Core Practice

Executive Briefing #82 – 3 Questions To Ask Before Buying WFM

Workforce Management Software Is Not A Tactical Purchase

Workforce Management Software (WFM) tracks, controls, and engages the most important asset in your business: your people. This is no longer just about time and attendance, but also productivity, performance management, employee engagement and communication tools, collaboration, and retention. Traditional human resource and payroll tools may be adopting prettier user interfaces, but they have proven over and over again that they cannot handle the complex realities in today's business environment. As legislation and cultural variables continue to dicate incredibly complicated pay rules, your WFM solution must be robust enough to handle them. We know payroll software will not.

Three questions must be asked to determine a potential software partner's focus, ability to deliver the complete solution, and range of delivery options to fit your needs.

1.   What is the vendor's core competency?

WFM is not ERP. The focus on employees and what they do from hire to retire is a giant undertaking. The amount of focus and understanding required to do this right means a company providing this type of technology should only be focused on this topic. When buying WFM, look for the firms that have the experience and focus on this very large area. If a company is selling WFM, but also ERP, payroll, and other peripheral tools, you will be hard pressed to know their priorities. Do not be afraid to ask them. Many large companies, through acquisition, have entered the WFM field. Is it their primary focus? Probably not, but it should be.

2.   Can we get the complete solution from one vendor?

There are many components to a WFM system. Although the off-color term "one throat to choke" is often used when describing the software buying experience, there is a reason buyers want one vendor handling as many of their needs as possible – complexity. As WFM has morphed from a simple time management system into a full Human Capital Management (HCM) system, there are many pieces that need to work together. Activity management, data analytics, payroll, and time off management are some of the many points of integration. Without accurate data from a robust WFM solution, whatever investment you make in these areas (especially analytics tools) may be more destructive than helpful. To simplify the buying experience, find a vendor that can provide as many of these options as possible. The integration will be easier and even if you don't buy everything immediately, adding modules later will be dramatically easier than combining multiple vendors. You do not want to end up with custom code linking random solutions together. Also, to add to this expandability, make sure the company is global. Even if you are not a global company today, you may be some day and you do not want to have to start all over again to get it right.

3.   How many different ways can we "buy" it?

Core Practice is a leading provider of operational and labor strategy consulting services with over 20 years of experience designing, developing, and implementing innovative labor solutions. Core Practice's labor strategies combine the best people with the right equipment at the right time and provide clients with a competitive advantage. Core Practice has worked extensively with clients in manufacturing, distribution, contact center, and mining industries. To learn more about Core Practice and what we do, please contact:

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With a move to the cloud, more companies are offering a SaaS model. In these cases you are not "buying" the software, but renting it as a service from a software provider. In these cases, the upfront cost is less, but you rent for as long as you use the tool. Although this can be great for a variety of reasons (less internal technical support requirements, lower upfront cost, reliability), it is not right for all customers. Make sure your vendor offers more than just SaaS. Buying licenses and the option to host are valuable alternatives depending on privacy concerns and immediately available budget to start the project. Your total cost of ownership over time may be less, and you actually own the licenses. Vendors with only one option force you to play by their terms and often those terms are in their best interest, not yours.

WFM needs to be the priority in a world of shrinking talent pools and more highly educated employees. If we engage them, they stay. If we understand where the opportunities are, we can fix them. The right WFM solution can make this a reality. If any of this topic interests you, we can help. To find out how we can actively help your organization navigate the WFM landscape, contact Core Practice at 212-534-0539.

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