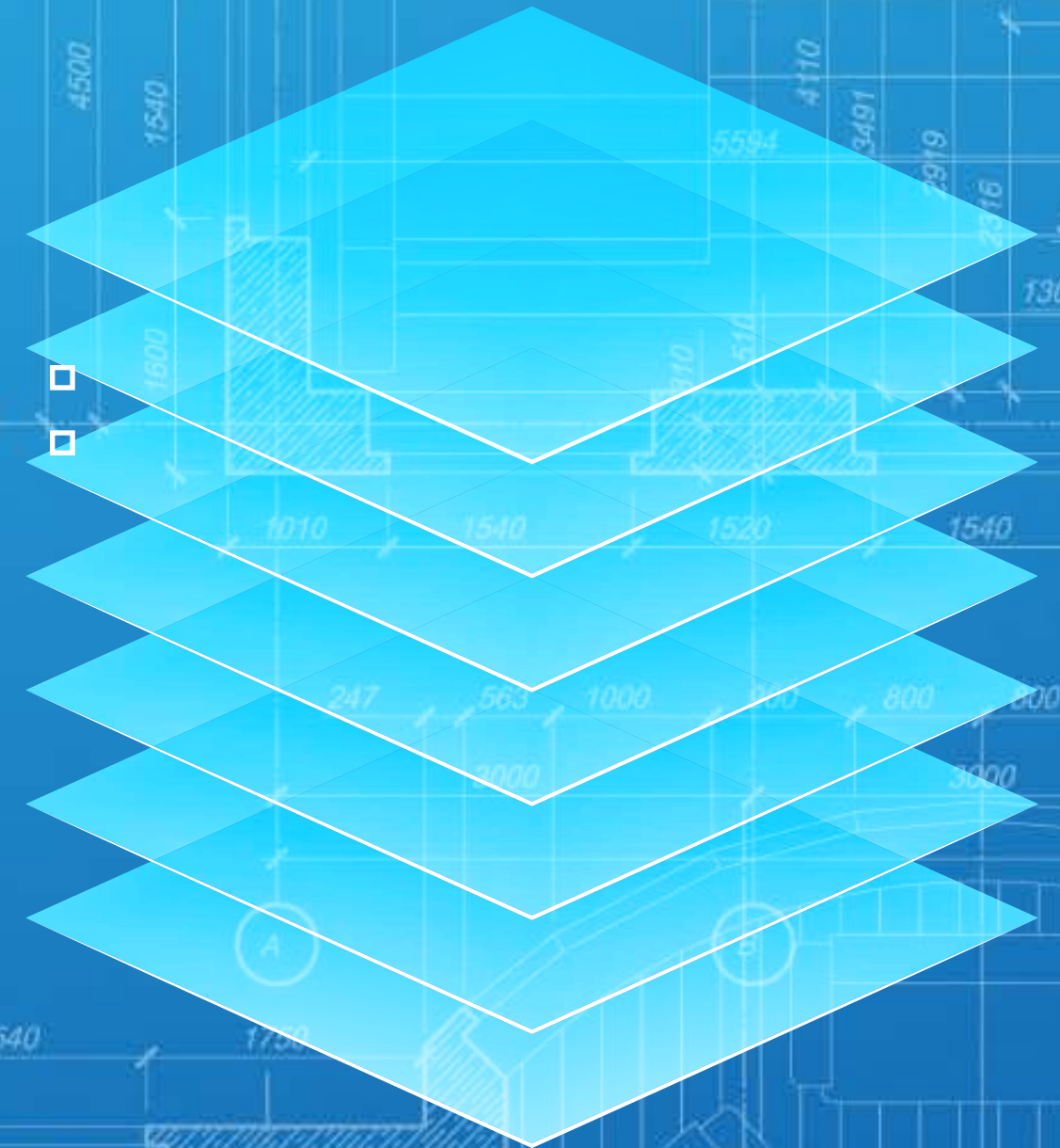




The Modern HR Tech Stack

BLUEPRINT

A Builder and Buyer's Guide For Growth



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WHY IT'S SO CRITICAL TO GET YOUR HR TECH STACK RIGHT

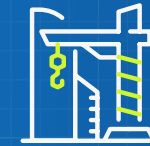
Every HR leader has heard the promise: “One platform to do it all.”

