White Paper

Your Talent Acquisition Software Buyer’s Kit
Make Buying Simple and Successful
Upgrading to a new TA software solution can seem like a big undertaking. Your robust business has specific needs for talent acquisition technology, and there are many providers, each with various products, from which to choose.

However, with the right insight and resources corporations can ensure their TA software upgrade meets and exceeds expectations. Find the provider that best fits your business with our proven path to purchasing success.

### Getting Started FAQs

Set your search up for success with answers to these common pre-buying questions.

**Q: What is talent acquisition software?**

**A:** Talent acquisition software empowers recruiters with automated sourcing, applicant tracking, and onboarding capabilities. *It's technology that streamlines and elevates your talent acquisition lifecycle.* Talent acquisition software is meant to serve as the hub for all talent acquisition needs, and when providers can easily integrate with other leading TA vendors, organizations benefit from a unified system of record.

*A talent acquisition suite* is capable of far more than a traditional applicant tracking system. Its additional features facilitate things like employment branding and consistent candidate communication, which help keep rapidly growing and evolving corporations on the cutting edge of recruitment. A talent acquisition suite also provides key candidate relationship management (CRM) capabilities, like tools to build talent pools and manage email campaigns to help build relationships with your future workforce.

A TA suite also provides access to automated, tried-and-true talent acquisition methods—such as automated job board posting—as well as recruitment approaches like mobile portals, video capabilities, career microsites, and social media recruitment.

### Resource

For more information on talent acquisition software solutions, check out our “Recruitment 101” white paper.

Learn more about how talent acquisition software can improve enterprise business goals. Check out our “Global Recruitment: Strategic Advice from Top-Performing Brands” white paper.
Q: When do I need a talent acquisition software upgrade?

A: Corporations find they need a new software solution for many reasons. These include preparing for company expansion, improving process efficiencies, increasing recruiting ROI, or enhancing system functionality to better attract top talent.

Corporations also upgrade software solutions when they recognize that the right software is key to meeting strategic business goals. According to a study by Aberdeen Group, organizations that have this “best-in-class” approach to talent acquisition reap the following benefits as compared to organizations that don’t have the same focus:

- Reach twice as many organizational goals over the course of a year
- Achieve five times the improvement in customer satisfaction
- Experience a 9% reduction in cost-per-hire

“Companies that use a full talent acquisition suite improved their time-to-hire by almost three times (6.8% vs. 2.3%) year-over-year, compared to those that have disparate recruiting and hiring functions.”

–Aberdeen Group

Q: Who will be involved in the buying process?

A: From the provider’s side, you’ll likely be speaking to a dedicated sales representative throughout the buying process. This representative should specialize in dealing with other large businesses, and should be able to speak on success stories from other customers in your industry. You’ll also likely speak with a technical engineer or product specialist, who can answer more in-depth questions about software functionality and the specifics of integrations and migrations.

From the buyer’s side, it’s important for your selection committee to reach out to all who might be affected by the software purchase, such as your IT, legal, or finance department. These groups can bring important questions to the table that might otherwise be overlooked.

Q: What should happen before the buying process begins?

A: Get approval from corporate leadership to begin evaluating vendors. From there, form a selection committee that will take ownership of the vetting process. Depending on needs and budget, it may make sense to include a third-party consultant in this committee.

Companies are often highly-successful when they form a coalition of players (a selection committee) to develop an organized plan that includes goals for:

- Budget
- Timeframe
- Features
- Customer service

A selection committee will be responsible for ensuring the providers offer solutions that truly meet the needs of the company, while soliciting input from internal stakeholders.

Q: How long does the buying process usually take?

A: This is an answer that can vary significantly, and is most affected by the needs of a buyer. A purchase may be made within a few months, or six. Regardless of the exact time frame, the process should include multiple conversations with sales representatives, video demos, and when necessary, in-person meetings with a potential buyer. Timeframes also depend on how many providers your company is vetting.
## Talent Acquisition Provider Evaluation

You want software that gives your company a competitive edge, enabling it to source and hire the best candidates available, fast. Understanding the type of system that will work best for you, and which system features will deliver, is the first step to finding that software.

Let's start with the basics.

