



Buyer's Guide: Talent Acquisition Essentials

 aspect43



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Finding and hiring the right people for your organization can be challenging. Navigating through a wide range of applicants, recruiters and hiring managers bear the demanding responsibility of identifying candidates equipped with the right skill set. Corporate positions attract hundreds of applicants, yet only a few qualify. Many organizations are embracing Talent Acquisition (TA) software to simplify and enhance the recruitment process.

Talent Acquisition (TA) technology helps organizations efficiently find and hire the most qualified talent for their organization, supporting their talent strategy (see [Guide to Talent Strategy](#)). Pairing the right strategy with the right solution for your organization enhances the benefits of both by providing:

- ✓ **Streamlined processes:** Saving time and administrative effort with simplified workflows.
- ✓ **Data insights:** Providing insights on the effectiveness of hiring strategies and the quality of candidates.
- ✓ **Candidate experience:** Enabling applicants with an easy and accessible way to find, apply and engage with your organization.
- ✓ **Communication facilitation:** Providing a platform for recruiters, hiring managers, and other stakeholders to centrally store and access candidate information, interview feedback, and hiring-related documents.
- ✓ **Compliance ease:** Helping you stay on the right side of regulations while minimizing paperwork.



Knowing when it's time to buy a new Talent Acquisition system

There are several reasons organizations decide to explore new Talent Acquisition (TA) systems that are firmly rooted in the practicalities of business operations, and awareness of these drivers can effectively steer your Talent Acquisition decisions.

Organizations typically consider adopting new Talent Acquisition systems when they need enhanced efficiency, better candidate management, or improved recruitment outcomes. These situations include accommodating growth by handling larger candidate volumes through streamlined processes, addressing inefficiencies through automation, expanding candidate reach to overcome limited talent pools, and enhancing the candidate experience through personalized interactions. Additionally, organizations seek Talent Acquisition systems to empower data-driven decision-making, gain a competitive edge in the talent market, ensure regulatory compliance, adapt to remote work demands, achieve better integration across HR functions, and elevate the overall quality of hires through advanced assessment tools.

When determining if it's time to purchase a new Talent Acquisition system, there are a few essential things to watch for:

- ❗ Your current system can't keep up with your business's growth.
- ❗ Your current system doesn't include functions you need or want, such as automation, analytics, or compliance reporting.
- ❗ Your current system can no longer provide timely and accurate data.
- ❗ Your current system doesn't integrate with other software to support your talent strategy.
- ❗ Your current system is too expensive to maintain or upgrade.

How to approach the buying process

The buying process is more than just demos and vendor contracts, although they are essential. When acquiring HR technology, the goal should always be adoption to guarantee your long-term success and full value. This is a difficult challenge to meet with the quickly advancing tech and corporate needs.

Building an “HR Tech Stack” or a strategic plan for how your technology will support your strategic talent acquisition planning can be complicated with many different tools and technologies. We suggest breaking your decision-making into a few key areas:

- ✓ **Understanding the overall process and strategy** you are solving or supporting and making a business case, if needed, for budget approval, etc. (see Developing a Unified Talent Strategy).
- ✓ **Researching and buying planning** — This is a great place to look at buyer’s guides and product comparison grids across multiple vendors.
- ✓ **Evaluating and selecting** — Make a list of key things you want and need, make a checklist including product and partner-level questions, and determine how well their solutions meet your needs .
- ✓ **Implementation and change management planning** — How do you plan for the success of a project or technology?



What to look for in Talent Acquisition software

Talent Acquisition systems play a pivotal role in streamlining and optimizing the entire recruitment process, from sourcing and attracting candidates to evaluating and hiring the best-fit talent. These systems provide a centralized platform that automates tasks, enabling organizations to manage the end-to-end recruitment process efficiently, improve candidate experience, enhance collaboration among hiring stakeholders, and leverage data-driven insights for more effective decision-making.

Selecting the right TA system might seem overwhelming, but remember that you don’t necessarily need to opt for the priciest or most advanced options. Remember these four components as the must-haves for any system you consider.



Strategy informed: Helps attract, engage, and manage talent from various sources to support a talent strategy.



Focus on candidate experience: Prioritizes the individual applicant experience through online application portals and personalized communication tools that enhance the candidate experience.



Supports retention: Helps attract and select candidates who align with the organization’s culture and values and facilitates talent development and internal mobility.



Consistent compliance: Automates compliance with labor laws, regulations, and internal policies to ensure organizations stay updated with ever-changing legal requirements and foster fairness.



