Essential Questions To Ask During a Vendor Management System Demonstration

SAP Fieldglass Whitepaper
Introduction

The product demonstration is where the rubber meets the road for a Vendor Management System (VMS) provider. After the arduous Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the demonstration is an opportunity for you to see the user interface, learn how to manage specific tasks and get questions answered. More complex issues such as integration and implementation can be touched upon as well. As each organization has its own unique processes and business needs, how can you be assured you’re asking the right questions?

This is the second whitepaper in a series of three focusing on the essential questions to ask during your search for a VMS. Read it to understand how to manage the demonstration process and be better equipped to take the next step.

Success starts with you

Question yourself first

Before you ask questions of the solution provider, first ask questions of your own organization. What are you hoping to gain from this initiative? How big is your current program? What labor categories and types of services would you like to include? Will you roll out the program all at once in a “big bang” or in phases? Is your program global?

If you come into the demonstration armed with answers to these questions, you’ll be better equipped to evaluate the solution. Before the demonstration, give the vendor as much information as possible about your current processes and program to guide the discussion and push the vendor to show specific solutions.
Who should attend?

Program sponsors and other internal stakeholders should attend the initial demonstration but that doesn’t mean other departments shouldn’t have a voice. Meeting with decision makers from the procurement, HR, legal, finance and IT teams can help you define pain points and business objectives to be discussed during the demonstration.

Comparing solutions

Many organizations create a scorecard and assign actual point values to features and functionality. Oftentimes certain areas are weighted differently to give extra value to items addressing specific business objectives brought forward by stakeholders. For example, a company in the insurance industry created its scorecard based on recommendations from key departments including HR and procurement. After seeing demonstrations from multiple vendors, they said almost 95 percent of the final decision was based on those scorecard results.

We’ve outlined several key areas that are important to address during the demonstration including the login, determination of labor type, requisition and SOW creation, candidate selection, work order, approving timesheets and invoicing, social collaboration, reporting, global and administration. These functional areas cover the essentials and can act as a springboard to evaluate more complex features of a VMS. Addressing the areas below will broaden your understanding of a solution’s capabilities and how it can automate and improve your external workforce program.

Login

The login is the first impression you’ll get of the user interface — and first impressions matter. A guided, highly personalized and familiar experience is imperative for users who might be hesitant to adopt the new technology. Keep an eye out for features and functionality that will help your users feel at home and reassure them that help is readily accessible.

1. What is the first page users see when they log in? Can it be easily navigated and understood?
2. Do users have to remember a username and password or can a single sign-on be used?
3. What features are built into the solution to assist first-time users?
4. How can the interface be configured and customized for different users such as hiring managers or program sponsors?

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Determining labor type

The type of labor used — either external or SOW — governs the workflow within the VMS and the demonstration should address both these labor types. If you’re unsure of the kind of labor needed, the application should be capable of determining whether a job requisition should be created for a flexible worker or if the multi-bid SOW and SOW processes should be initiated.

A thorough walkthrough of the job requisition and SOW creation processes will give you a sense of how everyday users, such as hiring managers, will experience the interface. If you’ve touched base with your internal stakeholders beforehand, you’ll know their specific pain points and what features would be most appealing to them.

For example, one customer determined that the end-user experience would factor largely into its final decision. This organization was particularly interested in the candidate vetting and interviewing processes, as they were previously manual. As a result the customer required its potential VMS vendors to demonstrate how they could provide more self-service and visibility into where users were in the process.

Requisition

1. Demonstrate decision support capabilities that assist with the classification of labor.
2. How does a hiring manager request an external worker?
3. What type of comparison rate data is available to hiring managers when creating a requisition?
4. How much information do the hiring managers have to provide in order to create a requisition?
5. How are approval workflows set up? Can we have different approval workflows set up by business unit or by geographical location?
6. Does the application support conditional approvals? In other words, can rules can be built into the system so approvals are specifically routed based on certain conditions?
7. In some areas of the business where there are rapid hire needs, how can we accommodate for a shortened process?
8. Can we add ad hoc approvers on the fly?
9. How are suppliers set up and tiered depending on the job title or location?
Statement of Work (SOW)

1. Please show how the application can support the multi-bid SOW process.
2. How are different payment structures utilized in an SOW?
3. Demonstrate how internal and external resources come together to negotiate an SOW.
4. Do you have the ability to track resources or workers within the SOW?
5. How are rate cards managed?
6. Can capital expenses be tracked?

Candidate selection

A VMS can help ensure the best candidate gets through the door as quickly as possible. During the demonstration, the VMS provider should explain how candidates are submitted and vetted. Think about how you currently source and review candidates and measure the solution in its ability to streamline those processes.

1. What tools are available to assist suppliers with finding and submitting quality talent for a position?
2. How do you uniquely identify a candidate with past experience, one marked as a “do not rehire” or a duplicate submittal?
3. What features are available to assist the hiring manager in reviewing, interviewing and selecting a candidate?
4. If I want to collaborate with other managers/users on the review of candidates, how can I do this in the system?
5. How do you support an environment (such as light industrial or manufacturing) where a hiring manager simply creates a requisition and all candidate qualification is handled by the supplier?

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Work order

The work order is essentially the “handshake” between the buyer and the supplier with specifics such as the start date, end date, rate and site, among other details. A VMS not only automates the creation of a work order and assists the hiring manager with onboarding processes; it should also be capable of integrating with an HR Information System (HRIS) in order to tie the data captured in the VMS with existing processes for provisioning, identity management and invoice payment.

