



# How to Choose a Talent Management System – 5 Key Considerations

Investing in talent management software leads to bottom line results, but only if you've identified your company's needs and goals, and know what questions to ask vendors. Before you start scheduling demos, here are 5 things you must know to ensure you select the right talent management provider for your organization.



## Evaluate What You Need

Examine your existing recruiting, learning, performance, and succession processes. What's working? What's not? Make a list of your must-haves. For example, if handling compliance reporting is a key issue, you'll need a learning system that offers form management, real-time data visibility, and custom certifications. Or if you're looking to streamline performance reviews, you'll want a system that helps you manage competencies and goals that also seamlessly lets you create tailored development plans.



## Insist on the Demo

RFPs don't cut it. A live demo is really the only way to get the true look and feel of a new system. According to Lisa Rowan, research vice president of HR and talent management services at IDC, it's also important to make sure the demo isn't a customized version of what the vendor offers. Clarify that the demo represents what you get for one fee—or if the provider is showing add-ons that require an extra investment.



## Do Your Research

You wouldn't hire an employee without checking references; partnering with a talent management provider shouldn't be any different. Have they been in business for a sufficient amount of time? How's their reputation in the industry? Are they financially stable? "Most organizations put the focus on the features and functions of talent systems, but I would put just as much effort into conducting due diligence on the financial wherewithal of the provider," said Kevin Oakes, CEO of the Institute for Corporate Productivity. You should also be able to talk to current customers. Do the references come willingly or is the provider reluctant to share their client list?



## Look for Unification vs. Integration

Integration varies greatly among providers, and what you really want is *unification*. Many vendors have acquired different talent tools and messily bolted them together – this does not provide the same easy user experience as a *unified* solution that has been built organically on a single code base by a single provider.

For example, a unified system should link performance and learning in such way that if a manager notices a skill deficiency during a review, the system should automatically trigger available training in the learning tool to address it. This difference sounds subtle, but it carries huge ramifications to how easily you can pull reporting on employee data and how simple the system is to use, not just for HR, but for your employees and executives. Unified technology provides a much friendlier experience than integrated systems. *Be absolutely sure to check if the provider is integrated vs. unified during the demo process!*



## Ensure Analytic Capabilities are Ready Out of the Box

Analytics are crucial to making better business decisions, like which successor should take your open COO position. Yet some providers claim to have powerful analytics, only to tell you later that you must set up everything yourself. Make sure that any reporting capabilities are ready to go out of the box and don't require any tech wrangling on your part. The same goes for social and mobile capabilities.