Payroll, compliance, recruiting, learning, performance, engagement—just log in, and it's magically covered. But anyone who's actually lived inside one of these so-called “end-to-end” suites knows the truth: foundations alone don't build thriving organizations. The challenge isn't whether you have a system. You probably do. The real challenge is whether that system delivers the outcomes you need: faster hiring, seamless onboarding, engaged employees, managers who don't drown in admin, and data that leaders can actually use to make decisions. On those fronts, most of the all-in-one HR solutions fall short.

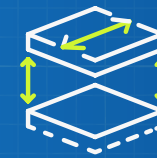
Meanwhile, the marketplace is exploding. There are more than 3,800 HR technology vendors spread across a dozen categories—everything from candidate sourcing to workflow orchestration. For buyers, the sheer noise makes it nearly impossible to know: Where are the real gaps in my stack? Am I leveraging AI in the right places? Am I missing something critical, or just chasing the latest shiny object?

Here's the good news: you don't need to rip and replace what you've already invested in. Your system of record—Workday, SAP, Oracle, UKG, ADP—is valuable. It's the foundation of your HR stack. But a foundation without framing, plumbing, and electric is really just a hole in the ground. To grow, adapt, and compete, you need to layer in the missing capabilities that make the stack whole.

Use this blueprint to:



Cut through the noise



Map the essential layers of a modern HR tech stack



See exactly how to go from a rigid foundation to a living system that drives growth

THE HIDDEN COST OF A BROKEN STACK

When your HR tech stack isn't connected, your people feel it. Fragmentation creates friction and drains productivity, morale, and money.

Research shows that:



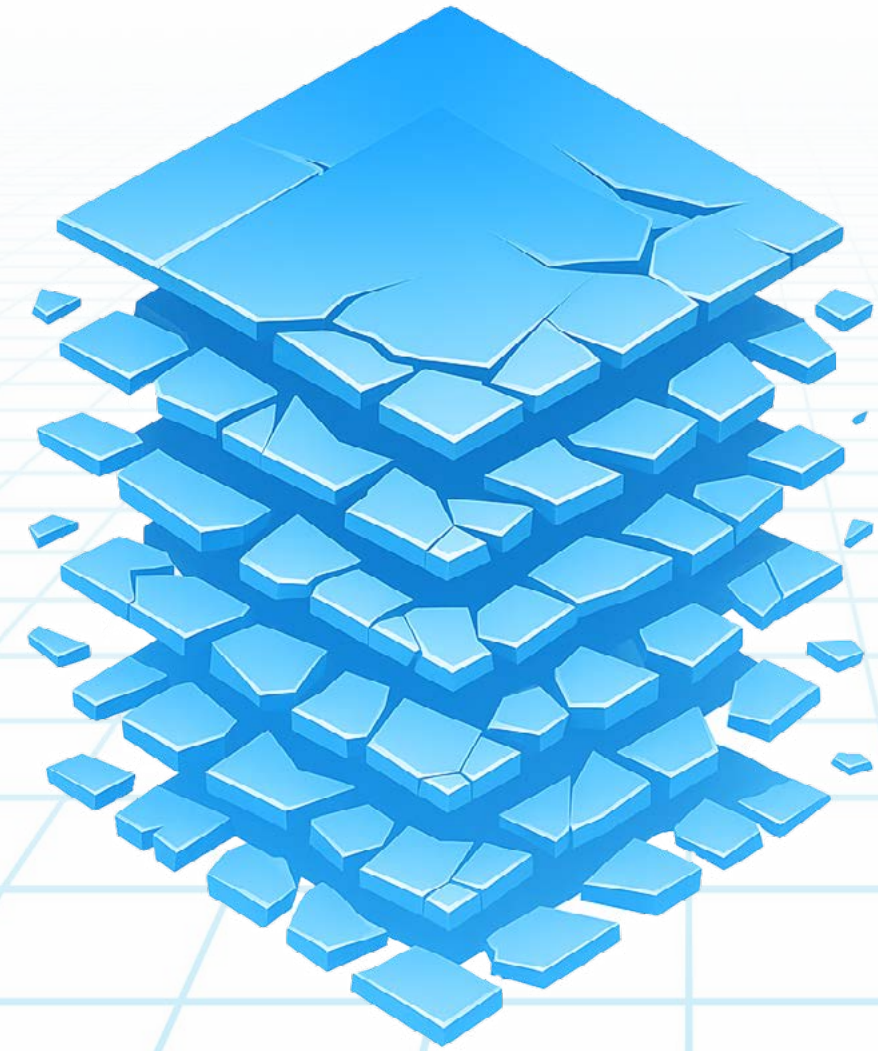
70% of employees spend **20+ hours per week chasing information** across disconnected systems instead of doing their actual work (Quickbase).