### Platform Options

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cloud-Based</th>
<th>vs.</th>
<th>On-Premise</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cloud-based software is fully hosted by the vendor, and doesn’t require hardware or software maintenance. This SaaS model gives companies the benefit of easier, more robust, scalability.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Software is installed and operated on computers within your company. Requires in-house maintenance and typically warrants a longer-term commitment.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dedicated TA Software</th>
<th>vs.</th>
<th>Full HRIS/ERP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Solution is exclusively dedicated to talent acquisition, with features tailored for best-in-class experience. This solution integrates with other software vendors to act as a hub for all things talent acquisition, and seamlessly integrates with HRIS providers that manage post-hire processes.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Customers rely on just one vendor to provide all HR technology needs, which can result in lower overall cost. In addition to talent acquisition, a unified solution may offer learning management and training, or payroll.</td>
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Evaluating a Software Solution

A Checklist

Next, use this checklist for a comprehensive assessment of providers’ features and functionality.

Note that the following doesn’t represent all of the criteria that may impact your decision; however, they are factors that shouldn’t be overlooked.

Ease of Use

✓ I’m Confident that the software is both intuitive and easy to use
✓ The look and feel of the software is clean, organized, and easy to navigate
✓ I can track the entire recruiting process from one screen, helping me determine what my next steps should be
✓ The recruiting workflow can be configured to match our current workflow, resulting in little disruption of our operations

__ / 4 Ease of Use Score

The Candidate Experience

✓ The Career Portal will be fully configured to reflect our employer brand
✓ The Career Portal is optimized for jobseeker traffic from a mobile device
✓ Job seekers can easily connect with our organization to learn more about our culture and future job opportunities
✓ Candidates will be able to apply to open positions quickly through their LinkedIn, Google +, or Facebook accounts

__ / 4 Candidate Experience Score

Job Management

✓ I can configure the approval process for a new requisition
✓ I can associate screening questions to any job
✓ The software’s job board posting capabilities allow me to automatically post to any job board
✓ My team, and even the company’s employees, can take advantage of social media posting capabilities that will increase our passive candidate pool, brand awareness, and employee referrals
✓ A job’s workflow lets me see the status of each candidates and where they are in the process
✓ I can communicate with candidates, hiring managers, and other recruiters through the software to schedule appointments, interviews, and communicate opportunities, rejections, and offers

__ / 6 Job Management Score

Tip

During the evaluation stage, think about what KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) your company needs a provider to agree to. KPIs should be discussed before any contract is signed.
Searching and Reporting

- Every field within the software is searchable and reportable
- The software comes with a library of standard reports
- I can create custom reports
- I can quickly access important metrics that show me information that highlights efficiency and bottlenecks

___ / 4 Search and Reporting Score

Technology Roadmap

- I’m confident that the vendor will continue to update and improve its software as recruiting and talent management trends evolve, keeping me ahead of my competitors
- The software will scale with my company’s evolving needs
- I will not have to pay for additional databases or modules to accommodate company growth
- Routine software upgrades are provided to me at no additional cost

___ / 4 Technology Roadmap Score

Customer Service

- I do not have to pay extra for customer service, regardless of my company’s size
- Multiple training options (webinar, manuals, etc.) are available at no cost to my company
- The provider maintains a high customer retention rate
- I can contact a knowledgeable support staff member at any time of day during regular business days
- I can opt to solve common questions myself by referring to a customer care center that provides answers to frequently asked questions

___ / 5 Customer Service Score

Integration

- The software will integrate with my HRIS/Payroll system
- The software will integrate with my other existing vendors, including background check providers, assessment providers, and payroll providers
- The software has the flexibility to integrate with new vendors to create one unified TA system of record

___ / 3 Integration Score

___ / 30 Total Provider Score
Additional Considerations
Leading talent acquisition providers may also address each of these increasingly important facets of talent acquisition:

**Recruitment Marketing**
Does the provider offer recruitment marketing automation to create and schedule email campaigns that engage talent pools on a recurring basis?

**Hiring Manager Experience**
Does the provider offer mobile-optimized hiring manager approval requests to accelerate the approval process?

**Candidate Communication**
Does the provider offer bi-directional email synchronization for automatic tracking of all candidate communication?

**Task-Based Onboarding**
Can I automate and reduce paperwork for new hires and HR, while including job-based tasks for a personalized new hire experience?

Request for Proposal (RFP)
Many HR software providers accept Requests for Proposals (RFPs), which ask providers to answer questions specific to a purchaser’s needs. If your organization knows exactly what it needs, or has specific areas of concern, submitting RFPs to various providers can be an effective option for vetting.