Data-driven approach: Leverages data analytics to identify trends in applicant pools, optimize the recruitment process, reduce recruiting costs, and allow organizations to make informed decisions and align talent strategies with business objectives.

What's included in the Essential Talent Acquisition Tech Stack

Many people think of applicant tracking systems (ATS) as “the” recruiting and hiring software, but Talent Acquisition (TA) technology encompasses so many more solutions to support this area of HR. A well-designed TA tech stack seamlessly integrates multiple technologies to improve recruitment efficiency, enhance candidate experiences, and drive data-informed decisions while managing records and compliance.

Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

An ATS efficiently manages hiring by helping organizations source, track, and manage job seekers' information. It's designed to handle tasks such as posting job openings, collecting and parsing resumes, scheduling interviews, and tracking candidate communication. An ATS acts as a digital hub that centralizes and streamlines all recruitment activities, making it easier for hiring teams to collaborate and make informed decisions.

Candidate Relationship Management (CRM)

A CRM system helps organizations foster relationships with potential candidates throughout the hiring process, even before they officially apply for a job. The primary purpose of a CRM system is to build and maintain a talent pipeline, engage with passive candidates, and provide personalized communication and interactions. This proactive approach creates a positive candidate experience. It helps organizations stay top-of-mind for potential hires, building strong connections with candidates over time and leading to a larger pool of qualified talent to draw from when specific job openings arise. Many ATSs have incorporated CRM functionality into their standard ATS solutions recently, so look to see if this is already a feature of your chosen ATS that will meet your needs before searching for a stand-alone system.

If you hire globally, be sure to inquire about each provider's global recruiting and hiring capabilities and ability to maintain compliance.

Onboarding

Onboarding systems facilitate the smooth integration of new employees into an organization. It streamlines administrative tasks such as document submission, training scheduling, and policy acknowledgment to ensure a structured and consistent onboarding process. The system enhances employee engagement, accelerates productivity, and fosters a positive first impression. Automating paperwork and providing essential resources saves time and reduces manual errors, ultimately contributing to higher retention rates and improved overall employee satisfaction. New employees with a great onboarding experience are more likely to stay at their organization longer, and the right software can help.

Organizations can leverage many onboarding systems for more than just new hires to support crossboarding (internal moves), reboarding (returning employees), and offboarding (exits).

Compliance (Background, I-9, Audit)

Compliance software ensures legal and regulatory compliance while streamlining hiring procedures. These solutions focus on verifying the accuracy and integrity of employee information, mitigating risks, and maintaining compliance with applicable laws. Features include background screening, document verification, I-9 verification, automated workflows, audit trails, and reporting capabilities. This software can also help employers detect potential compliance violations and alert them beforehand. It is vital for organizations to use compliance software for hiring because it prevents costly penalties, maintains a safe and secure working environment for employees, and protects them from potential legal liability.

Beyond the essentials

As organizations develop their talent strategy and increase their headcount, their tech stack often expands to offer more to candidates and leadership teams regarding data and insights for strategic decision-making. Supplemental solutions help expand candidate reach, improve candidate evaluation, and promote internal talent development. Consider the organization's size, budget, and desired functionality when growing the TA tech stack.

Some suggested solutions to consider are:

- ✓ **Sourcing/outbound recruiting**
- ✓ **Recruitment automation**
- ✓ **Recruitment marketing**
- ✓ **Video interviewing**
- ✓ **Assessments**
- ✓ **Talent mobility**



How to evaluate and select a Talent Acquisition system

Selecting the right Talent Acquisition software can transform your recruitment approach, streamline the hiring process, and enhance candidates' experiences, ultimately boosting your employer brand.

This guide outlines features, tech considerations, and process priorities to simplify decision-making. These steps provide a structured approach to help identify requirements, evaluate vendors, and pick the best solution that aligns with your talent strategies and goals.



1 Identify the problems you're trying to solve

The Talent Acquisition evaluation and selection process starts with understanding why you want the project. This clarification will help you explain the project to others, build a business case, and keep you focused as you progress. Determine the challenges with your current processes and system. Be sure to involve appropriate stakeholders in these conversations. Including them early in the process helps with alignment and gaining much-needed buy-in.

Identifying challenges:

- ❗ What are the issues?
- ❗ How have you addressed them with current resources?
- ❗ Why didn't it work? Or why won't it work for the future?

