What to consider before investing in
Recruitment Software

Finding the best recruitment software for your company is one of the biggest decisions a recruitment organisation will make and is one that is often made when a business is in its infancy, under pressure or in a time of growth.

Making the right decision is important but unfortunately it isn't black and white. There is no 'best product' in the market. It's all about finding what's best for each individual recruitment organisation.

We do hope that you'll end up seeing what Voyager Software can offer your business, but that's not why we've put this information together.

Our aim is simple, we want to help you make an informed decision to maximise the return on your investment.

Good luck in your supplier selection!

Paul Thompson

Key Questions to ask yourself, your team and the crystal ball before you start.

A FREE Guide is available by emailing: rec.enquiries@voyagersoftware.com

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What type of Recruitment Organisation are you today?

SME start-up

Sounds obvious but don't look too far ahead. You need a solution that suits you during your embryonic phase. Look for an established and solid brand that has the resources to help you if and when necessary. For example, an 0800 support number, version upgrades included and great training tools. Look for a 'partner' rather than a basic CRM package. Ensure the sales representative has time to talk and support you through your decision rather than cut a quick deal and move on the next. If you're ever tempted to buy on price alone, remember the proverb 'buy cheap, buy twice' – it should be a balance between quality and price.

Lifestyle Recruiter

You've got your black book of contacts and so business development features within a system may be less important, but a system that automatically tracks all your communications whether you're in the office or out and about is a great benefit. A tool which is super easy to use and that connects your phone, email, calendar, website and database into one solution is likely to be at the heart of your requirement. Create a *'features list'* in Word/Excel and ask the supplier to add their comments.

Established brand with a range of sectors and remote workers

You are likely to have more complex business requirements and thus need the appropriate level of configuration and support from a software partner used to working with the demands of such a business. You are likely to benefit most from a supplier with a range of solutions that can be deployed in a variety of ways and will benefit most from a company that manages high volumes of transactions and one that can manage to entire recruitment process from web-application to the pay and bill. A provider that has a choice of options is more likely to think about what's best for you. KPI dashboards and reports will allow you to track performance now and in the future and so for larger more complicated businesses a focus on the reporting capabilities will help weed out   inappropriate software solutions early on.

Niche supplier

You may require a completely bespoke solution. A good place to start is to documenting your workflow using Excel, or even post-it notes on a wall if that will help visualise the process.

Few software suppliers will have the skills or breadth of expertise to create a solution from scratch. If this is your requirement then it's essential to work with a company with a proven track record of developing a range of solutions that have been deployed on a range of platforms – ask for references before you engage with a supplier.

Consider you are getting married – and can't afford the divorce. It will really help if you genuinely get on well with the people in the business, trust your gut instinct, but do your background checks! It's never a one-off project so think about the future as no software product can stand still with the changing pace of technology. There will always be an ongoing spend.

And finally, who owns the system at the end? A basic question, but one that is often rarely asked until it's too late.

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Where does it hurt and how do you measure the pain?

Before you start your journey you need to define what success looks like and that's often best done by defining what areas of the process and business are feeling the most pain. By measuring the stress in the business today you can make better informed decisions that will help you hugely in your search for your next software supplier. When you go to the doctors they ask what's wrong, it's no different here.

Key areas to improve typically include;

Do it faster – *"One man's fast is another man's slow."*
Do you need to text search on 50,000 CV's in a nanosecond or would being able to do a more structured search be ultimately faster?

Many solutions are selected based on performance, but being able to use a fully integrated solution will offer far greater return. Ask each member of the team what they would like to be able to do faster and you will receive a range of answers. Whilst managers will want the ability to automate their reporting requirements, a recruiter may state the ability to quickly import a CV or LinkedIn/Social Media profile as being key, whereas for a resourcer it may be an integrated search solution that can scour the web.

For a solution to be 'fast' you need to do more than look under the bonnet – ask to see it in a demonstration or even organise a trial, but the latter needs to include some help and/or training in order for it to be meaningful.

Social Media – *"Do you need to search and import Social Media content?"*
Are you doing this manually or are you looking for a joined up solution? Ask the team – Social Media can often be a black art - and black hole!

Remote Workers – *"Define what this means for you."*
Working from home is different to what most recruiters need. An accountant will benefit from full access to the server in the office, Sage your CRM plus all the public folders, but a Recruiter may just require email and diary access when they're out and about interviewing or meeting clients. A web-based CRM may or may not be the way forward for your business.

There are suppliers that offer databases that can be bought outright and installed on your server or can be provided 'on the cloud' as well as 'basic web-based CRMs'. The right decision for you will be the one that gives you greatest flexibility as to how data is accessed, updated, copied and secured.

Give me access to what I need
- Multiple databases – Would you benefit from them or should everyone share one?
- Do you have an exit plan and if so, would you sell the business whole or in chunks?
- Management reporting – what metrics do differing users need to track?
- Ownership of data – How can you pull your data into one solution and keep it safe?

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Staff retention – *"Staff will blame the system for holding them back unless it helps them."*
Get the team involved in the sales process from the start. It will help to explore their frustrations and ensure that your software supplier understands the reason for change and what needs to be achieved.

A recruiter should be able to earn more money and be more effective by working as part of a team. An excellent way to retain great recruitment talent is to ensure that they're involved in the search for your new supplier. Ask each staff member for 5 key items that need to be addressed with the new solution and bring together one list of requirements which address all the key items. Weed out unrealistic requirements and ones which don't bring efficiencies to the business. Bear in mind that often what's 'shiny and new' may distract from the core features.

Compliance
Most will require a solution that's tracks forms of ID as part of a registration but does you system need to track and manage compliance more fully?

