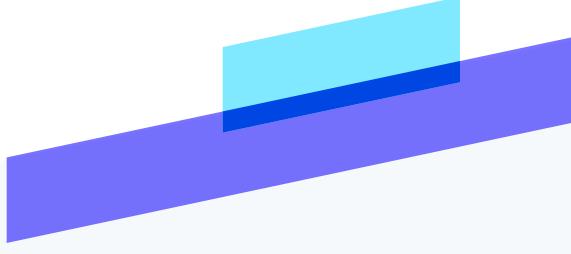


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# Guide to running a payment provider RFP for medium-sized enterprises



# Introduction



Businesses face a variety of challenges while navigating the complexities of payment processing. From concerns about high costs to the need for robust features, reliable customer support and simple integrations, selecting the right payment provider is important for long-term success. Businesses should regularly re-evaluate their existing payment service providers, because many systems that were once reliable no longer address modern businesses' evolving needs and expectations.

To address these concerns effectively, businesses often use the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to evaluate and choose the provider best suited to meet their specific needs. As businesses increasingly optimise for cost, they should reframe their perception of payments from a cost centre to a tool. By improving payments operations, businesses can reduce operational costs, access new revenue streams, and transform payments into a driver of growth.

This guide simplifies the RFP process for businesses by providing insights, recommendations, and best practices for effectively evaluating payment providers, helping you select the ideal payment service provider for your business needs.

# Features, functionality, and flexibility

Businesses need a payment provider that offers advanced technology to enable innovation. They're looking for a way to offer seamless payment experiences, easily implement payment methods such as wallets (e.g. Apple Pay and Google Pay) and buy now, pay later (BNPL) options, improve payment performance, and automate reporting and tax management. However, it's hard to find providers that can deliver capabilities across the full payments stack while also offering flexibility for future scalability and global expansion. A global, unified, API-based payments infrastructure enables rapid development, giving you the flexibility to add new payment methods, expand to new markets, and build new payment experiences and financial services offerings.

## What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Unified platform.** Choosing a payment provider with a unified platform eliminates the need to piece together disparate systems across payments, [billing](#), [fraud capabilities](#), [reporting](#), and [multi-party payments](#), providing architectural benefits over integrating and managing multiple platforms.
-  **Unified payments.** Ensure your provider can provide continuity across online and in-person [payments](#), providing the same level of performance, payment methods, data, and reporting across every channel.
-  **Consistent customer experience.** Look for a payment provider that enables the use of identical local payment methods across all channels, provides uniform data and reporting across all channels, and effortlessly accommodates scenarios such as BORIS (buy online, return in store).
-  **Investment in developers.** Consider the level of ongoing maintenance your team will need to engage in. Look for providers that invest in developers so that you can use your limited engineering resources on projects that drive business value.
-  **Active feature development.** Your payment provider should invest in an active development team to ship new features, respond to changing market dynamics, and stay competitive in an ever-changing payments landscape.
-  **Future-proofed payments stack.** Find a technical payment provider with a solid foundation to support continuous change and innovations so that you don't need to go through the RFP process again.
-  **Aligned roadmaps.** Your roadmap should align with the one the payment provider is building. Ideally, you can influence the payment provider's roadmap to address your requirements.

## Reliability

Because of the potential impact to revenue and reputation, reliability and uptime are key considerations for businesses, many of which have experienced the consequences of downtime with many providers. Ensuring uninterrupted payment processing is key to maintaining customer trust and operational efficiency. When thousands of transactions are processed daily, even minimal downtime can lead to significant losses. Stripe is the only major payments provider that publishes its uptime for the entire platform and leads the industry with [99.999%](#) uptime. Processor downtime does not just impact that lost window of sales, but also negatively impacts customer lifetime value and potentially your brand perception.

### Industry-leading uptime

During the 2023 Black Friday and Cyber Monday, Stripe's API maintained an [uptime of more than 99.999%](#), with a peak of 27,395 requests per second and over 300 million transactions processed.

## What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Proven track record.** When considering a payment provider, ensure it has a strong record in minimising downtime and a commitment to transparency when it comes to platform health metrics.
-  **Peak performance.** You want confidence that your provider can handle the influx of volume. Query how each payment provider runs load tests and be sure they can demonstrate historical performance managing similar surges in traffic.

## Integration experience

As businesses increasingly understand how payments enhance operations and the customer experience, the integration process becomes even more important. Integrating the payment provider directly with third-party systems creates a cohesive ecosystem. It connects different systems and applications, enabling smooth data flow, providing real-time access to information, and preventing the isolation of data. A well-executed integration improves operational efficiency by streamlining processes. When evaluating payment providers, assess their ability to facilitate seamless integrations. Look for a provider that offers comprehensive tools, technology, and services to support successful implementation, tailored to your specific timeline and requirements.