Group these challenges together connected to business results. This approach will show why your present technology and processes fall short and hold back your organization's progress. Ensure you involve stakeholders in these conversations; having them onboard from the outset helps align goals and secure crucial support.

2 Explore the functions and features that address your problems

Exploring software options and providers helps you identify features that directly address the challenges you've identified within talent acquisition. By thoroughly understanding these capabilities through your research, you can ensure that conversations with vendors are focused on your organization's specific needs rather than following trends. Your research might uncover functions and features tailored to your industry or organization size, making it crucial to include them in your list of requirements.

→ Job posting and distribution

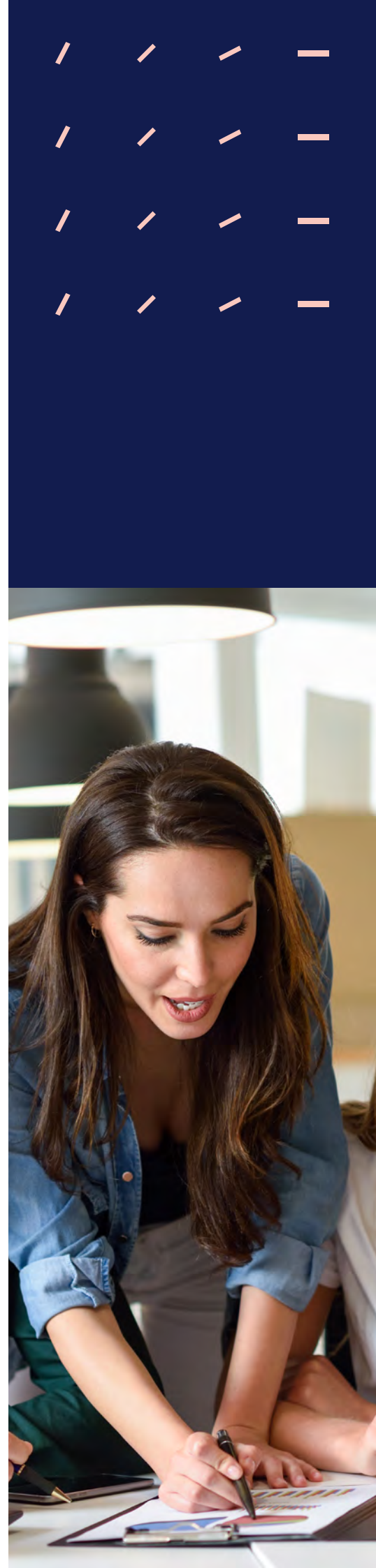
To acquire talent, you need to be able to share that you have a position available. A TA system should help you to create and post job openings across various job boards, social media platforms, and your organization website, expanding the reach of your job listings.

→ Candidate communication

TA systems should include ways to prepare, distribute, and track communication with candidates, ideally via email and SMS text messaging. A more advanced system may do this through a CRM, allowing communication with potential candidates over time, not just those who have applied to a specific role.

→ Collaboration tools

These facilitate seamless collaboration between hiring managers, committees, and recruiters. Consider features such as real-time messaging, file sharing, task management, and collaborative document editing. These tools enable efficient and transparent communication, allowing these groups to coordinate their efforts, share feedback, and collaborate on candidate evaluation.



→ Reporting and analytics

Reporting and analytics provide valuable insights into the recruitment process with customizable dashboards, data visualization tools, and advanced reporting capabilities. These features enable talent acquisition specialists and hiring managers to track key metrics, analyze recruitment performance, and identify areas for improvement.

→ Candidate experience

Candidate experience directly impacts the employer brand and the ability to attract top talent. TA systems should be user-friendly and have an intuitive interface, mobile compatibility, text to apply, and personalized communication. Investing in a candidate-centric TA system leads to improved hiring outcomes, higher employee satisfaction, and a competitive advantage in the talent market.

→ Compliance

Teams must navigate EEOC, OFCCP, SEC, and local laws so effective TA systems embed safeguards, notifications, and reporting to ensure adherence. Key features include robust security measures, integration with reputable background check providers, and automated documentation for I-9 verification. This approach safeguards the organization from potential liabilities, builds trust with stakeholders, maintains a safe work environment, and upholds the organization's reputation.

→ Onboarding

Onboarding features help organizations bring new hires into the organization by designing, delivering, and automating new hire workflows — improving the experiences for the organization and the new employee. These tools help new hires feel welcomed and included.

