



RIP, RFP: TECHNOLOGY SELECTION GETS PERSONAL

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OUTLIVING ITS USEFULNESS

A New Way Forward

The Request for Proposal (RFP) and its cousin the Request for Information (RFI) have long been the gold standard of technology procurement. Traditionally, these tools were used to compare providers by gathering information on capabilities. But do they still make sense in this evolving technology world – particularly for human capital management? Has the RFP outlived its usefulness now that Software as a Service (SaaS) delivery models are something of a given, feature/functionality has become commoditized, and even on premise buyers expect a new level of relationship and service from the technology provider?



RIP, RFP

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WHAT MATTERS NOW

According to new data from Aptitude Research Partners' 2016 Hire, Engage, and Retain study, RFPs may be on their way out (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Influence on HCM Technology Decisions



Source: Aptitude Research Partners Higher, Engage, Retain Study, 2016. N=367.

RIP, RFP

Just 8% of organizations in the study rated the RFP or RFI as influential – and nearly 3 times as many rated results of a Google search or review of solution provider websites as influential. When a process is less influential than website copy, one has to question why we're still undertaking it.

It is important to make sure that you cast a wide net when it comes to understanding the world of available technologies. And it's important to try and make meaningful comparisons. But there are infinite combinations of functionality today that a traditional RFP cannot account for.

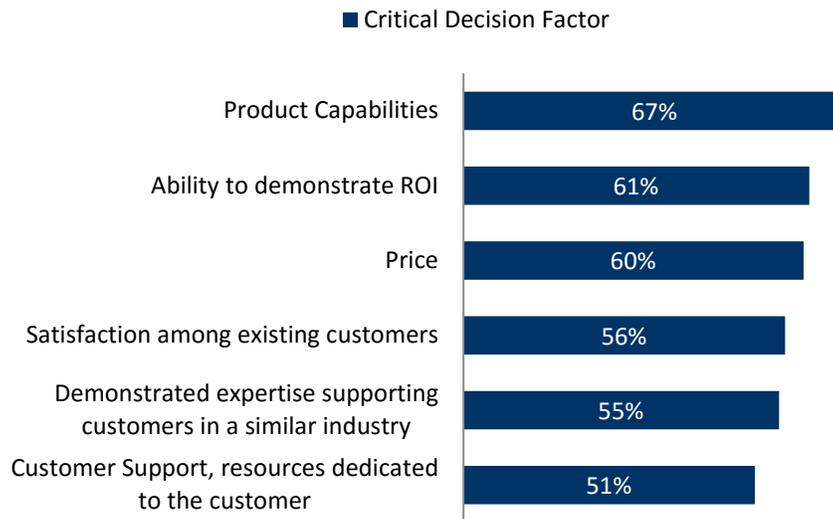
The Aptitude Research Human Capital Technology Landscape highlights the growing complexity and variety of solution providers available and is one way to help organizations discern who has the capabilities to support your organization's needs. Often, a true understanding of those needs does not come out until after the traditional RFP process, when the conversations with providers really start.

TECHNOLOGY SELECTION GETS PERSONAL

The top five influencers of HCM technology decisions are all about personal interactions: demos, word-of-mouth, case studies, and conversations with users. These can be so helpful because often people don't know what they don't know until they get deeper into conversation. In talking with others in the same position or with solution providers about their capabilities, organizations often realize there may be products or services they didn't know existed or issues they hadn't considered but that make a huge difference in their ultimate technology decisions. And often, the differentiator between two solution providers is not about feature functionality, it's about the culture of the solution provider and the support they can provide.

This study also looked at the specific decision criteria for organizations selecting an applicant tracking solution (ATS). Beyond capability, those criteria were all about customer satisfaction and support (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Provider Selection Criteria for ATS



Source: Aptitude Research Partners Higher, Engage, Retain Study, 2016. N=367.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

So what can your organization do to make sure that its next technology selection process helps it get at what will truly matter in a long-term relationship?

- **Start with understanding your needs.** Time and again, organizations make technology decisions without a true understanding of organizational need and change readiness capabilities. Involve the business, look critically at current capabilities and future strategy to determine gaps, and work with other leaders to establish change champions. Getting a return on your technology investment depends on user adoption during implementation and the ongoing usefulness of both the tools and services from your solution provider. Ensuring you have completed a thorough needs analysis will make selection, implementation, and driving ongoing value significantly easier.
- **Take control of the demo process.** Once you understand your needs, don't just let the solution provider drive the demo process. Make sure you're asking all the questions that are important your organization. And make sure you truly understand how the organization addresses all of the different groups that may be impacted by the solution. What do your executives need and how does the solution deliver on those needs? What's the experience like for employees? Make sure that the demo and the solution you pick are not just about the power user. And move the conversation beyond just the product. What services are available, which are included in your purchase, what's the customer support process?
- **Work your network.** Make sure you not only get feedback about the solution providers you are considering, but to make sure you are aware of those you may not have heard from. And remember, your network goes far beyond just the people in your organization. It includes the bloggers, influencers, and analysts in our space, people in your own and other tangentially related industries, and more. Most people are open to talking about these kinds of processes, so don't be afraid to pick up the phone and get the information you need.

As they say, the RFP is dead! Long live the RFP! But let's evolve the term. In today's world, a request for partnership is more in line with what is needed. Get beyond the RFP and engage in the conversations that will drive meaningful decisions.

APTITUDE RESEARCH PARTNERS

Aptitude Research Partners is a research-based analyst and advisory firm focused on the new conversation required by changes in how HCM technology is delivered and utilized by today's organizations.

Our goal is to look beyond the obvious product capabilities to identify the real differentiators organizations should be looking for when considering providers, as well as the change management and change readiness capabilities consumers must have in place for successful technology adoption.

We conduct quantitative and qualitative research on all aspects of Human Capital Management to better understand the skills, capabilities, technology, and underlying strategies required to deliver business results in today's complex work environment.

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