### Top rating

The Forrester Wave™: Merchant Payment Providers, Q1 2024 ranked Stripe the only payment provider evaluated with a [5/5 in the Integrations criterion](#).

## What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Development speed.** The clarity and comprehensiveness of API documentation serve as an initial indicator of a provider's technical capability. Look for a provider that offers access to APIs, webhook events, and support for low- and no-code options, plus tools to enable developers to go from testing to production with confidence.
-  **Pre-built integrations.** To access real-time data and avoid disparate data silos, choose a provider that offers integration interfaces aligned with your needs, including pre-built connectors tailored for popular CRMs (e.g. Salesforce), ERPs (e.g. NetSuite), and data warehouses, ensuring developer efficiency and faster deployment.
-  **Single integration for all channels.** Make sure that your payment provider enables you to expand to a new revenue stream, market, or payment method (such as Tap to Pay or a new card reader) without requiring a new platform.
-  **Technical documentation.** Look for a provider offering comprehensive documentation featuring sample code snippets, detailed step-by-step instructions, and user-friendly guides. Additionally, an engaged developer community can provide further support.

## Customer support

In addition to feature-rich solutions, businesses expect reliable customer support. Quick access to knowledgeable support staff who are available 24/7 is necessary for troubleshooting, product guidance, and smooth implementation. Many premium support plans offer this level of service, but businesses must ensure clarity regarding support tiers and associated costs.



### Cost savings on engineering resources

Stripe helps companies save on engineering resources, with a **59% increase** in developer productivity on average.\*

## What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **The right level of support.** Many payment providers offer customer support at no additional cost, but the level of support is typically based on payment volume, which often leaves businesses getting less support than expected. If you anticipate needing more customer support, look for a provider that provides premium support plans, which tend to ensure easy-access, 24/7 support with prompt response times.
-  **Technical resources.** For businesses lacking in-house development resources, ask if the provider offers professional services or has a network of certified systems integrators. Consider providers that collaborate with integration and consulting partners you may already have relationships with to deliver a smooth transition.

\* IDC, The Business Value of the Stripe Payments Platform, Doc #US43596118, March 2018

# Cost optimisation

There are a variety of network fees that accompany a typical transaction, and they can vary depending on the nature of the transaction. In flat-rate pricing, the payment provider pays these network fees on your behalf in exchange for a fixed amount on each transaction, meaning your costs are predictable but you don't have much control. On the other hand, with network cost plus – sometimes called "cost plus" or "interchange plus" – you pay these network fees yourself, along with an added markup to the payment provider. With this level of control and detail, you may have the opportunity to identify and influence the biggest drivers of cost. However, this opportunity also comes with unpredictability and complexity: the factors that influence network costs fluctuate, can be hard to predict, and are subject to change by the card networks.

A provider should ensure that your acceptance costs are as low as possible and provide transparency around drivers of network costs. The best way to do this is to provide the most accurate transaction-level data, including network and [interchange fees](#).

## What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Visibility into network costs.** Your provider should provide transparency and user-friendly visualisations into how your network costs have changed over time so you can easily understand and report on cost increases or decreases.
-  **Downgrade avoidance.** Your payment provider should offer tools and strategies to avoid downgrades, which occur when higher network fees are levied on a transaction because it is missing information about the purchase or customer. For example, they should help your business improve checkout flows to capture the information necessary to avoid such downgrades while minimising friction.
-  **Itemised fee reporting.** You should be given access to transaction-level granularity into interchange, scheme, and fees. This helps you reconcile end-of-month reports back to a transaction basis and quickly identify any processing issues. In addition, the ability to see data at a transaction level can help you identify areas for cost optimisation.

# Global coverage

If your business operates in multiple countries, consider how well your provider can support your needs in each country. Look at how easily new payment methods can be turned on without additional integration work or the need to register as a local entity. This drastically improves your ability to quickly bring your products to market to drive new revenue streams.

## What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Geo-targeted customisation.** Your provider should be able to display the right language, payment methods, currencies, and form conventions based on the customers' location.
-  **Local expertise.** Your provider should have region-specific proficiency in your priority markets so that they can help your business navigate changing rules and regulations. Local acquiring can generate both authorisation rate benefits and cost savings.
-  **Async settlement.** If your business operates as a marketplace or platform, consider whether your provider can settle business funds locally and cover foreign exchange rate changes between the time of the charge and time of settlement.

# Risk management

## Fraud

Given the substantial negative consequences of high fraud rates, such as financial losses, damage to reputation, and compromised customer trust, you need a payment provider that can implement a top-tier fraud solution. The most sophisticated ones will be directly integrated into the payments flow and use machine learning models trained on billions of transactions to prevent fraudulent transactions.