HR teams in the **US and UK lose 40 million hours every month** untangling tech redundancies—costing businesses an estimated \$8.5 billion annually (Forbes).



The ripple effects are real: 48% of HR professionals say overlapping tools make learning harder, **47% say it reduces productivity**, and 46% cite serious security concerns (Capterra/SHRM).



A broken stack slows you down, and it quietly taxes your entire workforce. Lost hours, duplicate data, and disjointed experiences compound into missed goals, disengaged teams, and higher turnover. **The cost is culture.**

BUILDING BLOCKS: WORKING ON THE FOUNDATION YOU ALREADY HAVE

Every house starts with a foundation. In HR tech, that foundation is often a system of record. Something like Workday, SAP, Oracle, or UKG. These are the platforms executives feel safe betting on: compliant, global, and built to keep regulators happy.

And here's the catch: that's really all they were built for. They're the baseboards, not the living room. They track who you employ, what you pay them, and when benefits kick in. But they weren't designed to delight a candidate, keep a new hire warm before day one, or help a manager spot burnout before it happens.

Have they added on modules to try to do more? Most of them. Are those new features hitting the mark? If you're reading this far, chances are they have not.

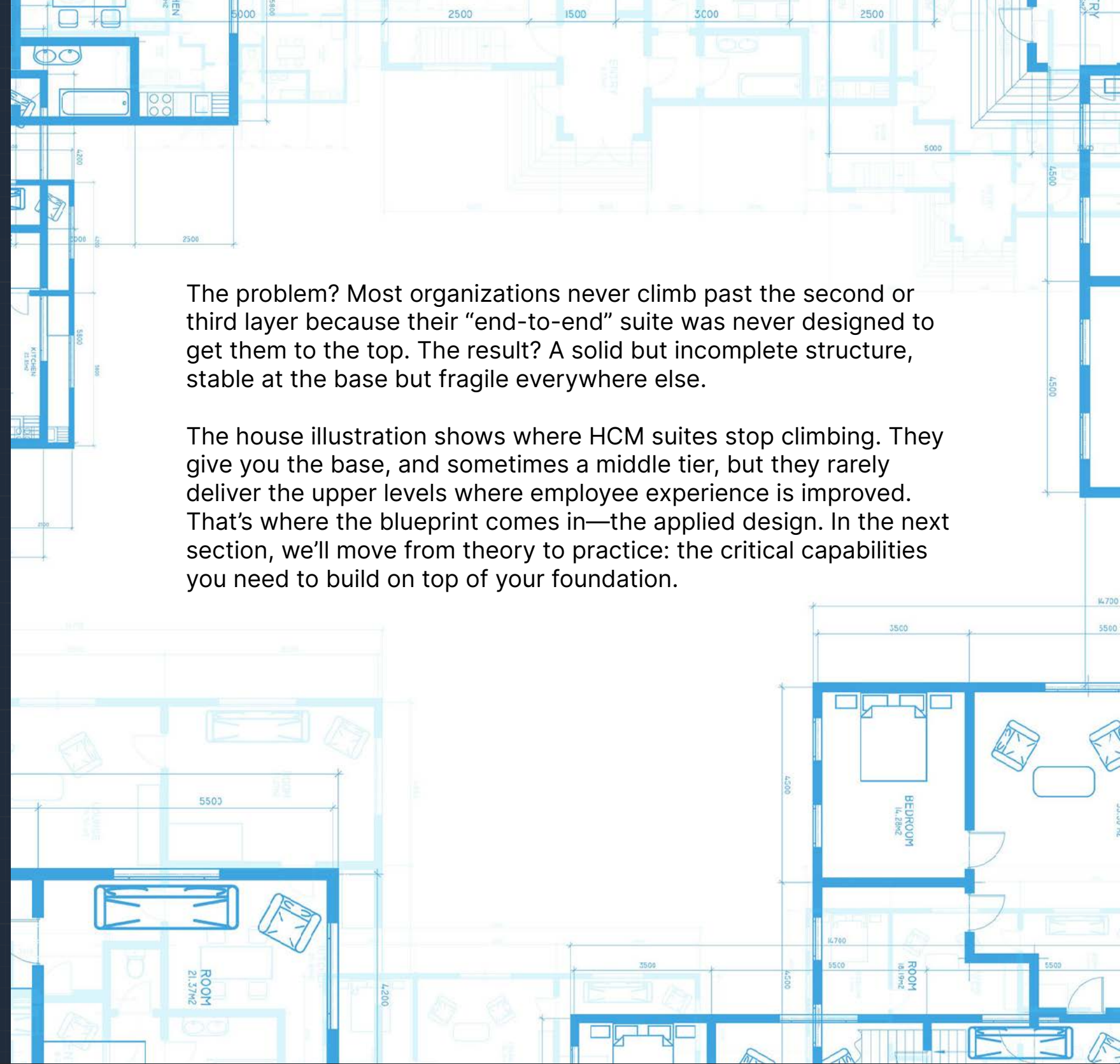
That's why so many buyers get stuck in the "end-to-end" trap. The big suites pitch themselves as all-in-one experience platforms. But in practice? They're brilliant at payroll and compliance, and hit-or-miss everywhere else. The result is a lot of HR leaders saying, "Our HCM already does that," while employees, recruiters, and managers keep asking, "Does it really?"