1. Does this tool eliminate the need for a purchase order? Can the creation and approval of a purchase order be incorporated into the process?
2. How is tenure policy tracked and enforced through this process?
3. How does the tool assist the hiring manager with the onboarding and induction process to ensure the contract worker has the proper background check, screenings, badging, equipment provisioning and training in place prior to the start date?
4. What if we have resources that we want to track, but are not required to submit time/expenses?
5. How are new contract workers fed to downstream HRIS tools or identity/asset management tools?

Approving timesheets and invoices

Your users need an approval process that is easily accessible and quickly understandable. A VMS can automate processes related to time entry and can automatically alert hiring managers when workers have reached tenure or are approaching overtime. Issues such as tax adjustments and budget considerations that can become complicated through manual processes can be simplified and automated in the solution.

The timesheet and invoicing processes are opportunities for confusion. In many organizations, diverse tracking systems are already in place, timesheets are often submitted with possible discrepancies, approval procedures are time-consuming, and compound budget and tax considerations are difficult to calculate accurately. The demonstration should walk through how these issues might be resolved with a VMS in place.

1. Describe the options available for time entry. Can workers continue to enter time into existing time tracking systems such as punch clocks, project management tools, etc.?
2. What type of alerts notify the hiring manager if the contractor has entered time incorrectly?
3. Can suppliers or the Program Office (PMO) review timesheets for accuracy prior to the hiring manager?
4. Do hiring managers need to approve timesheets via the VMS tool only or can they do so via mobile devices, email approvals, etc.?
5. Can the VMS ensure invoices have the proper taxes and adjustments applied? How?
6. Can you show where invoicing data is located?
7. When an Managed Service Provider (MSP) is involved, how does the application create the three-way invoice?
8. How does your system track budgeted spend versus actual spend?
Reporting

Talking about automation and reporting can demonstrate how the VMS could improve visibility into your external workforce and services procurement program. Inquire about standard reports available out-of-the-box and the ability to create custom reports tailored to your organization’s unique goals.

While one customer was building its business case for a VMS, it determined that cost was a significant pain point and wanted a solution capable of providing high-level reporting. During the demonstration, the customer made sure to ask questions specific to this type of reporting and scored each vendor on its ability to produce it.

1. What types of reports are available out-of-the-box?
2. What level of training is required to use the custom reporting engine? Is there a charge to create custom reports?
3. Can reports be scheduled to run and sent to a user automatically?
4. Show what types of drill-down reporting and graphs are provided to end users.
5. What type of out-of-the-box business analytics are provided?

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Social collaboration
Social capabilities within a VMS can offer collaboration tools to ease the burden for everyone from the hiring manager, to the PMO, staffing company and even the external worker. If a solution comes equipped with social features, it can provide immediate access to tribal knowledge and peer-to-peer assistance in real time. Because not all VMS solutions offer social capabilities, the demonstration can show how one VMS utilizes these tools to improve efficiency and enhance communication and collaboration.

1. Does your solution offer any type of chat functionality, similar to popular consumer tools?
2. Is there any type of messaging system in place for users to ask questions if they need assistance?
3. Can users attach notes to individual items directly within the VMS that they can later reference?
4. What usability features are available to hiring managers for marking an item as a favorite for future reuse?
5. What type of search capability is available to hiring managers?
6. What type of online help is available to users?

Administration
The day-to-day management of the tool is often handled by the PMO and with the right VMS in place, it can focus on strategic initiatives rather than administrative duties. The VMS provider should demonstrate how the tool can be configured, how data is managed in bulk and if it offers any supplier qualification solutions. Whether or not the program has a MSP or is “self-managed,” you’ll want a thorough walkthrough of how the VMS can support these different models. You should consider any and all possibilities for the future such as program growth and business changes, and anticipate how the VMS might grow with you.

1. Show how the PMO can configure the tool. What type of changes must be done by the VMS provider?
2. How can the PMO upload or download data in bulk, such as when a re-organization occurs or when rate cards are modified?
3. What tools are available to help make the PMO more efficient in managing the day-to-day activities of the program?
4. Show how suppliers are set up within the tool. Are there any features to assist with the vetting and qualification of suppliers or independent contractors (ICs)?
5. Does your platform support the management of additional talent pools such as retirees and alumni?
6. Do we have access to system audit trails?

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Global
Globalization is the new reality and a VMS should be capable of handling complexities such as global pay rules and rate components across a variety of countries and regions. Make providers aware of your current and desired global state so you can be assured your program can grow with the tool. The provider should be able to help guide your program expansion and answer questions about different languages, rate structures and local support.

1. Demonstrate how the solution handles rate structures and pay rules in local environments.
2. Can you detail how the platform handles complex regulatory requirements to ensure invoice accuracy in foreign countries?
3. Is the application available in other languages?
4. Can global users access help in their own language and in their own time zone?
5. Does the provider have “feet on the street” or local partners in your areas or those to which you’re expanding?
6. Can the system handle Collective Bargaining Agreements and other mandatory, site-specific legislative requirements?
7. Can the system handle monthly timesheets?

Summary
While there will likely be more than one demonstration during your VMS selection process, it’s important to ask the questions outlined above to ensure you’re covering a wide breadth of topics and addressing basic functionality.

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