Sectors such as Nursing, Domiciliary Care, Driving, Teaching, Agriculture and Hospitality have an increased admin burden as they need to accommodate a more transient workforce, increased compliance issues and documentation. If you are in such a sector start your search with compliance at the forefront of your selection process – for you it's not a luxury item. Excel should not be at the heart of your business once a solution has been implemented.

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What deployment & payment options suit you best? - Does your contract have flexibility built in?

Traditionally, software systems were purchased outright and installed on a dedicated server by the client. Whilst many firms continue to find this the most appropriate route to go down for them and if you have the appetite for the additional responsibility, it can be significantly more cost effective over time. However it can't be ignored that there is an increasing tendency towards "hosted" solutions (typically known as a SaaS or ASP solutions).

There is also a third, hybrid model, which allows users to buy the product whilst also paying for a hosting service.

Generally speaking, the 'outright purchase' model is chosen by larger firms or firms with an existing server infrastructure in place, whereas the SaaS/ASP model is chosen by smaller firms – those primarily focused on short term cost and those that wish to avoid the headaches associated with hosting a server.

The 'hybrid model' offers the benefits of both approaches. Support and Hosting are both services which are delivered over time and so paying a subscription fee makes perfect sense. However, subscribing to a software licence is akin to renting a television – in the short term it may be beneficial, but in the longer term it will undoubtedly cost more.
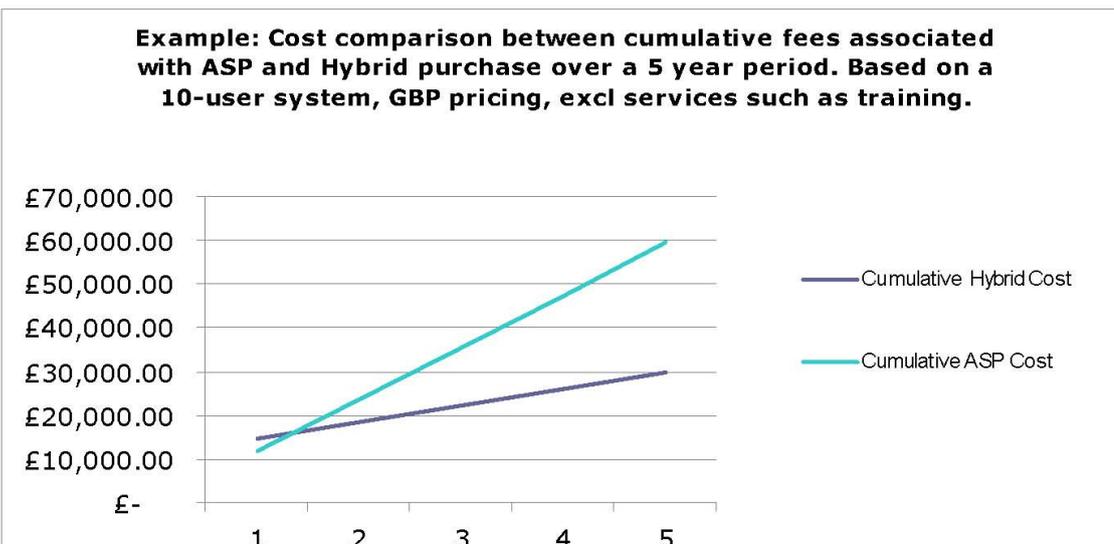
The hybrid approach of purchasing the software and subscribing to the hosting and support services can; over a five year period prove to be as much as 50% cheaper than the SaaS/ASP model – which still provides all of the benefits associated with a cloud hosted database.

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What commonly goes wrong and why?

- The 6 P's – Perfect Planning and Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. Plan with the team what you require now and in the future. Transparent working that offers visibility to colleagues and managers won't please every member of staff the solution should allow you to streamline processes and improve efficiencies and hopefully that means increasing sales, but it may mean losing staff.
- Key people need to be involved in the sales process – a new solution can be seen as an intrusion.
- Your internal processes are likely to be biggest hurdle – ensure there's a broad agreement on what is required.
- Free Software can blow your budget! Make an informed decision; avoid free software or free trials that are only there to get you hooked in.
- Focus on the sausage not the sizzle – get the basics right first.

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Don't just look at the software itself. What about the company providing it?

- Credit check your supplier – you can't afford for them to disappear and you need to ensure they have appropriate levels of R&D.
- Are they able to support you now and in the future with a range of solutions that you can grow into?
- Proper support isn't a luxury item – get references and ask about the team size.
- Ask about future developments and what's 'coming soon'.
- Is your supplier recognised by trade or public organisations such as REC, TEAM, Investors in People, etc.?
- Get recommendations before you ask Google – with over 200 suppliers to choose from, you need a partner with more than just a pretty website!
- Get out of jail card – what's the exit strategy if things go wrong?
- With many recruitment software 'advisors' – are you actually talking to a reseller? How are they getting paid for their advice?
- Consider a trial – but ensure its one you can exit and get your data back.
- What happens if you want to exit after 3 months and what happens to the data you've put in the system?
- How do you pay for it? Is there flexibility? For example, can you keep upfront costs low initially and pay monthly, but then buy it outright when it makes sense to do so?
- Does your supplier allow you to swap between the different options?
- Could you rent, then buy and then move it to the Cloud – and even back again?
- Do you get a dedicated Project Manager?
- **REVIEW YOUR PROPOSAL / CONTRACT** – there is always small print, get a second opinion before you sign.

About the author

Having joined Voyager Software in its infancy, Paul has played a pivotal role in the organisations development.

Paul has a passion for helping technically challenged Recruiters become more efficient and effective with technology and during his time at Voyager has helped over 700 Recruitment organisations get smarter with technology.

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