The iCIMS Talent Acquisition Suite

**Connect**
Attract and engage candidates on any device with this powerful recruitment marketing automation tool.

**Recruit**
Find, filter, and recruit the best talent with this industry-leading applicant tracking system.

**Onboard**
Get new hires off to a strong start with an onboarding solution with dynamic task flows and automation.
Internal Buy-In Strategy Guide

As part of the buying process, your selection committee will likely need to present proposals to your company’s internal team of executives. During this part of the buying process, a potential software provider should be your partner—this means they should be actively involved in preparing for a proposal presentation. Key strategies for an effective business case include:

Strategy 1: Identify Pain Points

Begin with the reasons your organization needs a software solution. These reasons may include:

- Financial: Extended Time-to-Fill
- Operational: Time-Consuming, Disparate Processes
- Strategic: Lack of Quality Hires
- Technical: Inability to Integrate with Other Tools

Explain how these challenges impact stakeholders across your company, not just the HR department. Include any statistics you or the vendor can provide, such as the fact that best-in-class talent acquisition organizations benefit from retaining 95% of first year employees and a 16% year-over-year improvement in hiring manager satisfaction. Broadening the argument to organizational impact—rather than just HR impact—can be an effective way to sell value.

Additionally, consider the company’s long-term business plan. How do these challenges impact organizational success in the long-term? The executive mindset is often three, five, and ten years down the road.

Strategy 2: Explain ROI

After introducing the provider and offering a high-level overview of product capabilities, explain how the software would improve each of your organization’s pain points, emphasizing various returns on investment. How does the software convert problems into opportunities?

Key returns on investment may include lower time-to-fill for improved revenue, workforce analytics for higher net operating income growth, or minimal to no internal IT requirements for increased savings.

By working with a provider with an ROI calculator that can forecast projected savings after system adoption, you’ll be able to present your executive board with anticipated ROI.

Strategy 3: Address Risk Assessment

Given that HR technology involves large amounts of data and has a significant impact on operations, new software can raise concerns about risks. That’s why it’s important to explain how a provider mitigates or eliminates various risks. Work with a potential provider to find answers to each of the following:

Information Security

Talent acquisition software providers will be responsible for housing sensitive information about your applicants and employees—ensure that a provider offers security protocol that adheres to government standards and can provide guarantees of these measures.
• What types of data centers is information stored in?
• What types of monitoring and security occur at the data centers?
• Does data transfer meet domestic and international compliance standards?
• What type of data encryption is used?
• What is the provider’s protocol should a system breach occur?
• What is the provider’s average uptime?

Migrations
You’ll likely need to transfer data from your current provider to a new system. Migrating this data in a way that’s safe and effective is imperative to successful implementation.

• Does the provider have experience successfully migrating customers from the vendor you currently use?
• What role will the customer have in facilitating a migration?
• Do migrations require basic, moderate, or advanced technical expertise from a customer?
• What does resume migration require? Flat file imports? What about an API file import?
• Can the customer write to the provider’s API for secure transfers of complex information?
• Will you be charged based on the amount of data to be migrated?

Integrations
Being able to integrate with TA providers that offer other services, like compensation, learning and performance, and background screening, ensures your company has access to leading providers of every HR professional service.

• Can the provider integrate with other leading TA vendors?
• How many, and which ones?
• Can all services truly be housed on a single platform?
• Does the provider have a history of successful integrations?
• What does the integration process involve from the customer’s end?

Strategy 4: Explain Logistics
For large companies, a TA software upgrade will affect dozens, if not hundreds, of HR employees across multiple company locations. For this reason, it’s important to address the logistics involved in implementing and using the new software.

• Will users in various locations get access to the system at the same time?
• Will recruiters be able to work remotely with the system?
• What will it take to get users up to speed with the system?
• How can new users be added?
• Can users have different levels of access, or unique system profiles?
Strategy 5: Get the Provider On-Site

Ask that a provider join you when presenting to your executive team. This not only strengthens your business case, but enables the provider to address the specific product questions your executives may have. Can the provider:

- Confidently address all questions?
- Talk about how their solution stacks up against competitors?
- Demonstrate intimate knowledge of the product’s features?
- Make the case for exceptional customer service and a willingness to serve as a partner throughout the term of a contract?

If a provider is unwilling to connect you with current customers at this stage of the buying process, it may be a sign of poor customer service.

Once you’ve scheduled phone conversations with current customers, it’s important to ask questions that will yield the most informative insight about all aspects of your decision. Consider the following.

Customer Reference Questions

Question #1: Has the product met your expectations? Are you satisfied with this product/service?


Question #3: Has this system met your applicant tracking and workflow requirements? Do you anticipate that the system will scale with your organization in the future?

Question #4: Describe the configurability (unique workflows, specific fields, etc.) of the system. Is it easy to make changes?

Question #5: Were you trained on how to use the system? Did the training meet your needs?

Question #6: Have you made recommendations to enhance the system? If so, what enhancements did you recommend?

