6 Non-standard Questions To Ask When Buying Recruitment Software

An Eploy Whitepaper. 2016

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Introduction

OFTEN WE ARE CONTACTED BY COMPANIES LOOKING TO IMPROVE THEIR RECRUITMENT SYSTEMS. SOMETIMES AFTER BEING WITH THEIR CURRENT PROVIDER FOR LESS THAN TWO YEARS. CHANGING YOUR SYSTEM CAN BE A COSTLY EXERCISE - IN BOTH TIME AND MONEY, SO IT IS NOT A DECISION TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.

So, what is prompting so many companies to change their recruitment software so frequently? One reason could be that the software which seemed like a good fit at the time, in reality, is not fit for purpose.

Another reason could be that the software provider is not quite the company they portrayed during the sales pitch. Both of these causes are easily avoided by simply asking the right questions prior to purchase.

Objectives

To help potential buyers through the recruitment software procurement process, we've compiled this list of 6 non-standard questions.

We're assuming that you have shortlisted a number of potential solutions based on their ability to meet your functional requirements. The questions suggested here aim to help potential buyers identify the technology partner that you are most confident in building a long term, productive and beneficial relationship with - right from the outset.

1. Explain how each of our stakeholders will access the system on mobile devices.

IN OUR 24/7 SOCIETY IT IS VITAL THAT ALL KEY `

RECRUITMENT STAKEHOLDERS CAN ACCESS & USE THE SYSTEM ON ANY DEVICE.

Candidates, for example, will often search for jobs on their smartphone - can they complete the application process on mobile too?

Similarly, Recruiters want Talent Pool access at any time, from anywhere - enabling them to work pro-actively on the move.

Even hiring managers can benefit from accessing and up-dating candidate and vacancy information - perhaps taking interview notes and reviewing CVs on their tablets.

Test your shortlisted vendors:

1.   Create some realistic user journey scenarios and ask for a live demonstration of the vendors solution, a simple story can be effective, for example: "Jane wants to apply for a job on her iphone, however, her CV is stored on Google Drive, demonstrate how Jane can search and apply for the job."

2.   Lookout for any additional software that might be required for mobile access - ideally the software should be accessed through a standard web browser and not require 'remote desktop', VPN or other pre-requisites.

3.   Ask what the limitations are for each device? Can all functionality be accessed on smartphones & tablets as well as desktops & laptops?

PUT IT TO THE TEST

Creating realistic user journey scenarios

A good starting point is to use the agile formula: <PERSON> wants to <WHAT> so that <WHY> e.g. *Jane wants to use her iPhone so that she can apply for a job.* Next, **throw in a likely complication** to ensure the solution has the required flexibility e.g. *Jane wants to use her iPhone so that she can apply for a job, but her CV is stored on Google Drive*

2. Is the recruitment software provider a technology vendor, or a technology partner?

A TECHNOLOGY VENDOR WANTS YOU TO BUY THEIR SOFTWARE.

A TECHNOLOGY PARTNER WANTS TO HELP YOUR COMPANY SUCCEED AND GROW.

The key difference here is in the relationship you have with the recruitment software provider. A partner is infinitely more valuable in the long run.

How to test this for yourself:

It can be difficult to devise an empirical test for this one- it's more of a gut feel. Ask yourself questions like:

- Has the recruitment software provider taken time to fully understand my company and our processes?
- Are the sales people trying to rush the sale?
- Is the pricing transparent?
- Have we met the person responsible for our implementation - remember the salesperson is unlikely to be involved in your actual rollout.

Other questions you can ask include:

How is training carried out? On-site or online? Some providers will insist that all training is carried out online. Online training has its place, but research has shown it is more effective following live, face-to-face training[1]. Be wary of providers whose onsite training is delivered in a completely standardised fashion and/or delivered from another country - where they may not be familiar with local recruitment terminology and processes.

PUT IT TO THE TEST

Has the person responsible for implementation been involved in the pre-sales consultation?

If not, your unique requirements could well get lost as soon as you place an order.

Insist on meeting the implementation manager before your sign and ensure they have provided documented solutions to any specific areas of requirement or customisation.

6 Non-standard Questions To Ask When Buying Recruitment Software

3. Explain your software development process.

TIMES CHANGE, SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO SELECT A TECHNOLOGY PARTNER WHO HAS A TRACK RECORD OF CHANGING WITH THEM.

This is important for two reasons. First- in a very real, practical sense, a product that is not being regularly developed will be out of date within two years. Second, from a psychological point of view, a software company that is no longer developing its product indicates a lack of ambition to improve and update the product.

PUT IT TO THE TEST

Get the evidence...

Ask to see their current (and previous) roadmaps and check that previous items on the roadmap have actually been implemented.

How to test this for yourself:

Look for the evidence, do they have a roadmap? Ask for both the current roadmap (to give you an idea of new functionalities that you can expect in the future) and previous roadmaps. Then ask to see demonstrated previously roadmapped items - this is a great way to test if the roadmap can be trusted - or whether it's just marketing 'spin'.

Also ask about the companies 'Feature Request' policy. How do customers submit requests for new functionality? How are these requests handled?