→ Integrations

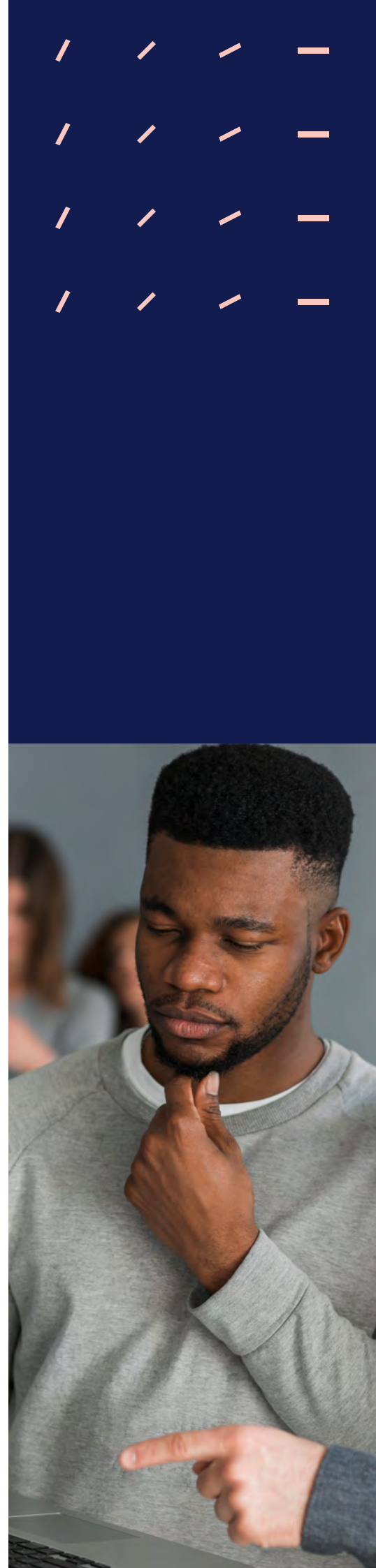
Integrations enable seamless data exchange and streamline processes across multiple HR and recruitment platforms. Consider its integration capabilities with job boards, career sites, background check providers, HRIS systems, and other relevant applications.

→ Vendor fit

Evaluating vendor fit is pivotal for a successful partnership. Beyond the system, consider reputation, expertise, and support. Assess implementation, customer service, and commitment to updates. In addition to conversations with the vendor, look at their website, speak with references, check out how their employees feel about them on employee rating sites, and visit their booth at events.

→ Implementation and training

Implementation and training are vital to ensure a smooth transition, improve adoption, and maximize the system's effectiveness. Assess the vendor's implementation plan, including project management, data migration, and support. Evaluate the level of support during implementation, including training resources, documentation, and dedicated specialists. Consider available training options, like on-site or virtual sessions, user manuals, and online resources.



3 Evaluate products to meet your needs and budget¹

During the evaluation step, ask relevant questions, seek clarification on any doubts, and request demonstrations of key workflows and processes. Shortlisting and product demonstrations allow you to better understand the system's capabilities, assess its suitability for your unique needs, and make an informed decision based on firsthand experience with the solution.

✓ Shortlisting

Shortlisting helps you identify the right vendors to spend time with so you can plan more in-depth assessments of a manageable number of options. Create a requirements checklist based on research and stakeholder input, listing must-haves and nice-to-haves. From 10-25 options, explore provider websites, business cases, demos, and videos. Assess them against your checklist to narrow down to 5-10 that meet your needs and preferences. This focused approach saves time and guides your choice effectively.

✓ Product demonstrations

Product demonstrations provide an opportunity to see the system in action and assess its functionality, user interface, and overall user experience. Demos involve more than one presentation, with each interaction helping the vendor better understand your needs.

- **Discovery call** — You and the vendor should have a conversation to determine if there is a potential fit between the HCM solution and the organization's needs.
- **Product demo** — Usually, you will have a first demo that runs 30-45 minutes to give you an overview of the product and organization.
- **Pricing request** — If the system meets your requirements, ask for a pricing proposal that outlines implementation and maintenance so you can assess the financial feasibility.
- **Deep-dive demo** — Based on the initial product demo and pricing, narrow your list to 2-3 finalists and request a more in-depth demonstration. This presentation should be a tailored and customized demo that dives into the details of the HCM system.

