

## **Matchmaking: Clients and service providers**

The success of a piloting or manufacturing project and the likelihood of problems are partially determined by measurable factors but also to a good extent by “meta” factors between clients and contractors. Those are making each project setting unique. Expectation management is critical to ensure a smooth project. Therefore, both sides need to critically understand the project targets, the constraints of technology and equipment as well as both companies’ business drivers, mentality and working culture.

For the clients there are two extremes – the business driven and the technology driven. Of course, this judgement is never completely digital and companies need a good sense for both aspects to succeed. None of them is better or worse, but as a service provider you need to understand with whom you will be working to prepare for the mindset and expectations:

- The technology-driven often come along with a kind of bottom-up and data driven mentality. For your work at a service provider this typically means that the clients’ management will support decisions/ recommendations if your technical or operational counterpart already bought in and if decisions were made based on available data. This can make projects much more plannable.
- The business-driven are rather working top-down. Development targets are moving faster and are less predictable as they depend on the current business perception or outcomes of recent board meetings. Typically, these companies are willing to take riskier steps but also demand a more flexible mindset on the contractors side.

The maturity of a client and their industry background (e.g. agriculture, food, chemicals/polymers, fuels etc) are key differentiators as well as this sets expectations on various levels of the appropriate service already (quality standards, diligence for details, accustomed cost range).

On the other side there are the service providers, in our case facilities providing piloting and manufacturing services (CRO, CDMO, CMO). Those are to be primarily differentiated by the individual weight of the “R” (research) “D” (development) and “M” (manufacturing) in their business model. You’ll easily learn if they are primarily doing process development (focus on data) or manufacturing (focus on product) or even both (still rather unusual in industrial biotech, more common in pharma). Some of the piloting facilities are publicly funded, whereas others are privately held.

The facilities are mainly judged based on technical or operational abilities and track of records. The perception towards clients however can be more subtle (see **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**). This can be resolved if the project teams share a good working relation and proactively manage expectations. It is clear that some of the questions raised here can only be answered after some significant time working together. However, it is important to understand (and work) as much as possible on the fit between both parties.

If a project is essential for the growth of your company, you only want to go with a service provider that fits your needs. In contrast being a service provider who gets the feeling that the technological basis

provided by your potential client does not keep up with its high expectations on the service itself, you might better go on with another customer or add a reasonable markup on the project.

Table 1: Matchmaking – The first impression

Important aspects of choosing a service provider can be:	How do clients collaborate?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Available experience &amp; education on relevant levels of work</li> <li>- Experience from similar projects</li> <li>- Regulatory environment / available certifications</li> <li>- Variety of equipment in type and scale</li> <li>- Track of records in monoseptic fermentations / containment</li> <li>- Possibility to run extended 24/7 campaigns</li> <li>- Possibility to rent/invest in project specific equipment</li> <li>- Availability of utilities, analytics, maintenance/repair capabilities</li> <li>- Network with process service providers close to site</li> <li>- Number of parallel production lines, available redundancies</li> <li>- Provision of further logistical services on top of core business</li> <li>- Approach to convert R&amp;D work into production (contract, cost, scale)</li> <li>- Possibility to take/share risks</li> <li>- Flexibility to test alternative process settings on rather short notice</li> <li>- Freedom to collaborate (exclusivities with competitors)</li> <li>- Available continuous improvement process</li> <li>- Last not least cost (structure, model)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do they empower and support the service provider?</li> <li>- Will they be on site or manage remotely?</li> <li>- Are they aware of and respect the necessary procedures, timelines and regulations to run/plan a facility?</li> <li>- How frequently changing are technical planning details?</li> <li>- How do they react on any issues arising during piloting? As a partner or as a customer?</li> <li>- Is the project team efficiently able to make decisions?</li> <li>- How well in advance do they approach facilities?</li> <li>- Is (and how is) a technical due diligence performed?</li> <li>- Is the available process documentation in reasonable balance with their expectations?</li> <li>- Are they proactively discussing their technology risks &amp; unknowns</li> <li>- Are they preparing for the unexpected/problems or for success only?</li> <li>- Are they open or reserved for contractors recommendations towards process adaptations?</li> </ul>

## **About the author**

Dr.-Ing. Markus Fritsch is a bioprocess engineer and has been working in the Industrial Biotechnology sector on R&D, engineering, scale-up & biomanufacturing assignments. In particular he enjoyed the last ten years, in which he was managing projects in various positions at the interface of an industrial scale multi-purpose plant that acted as a gateway for commercialization projects.

Markus repeatedly experienced the challenges and dynamics arising out of different perspectives and requirements from customers, technology-, engineering- and service providers, end-users and financial institutes. Now he is providing independent engineering and consulting services for technology ventures, service providers and other stakeholders of the bioeconomy.

Contact us:

Fritsch Bioprocess | Engineering | Consulting

[markus@fritsch-bioprocess.com](mailto:markus@fritsch-bioprocess.com)

<https://fritsch-bioprocess.com>

Date of last revision: September 21<sup>st</sup> 2021