4. How can we define and measure our KPIs and metrics?

RECRUITMENT CONFERS A MYRIAD OF METRICS TO MEASURE ITS EFFECTIVENESS, BUT DON'T EXPECT 'STANDARD REPORTS' TO PRECISELY MEASURE THE DATA YOU REQUIRE IN THE WAY YOU REQUIRE IT.

The age of Big Data has also brought about the age of Self Service Analytics. Yet this is something that HR and recruitment software has been slow to adapt to, relying on archaic standard reports or requiring technical expertise to configure and use third party reporting suites[2].

It really shouldn't be that difficult! So when selecting a recruitment technology platform be sure to test its reporting and analytics capabilities.

PUT IT TO THE TEST

Ask for a live demonstration of their business intelligence tools

To really empower your users you need to be certain that they can run their own reports and measure their KPIs in real time, all without requiring a degree in advanced mathematics. If the salesperson can't create metrics on-the-fly, how can you be confident your team will?

How to test this for yourself:

Prepared reports are all well and good, but how does this work in real time? Try running the core analytics and reports you will need on a trial system.

Put the vendor to the test in any live demonstration, explain a metric that you use regularly and ask to see how it can be reported.

Also, investigate how the product handles target setting, modern recruiters are increasingly setting targets on key recruitment activities as well as for resource planning. Targets, therefore are integral to a successful recruitment service and should be an intrinsic part of the solution.

5. Which of your customers is most similar to us?... and can we talk to them?

IT'S VITAL TO DO YOUR DUE DILIGENCE WHEN SELECTING YOUR RECRUITMENT SOFTWARE PROVIDER. SPEAKING TO SIMILAR CUSTOMERS IS ONE WAY TO GET FEEDBACK ON WHAT THE PROVIDER IS REALLY LIKE TO WORK WITH.

Don't just look at online testimonials or case studies (although these can be a good indication). Is the recruitment software provider happy for you to speak to their customers? Speaking to a customer advocate can increase trust and alleviate any concerns you might have.

By asking which customer the provider thinks is the most similar to you - you will get a good insight into how well the provider understands your company. Ask why they think you are similar - is it just because you work in the same market sectors? Or were they previously facing the same challenges that you are currently experiencing?

How to test this for yourself:

Be prepared to ask the right questions if and when permitted. Questions about after sale care, product development, product reliability are all pertinent.

Make sure you have a clear list of checkpoints - particularly if you have any specific concerns about the provider.

PUT IT TO THE TEST

Don't settle for outdated or non-relevant references and case studies

Every software company will have at least one happy customer! So make sure the references you take are relevant to you. Find out who faced similar challenges to you - and ask to speak to them

6. Describe ways in which the software can be flexible towards our unique situation.

SORRY, ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL.

Ultimately, recruitment software is about you. Academics agree that the right software can enable organisations to achieve rapid growth[3]. It is vitally important that the software you select offers both scalability and flexibility - to enable you to manage growth and react to changes in the market.

PUT IT TO THE TEST

Can you customise the user interface?

In recruitment we often need to store lots of information about candidates and vacancies - some of this information can easily get 'burried' within poorly designed interfaces. Make sure you can tailor the interface to show the information you need to see regularly.

'Out-of-the-box' recruitment software is designed as a one-size-fits-all solution, it might initially be cheap, do 'most' of what you need, and you may initially be prepared to find workarounds for it's functional deficiencies - but what's the long term cost?

How to test this for yourself:

Again it's difficult to quantify prior to the sale, but be wary of the "we can do anything" lines. Speaking to existing customers can give you a good idea of the kinds of customisation that has taken place for existing clients.

As a bare minimum ask to see how users can tailor the user-interface to their own needs.

Summary and Recommendations

- Ensure that the recruitment software is scalable and flexible enough to adapt to grow with your organisation.

- Make sure that you manage to speak to a current customer. They can provide invaluable insights in to the software provider's after sale priorities.

- Technology partners are infinitely more valuable than technology vendors. Partners act in collaboration with you to improve your business; vendors simply try to sell more things to you. Choosing a technology partner is infinitely more valuable in the long run.

About Eploy

Eploy is the complete cloud-based recruitment platform for ambitious agencies and modern in-house recruitment teams. Eploy combines Applicant Tracking, Recruitment CRM, Talent Pools and Analytics into a unified web-based platform integrated seamlessly with your website to provide an excellent candidate experience.

Finding and recruiting candidates who are the perfect fit for your roles is always challenging. Fortunately Eploy's world-class recruitment software makes it much, much easier.

We've been helping leading companies move to the cloud and recruit faster and smarter since 1998.

Eploy is precision-engineered to work on every platform and add value to every stage of the recruitment journey. Eploy automates and simplifies recruitment processes to help you attract, engage, recruit and onboard candidates quickly. As Eploy is also your full talent engagement platform you can manage your relationships with candidates, departments and hiring managers better. With a high degree of measurability, you can track and analyse your recruitment performance, quality, costs and timescales accurately.

Our cloud-based recruitment platform is reinforced with market-leading mentoring and cross-sector expertise so you get the training and support you need to achieve a powerful commercial advantage.

Find out more: eploy.co.uk

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