✓ RFP

The Request for Proposals (RFP) lets you lay out requirements, and vendors respond with pricing and solutions. While function lists are common, modern solutions differ in service, innovation, and approach, so your RFPs must reflect these distinctions. The RFP process should further develop the vendor relationship and allow you to be more targeted as you finalize the evaluation step.

The RFP review process can be time-intensive, so only send them to your top 3-5 vendors in preparation for deep-dive demos. In addition to features and functions checklists, include scenarios and provide opportunities for the vendor to offer solutions to the situation — they might be able to solve them in a unique way.



4 Select a solution that will make your organization better

By following a structured decision-making process, involving stakeholders, and considering all relevant factors, organizations can select the most suitable TA system and create a roadmap for successful implementation and adoption.

☒ Compare finalists

Compare the features, functionalities, implementation plans, customer support, and any other relevant factors of the products you saw in the deep-dive demos. Evaluate how well each solution solves the organization's problems. Assess vendor fit, customization, scalability, and integration. Analyze how well each product and vendor meets your unique needs and supports growth. Review pricing against the budget, including ongoing support costs, and consider the implementation plan's alignment with the organization's timeline.

☒ Build consensus

While everyone may not agree on which product is best, building consensus toward a decision is important. Engage key stakeholders, including HR, IT, finance, and executive teams, to ensure a holistic evaluation of the vendors. Facilitate open discussions and actively address any concerns or reservations raised by stakeholders. They should feel heard and valued even if the final choice is not their favorite.

☒ Make a decision

Select the preferred vendor after a thorough evaluation, comparisons, and stakeholder input. Consider all the factors evaluated, including alignment with requirements, budget considerations, and stakeholder feedback. Communicate the decision to stakeholders, clearly and concisely articulating the rationale behind the decision and any relevant next steps.



Conclusion

Selecting the right TA system is about finding the one that solves your organization's problems, fits your employment brand, and provides the best candidate experience. Using a structured approach and focusing on your organization's needs will lead to a successful TA system evaluation and selection. Identify problems, explore features, evaluate products with demos, and choose the best solution. Investing time and effort in the selection process ensures that you choose a TA system that aligns with recruiting strategies and goals, supporting the long-term success of your talent strategy.

Talent Acquisition evaluation

Your recruiting and hiring efforts deliver the first impression of your organization to potential employees, who may also be customers. So, it's important to find a Talent Acquisition (TA) system that creates a great experience for candidates and the organization. The right solution can improve recruitment, providing a better experience for candidates, and leading to a more diverse and skilled workforce for sustainable growth.

- ✓ **Identify business needs** — Clearly outline your organization's needs and priorities before starting the vendor selection process. This will help you stay focused and evaluate vendors based on how well they meet your requirements.
- ✓ **Define success** — Establish the criteria and objectives to determine whether the TA solution is effective and aligns with the organization's goals. These measurements may include KPIs, benchmarking, timeframes, or outcomes specific to your organization.
- ✓ **Conduct thorough research** — Gather information on different TA vendors, their products, and their reputation in the market. To understand their strengths and weaknesses, look for customer reviews, case studies, and industry reports.
- ✓ **Build a shortlist** — Narrow down your vendor options based on their alignment with your requirements and reputation. Create a shortlist of vendors you want to evaluate further.
- ✓ **Evaluate product fit** — Assess how well each vendor's TA solution aligns with your needs. Look for features, functionalities, and customization options important to your organization's HR processes.
- ✓ **Understand integrations** — Assess the compatibility and connectivity of the TA system with other existing systems and applications within your technology ecosystem. Be clear about the specific data elements that need to be shared, available APIs and middleware and data security factors.
- ✓ **Request proposals** — Prepare a detailed request for proposal (RFP) document outlining your requirements and ask shortlisted vendors to provide proposals. Communicate your expectations, evaluation criteria and timing.
- ✓ **Consider vendor fit** — Evaluate the vendor's experience with TA products, their track record of successful implementations, and their understanding of your industry and business needs.
- ✓ **Review customer references** — Request references from the vendor and contact their existing customers. Ask about their experiences with the vendor, implementation process, customer support, and overall satisfaction.
- ✓ **Evaluate implementation and support services** — Consider the vendor's implementation methodology, timelines, and support services. Ensure they have a structured implementation plan and can provide adequate support during and after the process.

Talent Acquisition requirements checklist

Your talent strategy impacts productivity, innovation, employee engagement, and ultimately, the success of the entire organization. So your talent acquisition software should support your efforts to identify, manage, and track top talent.

