

# Get the right self-service system from the best vendor

By Tim Clifford

There are many sound, bottom-line reasons for HR to trade in many manual tasks for an employee self-service system (ESS). One reason is the significant “hard” savings in administrative costs and time spent, for example, on updating employee records or explaining health-benefit options. Another reason is that companies that significantly improve their technology-based HR services are likely to see increases in their market value. *However*, in order to realize these gains, it’s critical that employers select the right system, from the right vendor.

**Selecting the right system.** Here are key factors to consider in selecting the right system and the most knowledgeable vendor:

\* **Functional integration.** Make sure that functions within the ESS application (including the manager self-service system, if you have one) are fully integrated with one another. A well-integrated system increases productivity by making the workflow more efficient.

\* **Systems integration.** Select a system that will work well with and enhance your current HRIS system. This will protect your previous technology investments and help you avoid costly integration. You can use the savings for more-strategic HR functions.

\* **Usability.** Choose a system that is intuitive, easy to use, and that includes customizable fonts, logos, and color schemes. A reputable vendor will be able to suggest a comprehensive, affordable communications package that all workers can use. This level of quality in a system, called a “best-of-breed” solution, offers advanced capabilities such as role-based views, whereby the information on the screen will differ depending on the viewer, and single sign-on and authentication services.

With role-based views, for example, the on-screen view presented to a manager might contain a different set of

information than the view presented to an employee accessing the same system.

\* **Scalability and adaptability.** Select a vendor that can deliver an advanced technology platform whose scale and applications can be adapted to meet your organization’s changing business needs. Applications that aren’t adaptable need extensive configuration and will lose users over time—two situations that can be costly for an organization.

**Selecting the best vendor.** Here are some qualities to look for in a reputable vendor:

\* A long track record of outstanding customer service. Even if your in-house information technology (IT) staff has excellent resources, you may still need outside consultants to create an in-house product. The vendor should be able to meet both the immediate and future needs of your organization

\* Extensive knowledge of the ESS market, with a focus on best-of-breed self-service systems that have proven to be effective over time.

\* The ability to offer a range of flexible deployment options, such as on-premise software (software residing on an organization’s own server versus that of a host) hosted software (which would reside on the server of an application service provider (ASP), or mixed deployments.

\* Rapid, professional implementation of a system—since time is money.

Make your needs and requirements clear. The better a prospective vendor understands what you want, the better it can help you meet your objectives.

Also, ask vendors what you can expect as a return on investment and what the Total Cost of Ownership will be.

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