Six Important Questions to Ask When Evaluating Timesheet Solutions

White Paper

If you've outgrown your current paper-based or homegrown timesheet system, or if you have multiple installed time collection systems that produce inconsistent data, it gets hard to understand project costs, to figure out what people are working on, and to send correct and timely bills out to your customers. It also can make payroll very frustrating.

How can you be sure you'll get a system that works for your company and is immune to the most common problems people experience when buying a timesheet and expense management solution?

Here are a few things to consider:

1. Am I Being Duped By a Deceptive Sales Demo?

This is the most common mistake in buying timesheet software. You have the power to demand that any vendor absolutely, completely prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that their solution will solve your company's specific business problem. You deserve a detailed demonstration that uses your employee list, your customer list, your project list, your company's logo and color scheme and that shows you reports on your data that will prove to you that your business problem is solved. If a vendor can't make you 100% certain that the solution will work for your specific business needs, then walk. Period. Canned demos are designed to deceive. Don't believe them.

What to Ask Your Vendor

- Can you absolutely prove to me that you will solve my business problem, using my employees, departments, projects, etc. and then show me the reports I need to see?

2. Will I Receive Responsive Support from My Vendor?

Most vendors provide a static outdated FAQ list and support staff that are often part of the sales team. When support is part of the sales force you only get help as a prospect. Once they've got your money, getting help ... well, it's 'iffy' at best.

What to Ask Your Vendor

- How many cases do you have published in your automated helpdesk tool?
- Is your support staff part of the sales team?
- In what time can you guarantee me responses?
- Can I talk to three recent customers that are happy with your support?
- What is your average response time?
- What did your most recent support poll turn up as the overall satisfaction level for your supported customers?
- Do you even do such polling?
- What percentage of your customers renew their maintenance contracts each year?

3. Is the Timesheet Solution Web-Based or Web-Enabled?

Many timesheet systems that claim to be web-based are in fact only web-enabled. The fact is that your company's chosen operating systems and chosen browsers will change over time, and if a vendor doesn't support all systems and browsers today, then it might not support whatever you choose in the future. Web-based software works on all browsers on all operating systems, and every aspect of the software can be administered via the web. This enables real-time accurate data collection and management worldwide without the difficulties of maintaining special software on client machines. Web-enabled means that only some aspects of the software work via a browser, or that it doesn't work well with certain browsers or operating systems.

What to Ask Your Vendor

- Which web browsers do you support?
- Which operating systems do you support?
- Can you change the approval workflow in this application via the web browser?
- How do I add users?
- Is all reporting web-based?
- Is there anything at all about this application that doesn't work on all browsers?

4. Can I Gain Efficiencies from a SaaS Solution?

Most timesheet software companies either sell software or a SaaS service, not both. SaaS means software-as-a-service. You might also have heard it referred to as "the cloud." Essentially, it means you rent access to 100% web-based software that's running on external servers instead of installing it on a server at your office. This allows early rollouts, server protection and easier upgrades.

What to Ask Your Vendor

- What sort of backup generator do you have in case of a power outage at your SaaS site and where is it hosted?
- How much does server protection cost?
- Can I rollout on your SaaS servers and later transfer the data to my own servers?
- Where are SaaS backup tapes stored?

5. Is This Solution Flexible for All My Employees?

Most timesheet programs offer a single environment for time tracking that includes a few minor options for customizing an employee's timesheet layout and process. Limited ability to customize an employee's timesheet is a problem for two reasons:

1. Acceptance and daily usage of your timesheet system is required in order to realize the full benefits of automation. Employees are more likely to feel comfortable with the transition to a new system if the tracking environment and process resemble the process they followed previously. The ability to customize employee timesheets to emulate previous processes facilitates compliance and overall success.
2. Not all types of employees track their time the same way. Exempt employees, hourly part-timers and contractors may all require different methods of tracking time. The ability to use different timesheets for different types of employees is necessary in order to emulate each employee's time tracking process.

What to Ask Your Vendor

- What parts of the timesheet can I customize and what are the options?
- How many different timesheets can I create for my different types of employees?
- If I provide you with a copy of my employee timesheets that are currently in use, can you configure something similar using the standard options available in your software

- How do I assign one style of timesheet to one group of employees, a second type to another group, and so on?
- How do I set up timesheets that allow some of my employees to track the billing status of their time while preventing others, who do not track this information, from seeing it?

6. Is My Vendor Preparing Us For the Future?

Rolling out a new time tracking solution can be a real challenge if you have multiple departments with complex needs. A vendor that offers flexible and high-quality training services can be a lifesaver.

What to Ask Your Vendor

- How many training courses did you offer last year?
- Were they effective?
- How did you measure customer's satisfaction?
- How experienced is your training team?

Finally, Here Are Three More Questions

1. How much time are my employees spending on projects?
2. What type of work are they doing?
3. How much does a project cost us by employee?

Journyx can help you answer these questions and more so you can plan projects and bill more accurately, control labor costs and expenses, and save your business both time and money.

Additional resources:

Checklist: What to Look for in a Time and Expense Tracking Solution

5 Steps to Creating a Time Management System

About Journyx, Inc.

Founded in 1996, Journyx offers customers two solutions to reach the highest levels of profitability: Journyx – project, time and expense tracking software – and Journyx PX – resource management software that provides work and financial forecasting for a complete picture of project and budget status, employee time and availability. Journyx has thousands of customers worldwide, including Boehringer Ingelheim, Schlumberger, BP, Honeywell and many others. For more information, visit www.journyx.com.