The following are the most common TA functions and features to consider when evaluating solutions. Use these as a starting point to build and prioritize the list of your own requirements.

☒ Job posting and distribution

Does the system help you to create and post job openings across various job boards? If social media is part of your strategy, does the system create and post social announcements that link back to your ATS?

☒ Candidate communication

Can the system track multiple types of communication with candidates including emails, phone conversations, and text messages? Are pre-designed email templates for various stages of the recruitment process provided? Does it create personalized communications for each individual candidate?

☒ Collaboration tools

The hiring process involves people from multiple areas of the organization — recruiters, hiring managers, and search committees. Does the software facilitate seamless collaboration among hiring teams, including sharing feedback, interview notes, and candidate evaluations? Can the system help coordinate and schedule interviews with candidates, hiring managers, and interviewers?

☒ Reporting and analytics

Can the system provide reports and analyze key hiring metrics, such as time-to-fill, source effectiveness, and candidate conversion rates?

☒ Candidate experience

Does the system provide a user-friendly interface, streamlined application process, and timely communication to enhance the candidate experience? Does it support mobile devices, allowing candidates to apply for jobs and access their application status conveniently? Can the system automatically extract candidate information from resumes, saving time and improving accuracy in candidate data entry?

☒ Compliance

Can the system support background checks, facilitate I-9 verification, and ensure compliance with local, federal, and global hiring regulations? Does the vendor have a statement of AI ethics, which outlines how AI is used by the TA system with ethical considerations in mind, such as privacy, fairness, and accuracy?

☒ Onboarding

Can the system provide the new employee access to the necessary documents, resources, and training materials? Does it help new hires, HR, and team members communicate well to make a smooth transition and integration into the organization?

☒ Integration with HR systems

Can the system integrate with existing HR systems, such as payroll, to streamline the overall employee lifecycle?

☒ Vendor fit

Does the vendor have a solid reputation, a history of providing reliable software and good customer support, and a clear roadmap for future development? Do they understand your business, your pain points, and your priorities?

☒ Implementation and training

What support does the vendor offer during the implementation process, including training resources, documentation, and assistance with data migration? Do they provide change management guidance?

Talent Acquisition stakeholder alignment

In the TA buying process, it's essential to involve stakeholders with a vested interest in the system's success. Getting stakeholders on board ensures the organization's needs are met, gathers perspectives from different people, gets support and resources, addresses concerns and risks, and enhances user adoption and engagement. Engaging stakeholders throughout the process fosters collaboration, ownership, and a shared commitment to the success of TA implementation and adoption.

Who	Why	What they care about
Talent Acquisition Team	Primary point for sourcing, screening, and hiring candidates.	Ease of use, efficiency in managing applicant data, automated screening capabilities, integration with job boards and social media platforms, and robust reporting and analytics to track recruitment metrics.
HR Leadership	Plays a crucial role in the buying process as they are responsible for driving HR strategies and ensuring alignment with organizational goals.	A solution that supports the talent strategy, enhances candidate experience, and enables data-driven decision-making.
IT	Essential in evaluating the technical aspects of the TA software. Bring them in sooner rather than later to avoid wasting time on solutions that won't work for your organization.	The software's compatibility with existing systems, security features, scalability, and ease of integration. Integrations are the #1 frustration with current solutions, so pay attention to this during the buying process.²
Finance	Assess the financial impact of implementing the TA software and ensure it aligns with the organization's budgetary constraints.	Concerned with cost considerations, return on investment and budgeting; ensures the system meets financial compliance and security standards.
Representatives: Hiring Managers and Committee Members	Provide valuable insights into the specific needs and pain points of end-users; also offer insight into issues of change management.	User-friendliness, ability to collaborate with the recruitment team, access to candidate profiles and evaluation tools, and features that facilitate effective communication and feedback during the hiring process.
Representatives: Employees as Candidates	Give candidate end-user perspective, especially since some may apply for internal jobs in the future.	User-friendliness, mobile accessibility, clear and timely communication, and personalization.
Legal/ Compliance/ Risk Management	Aware of potential risks and requirements involved with the system and related processes.	Ensures the software meets regulatory standards, data privacy laws, and industry-specific compliance requirements.

² Aspect43 Insights at Work Research, 2023

About Aspect43

Aspect43 supports enterprise technologies, high-growth startups, and investors focused on HR, Talent, & Future of Work. For HR and Talent Teams, our analyst group produces free reports each year and provides training and education sessions to help better navigate the HR technology market.

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