Customer Reference Checklist

Before signing a contract, ask to connect with the provider’s current customers. Receiving input from someone other than a sales representative can more accurately inform your understanding of how the software performs, and how other large companies benefit from it.

Work with your provider to connect with two or three current customers who would be willing to speak with you directly. When making this request, ensure that the customer is:

- of a similar industry
- also a large or enterprise business
- uses the same specific product you’re interested in
- has been a customer for more than one year
Question #7: Are you confident in this provider’s product roadmap? Do you have confidence it will continue to innovate, develop, and provide regular updates to its software?

Question #8: How long did implementation take from the time you committed to purchase the product to actual go-live and use of the product?

Question #9: Did you experience any issues during implementation? After implementation?

Question #10: Are you satisfied with the customer service you’ve received before, during, and after implementation?

Request Case Studies
In addition to speaking directly with customers, ask a provider to share documented case studies. These case studies should clearly describe how the customer benefited from talent acquisition software.

Any case study that doesn’t feature a customer by name, or features an organization that’s no longer a customer, may not provide the accurate assessment you need.

Like customer references, ask to see a case study for an organization that matches your business size, industry type, and product needs.

Though a provider may not be able to present you with an exact match, they should be able to present a case study that meets at least two or three of these criteria.

Analyst Reviews
For a third measure of input, consider what industry analysts have to say about the provider. Analyst reviews can offer objective information about critical qualities like customer satisfaction, functionality, and ease of use—as well as how the provider stacks up against its competitors.

Additionally, has the provider received any industry awards or recognitions? These are also strong signs that the provider has put forth a competitive product.

Implementation: What to Expect
Once you’ve narrowed down your selection to a favored provider, it’s time to consider implementation. How will the technology get up and running across your enterprise?

The specifics of implementation vary based on whether you’ve opted for a cloud-based or on premise solution. However, regardless of type, it’s important to understand what overarching expectations should be met.

What to Expect from a Provider
- Work with a dedicated implementation manager with expertise in the process
- Workflows won’t be disturbed in any capacity: no system downtime for any location
- Provider offers best practices consulting with recommendations for realistic project schedules and goals for large companies
- Only a primary point of contact is needed (your entire IT team shouldn’t need to be all hands in for the process)
- The amount of work you need to invest on your own end is reasonable; a good rule of thumb is 4-6 hours per week for larger projects
- You’ll have access to robust customer support, both during and after implementation
• The provider will offer complimentary online training and resources for system users to access anytime
• There are no fees for configuring the system to your company's needs
• There will be final configuration testing before the software is officially launched

How to Prepare
As mentioned, implementation should largely be handled by the provider. However, some preparation on the customer's end will be warranted. Look for providers that make your internal prep as simple as possible. For example, before implementation, you will likely need to:

Determine workflow configuration
What are your preferred recruitment operations? A provider should be able to configure the system to them.

Identify and supply resources for recruitment branding
If a provider offers branding options for things like online career portals, what type of employer branding images and text do you want to feature?

Identify and collect current data
Organizing all files and data in Excel or CSV formats can accelerate your implementation process.

iCIMS Implementation Steps

Analysis
Project Kickoff & Discovery

Configuration
System Configuration

Conversion
Data Migration & Integration

Validation
Testing & End User Training

Production
Go Live with iCIMS
Next Steps

It’s time to get started on your search for best-fit talent acquisition software.

Solid first steps for your organization might include:

- Forming a Selection Committee
- Submitting a Request for Proposal
- Requesting a Live Product Demo

If you’re interested in learning more about the iCIMS buying process and our Talent Platform, contact iCIMS today at 800-889-4422 or reach out to one of our sales representatives at sales@icims.com.

Tour the iCIMS’ Talent Platform

For a first look at the iCIMS Talent Platform, be sure to check out our video demo! To request a live product walk through with one of our product specialists, contact us at sales@icims.com.

View Demo

Streamline processes, engage the right candidates, and monitor key metrics all within one powerful application.
How iCIMS Can Help

iCIMS is the leading provider of talent acquisition solutions that help businesses win the war for top talent. iCIMS empowers companies to manage their entire hiring process within the industry’s most robust Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS). Built on the foundation of a best-to-market talent acquisition software suite, iCIMS’ PaaS framework, UNIFi, allows employers to expand the capabilities of their core talent acquisition technology by integrating with the largest partner ecosystem in talent acquisition to help them attract, find, screen, and manage candidates. Offering scalable, easy-to-use solutions that are backed by award-winning customer service, iCIMS supports more than 3,500 contracted customers and is one of the largest and fastest-growing talent acquisition solution providers.

For more resources visit icims.com/hiring-insights

Connect with iCIMS on social media!