### What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Machine learning models.** Adaptive algorithms should be continuously trained on rich transaction and dispute data in order to adapt to the latest trends and respond to new fraud vectors.
-  **Mitigation of false positives.** Choose a provider with a well-rounded fraud solution that allows you to increase authorisation rates without a subsequent jump in chargebacks.
-  **Flexible rules and logic.** Your provider's fraud tool should offer a degree of flexibility, achieved with custom written rules and business logic for different responses to a range of risk scores, to adapt to your business's unique needs.
-  **Test rules.** Fraud is always changing, and industry-leading providers will let you change and back-test fraud rules without the need for custom development.
-  **Treatment of risk scores.** Select a provider that allows you to understand the inputs used to determine risk scores and make a fraud risk assessment, and be sure you have the ability to review transactions flagged as high risk.
-  **Insights and analytics.** Your provider should offer insights into your fraud trends, including the volume and key drivers of fraud over time, so you can effectively tailor your fraud prevention strategy.

## Disputes

As businesses well know, disputes are a common issue. However, that does not mean they need to create excessive operational strain or hurt your customer experience. A strong provider can offer tools and expertise to reduce the work required to mitigate and respond to disputes.

### What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Minimisation of chargebacks.** Payment providers should prevent disputes by using dynamic descriptors and integrating directly with major claims management systems, such as Visa Claims Resolution and Mastercom.
-  **Response automation.** When disputes inevitably do happen, your provider should reduce manual work by automatically submitting and formatting evidence and responding to disputes.
-  **Maximisation of win rates.** When manual intervention is required, providers should offer tools and strategies to improve win rates by calculating win probabilities and providing suggested actions.
-  **Programmatic dispute management.** Most providers will allow you to respond to disputes within a portal or dashboard, but the most technologically advanced will allow for programmatic dispute management via APIs, with functionality to upload evidence, respond to disputes, and receive dispute events via webhooks.

# Reconciliation

Reconciliation, while related to reporting, is a separate – but still important – task in ensuring accurate financial metrics, compliance checks, and audits, providing a unified view of your business. However, reconciliation tends to be needlessly complex, highly manual, and prone to errors.

## What to look for in a payment provider:

-  **Operational automation.** Your payment provider should alleviate operational burdens and enhance back-office functions through automation, consistency, and control, resulting in accurate reconciliation completed quickly with minimal lag time between settlement and data availability.
-  **Prompt transaction reports.** A sophisticated provider will offer both aggregate and individual transaction reports, including clear information on refunds, chargebacks, offsets, and fees, assisting with reconciliation and providing requisite information promptly in case of discrepancies.
-  **Custom reporting and consolidated data integration.** The provider should consolidate payment methods (e.g. cards, bank transfers, etc.) for easy reconciliation and integrate data into CRM, ERP, and custom systems for tailored reporting. It ideally offers options for different organisational needs, such as prebuilt executive summaries, custom reports for unique KPIs, and data integration with accounting systems and business intelligence tools ensure access to necessary payment data.
-  **Unified view of payments.** A provider with a unified platform and direct integrations to card networks should be able to present a unified view of all payments-related data at the appropriate level of detail, format, and interface you require.
-  **Transaction-level reporting.** A data-driven provider should offer transaction-level details, including relevant fees, in requisite formats, alongside custom reports, ad-hoc queries, and integrations with existing systems.
-  **Consolidated data and reporting.** Look for a provider that allows you to review and analyse data from online and in-person channels in a single dashboard – or allows you to export it to your repository of choice with little effort.

# How Stripe can help

Businesses partner with Stripe to solve payments challenges specific to their industries and build better customer experiences. Stripe offers a modern payments and finance automation platform to help businesses optimise costs by driving efficiency through streamlined payments and back-office operations such as billing, invoicing, and tax with flexible APIs designed for a smoother integration into your existing tech stack.



## Minimise costs and maximise revenue

Improving payments operations can reduce operational costs, and turning on new payment methods quickly and easily can increase conversion.



## Unify commerce

Use a single provider to consolidate payments, reporting, reconciliation, and data across both online and in-person payments to create a seamless customer experience.



## Implement modern features to meet evolving needs

By tapping into sophisticated capabilities on a single platform – operational automation, powerful reporting, tax management, fraud mitigation, and chat/IVR-supported payments, and many more – you gain a unified view of your data and give time back to your teams.



## Lean on quality customer support

Tailored premium support plans assign a dedicated manager for prompt troubleshooting or guidance on product usage to ensure your success on the platform.



## Depend on industry-leading uptime

Simplify payments operations with a platform that supports 135+ currencies, 100+ payment methods, and 47 countries with a single integration, and also delivers unmatched reliability and uptime of 99.999% to reduce downtime-related costs while building customer trust.



## Build, launch, and scale quickly

Technology-first solutions, including powerful APIs and detailed documentation, allow you to build once and deploy everywhere. Access structured financial reporting, build custom queries, or pipe Stripe data into your data warehouse to close your books faster and access rich business insights.

To start accepting payments with Stripe, [sign up for an account](#) or [contact our sales team](#).

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