitors. Further, not being sure of what the other may be doing, each builds in redundancies to cover potential oversights of the other. In the end, the customer not only pays for the redundancies but is never quite sure of the efficacy of the solution. What is worse, with whom does accountability lie if problems should arise? It can become a finger pointing nightmare.

Total solutions providers are the preferred way to go; unlike “piece parts” suppliers, they offer turnkey solutions. Such providers are not single entities, but rather consortiums comprised of “best in class” companies that work in concert for a single client on a specific project. Their collective expertise and credibility is unquestioned and the technology group will offer the most cost effective and comprehensive solutions available. The technology group will avail itself of the highest quality product, minimize or eliminate development costs, be “first to market” with innovation and the group’s lead partner shall be the single contact for the end user. From incipient stage through launch, total solutions providers are now “best of breed” as well.

How does one stop the “bleeding?” Is the solution a band-aid or tourniquet? Both are solutions, which one is most correct? Total solutions are out there, finding them may be a challenge. Here are some guidelines that should prove helpful-

1. Select a group that understands your vertical; there are many good companies out there, but if they have limited experience in your market, you will pay for their education and may not get the results you seek.
2. Carefully examine the “core competencies” of the group members; you may find the company name doesn’t match the company’s skill sets.
3. Know the lead partner in the group for your project. Lead partners change depending upon the nature or scope of the project. Since the lead partner is your prime contact, establish the relationship sooner rather than later.
3. Communicate, communicate, communicate. All technology group members speak to each other daily, but is anyone speaking with you? The project is all about you, so to insure nothing “falls through the cracks”, keep communicating with your prime contact.
4. Does all this ‘expertise’ cost more? On the contrary, it costs less. This is one of the few instances where *less is more*. Make sure you take full advantage of the “team” approach to your total solution. The efficiency, skills and expertise of the group’s members translates into savings for the end user.
5. Ask questions- no one will ever look down upon you. Those that don’t ask questions often don’t get what they expect. The good news is that technology groups always ask questions, so if you don’t, they shall.