Evaluating Whether a New Supplier:
Buyer & Decision-Maker Checklist

This checklist is designed to be completed before issuing RFQs or engaging alternative suppliers. Its purpose is to align engineering, quality, purchasing, and leadership on risk, validation exposure, and decision ownership, before cost and lead time bias the process.

1: Define "Right Fit" *Before* Evaluating Suppliers

☐ What does success look like six months after launch?

☐ Which risks are we willing to accept and which are unacceptable?

☐ What would cause us to say "this supplier is not a fit" even if pricing and lead time are attractive? Define disqualifiers.

2. Engineering Alignment – Design & Process Risk

☐ Which features, tolerances, or material behaviors carry the highest process risk?

☐ What aspects of the part are least tolerant to variation at volume?

☐ Are any expectations currently assumed rather than documented?

Goal: Make technical assumptions explicit before they become production failures.

Red Flag: Engineering confidence based on prototype success rather than process capability at scale.

3. Quality Alignment - Validation & Compliance Expectations

☐ What does "production-ready" mean from a validation standpoint?

☐ Which quality requirements are non-negotiable vs. flexible?

☐ Where have similar programs historically slipped during validation?

Goal: Prevent late-stage validation resets and requalification costs.

Red Flag: Quality is reacting to supplier output instead of shaping supplier selection.

4.. Purchasing Alignment

☐ Are we optimizing for price or program outcomes?

☐ How will suppliers be evaluated beyond quoted cost and lead time?

☐ What assumptions are we making about supplier capacity, prioritization, and responsiveness?

Goal: Ensure commercial decisions support execution, not just price targets.

Red Flag: Lowest quote wins without understanding what was optimized to get there.

5. Ownership & Decision Rights

☐ Who owns supplier performance after award?

☐ Who has authority to approve changes once tooling or validation begins?

☐ How are escalations made - and how quickly?

Goal: Eliminate ambiguity when things go wrong (because they will).

Red Flag: Multiple stakeholders, no clear owner.

6. Communication & Information Flow

☐ Are teams operating sequentially or in parallel?

☐ How will risks, delays, or capability gaps be communicated internally?

☐ What information does each function typically **not** receive—but needs?

Goal: Surface issues early instead of discovering them during validation or launch.

Red Flag: Problems are discovered downstream instead of escalated upstream.

F. Historical Insight

☐ Where have breakdowns occurred between engineering, quality, and purchasing before?

☐ What did we wish we had clarified earlier on similar programs?

☐ If we could rewind six months, what would we do differently?

Goal: Institutionalize experience instead of repeating mistakes.

Red Flag: “This time will be different” with no structural changes.