Think of your HR tech stack as that house—a hierarchy of needs for your HRIS:



The problem? Most organizations never climb past the second or third layer because their “end-to-end” suite was never designed to get them to the top. The result? A solid but incomplete structure, stable at the base but fragile everywhere else.

The house illustration shows where HCM suites stop climbing. They give you the base, and sometimes a middle tier, but they rarely deliver the upper levels where employee experience is improved. That’s where the blueprint comes in—the applied design. In the next section, we’ll move from theory to practice: the critical capabilities you need to build on top of your foundation.





THE BLUEPRINT: CRITICAL CAPABILITIES TO BUILD ON

Building a modern HR tech stack means thinking hard about what you need to best support your employees and teams. This is where it's super handy to have a blueprint—a design of where each tier adds strength, flexibility, and purpose at those upper levels.

When deciding what to layer on, HR teams have to prioritize people-centric solutions and not get distracted by shiny objects that don't produce results. You must truly understand what you're solving for and keep the end user in mind.

Your system of record is the foundation, sure, but no one builds a house just to admire the basement. To create a modern employee experience (EX), you have to build upward, capability by capability.



Talent Acquisition

Hiring is where the stack cracks first. Core HCM recruiting modules often feel like filing cabinets that are functional but uninspiring. To compete for talent, you need an agile ATS that pairs with your foundation to deliver AI-powered outbound sourcing, intelligent matching, candidate outreach, and employer branding. Without this capability, even the most solid applicant tracking system can't save you from offer declines and ghosted interviews.



Employee Journeys

The moment between “offer accepted” and “day one” is where people first discover your culture. It's where excitement can fizzle—or where you can set the tone for long-term success. Preboarding and onboarding journeys need automation: I-9s, background checks, IT setup, credentialing. Beyond that, the stack has to cover every inflection point, including cross-boarding, promotions, LOAs, mergers, and exits. If your foundation stops at “employee record created,” you're leaving experience on the table.



Performance & Growth

Annual reviews are not enough. Modern stacks include continuous feedback, goal alignment, manager enablement, and succession planning. This is where performance moves from retrospective to real-time. The foundation tells you what happened; this capability shows you what's next and where employees can go. Moreover, if you're a SOC2 organization, you'll need this structure to show proof of performance management for compliance reporting. Having this infrastructure in place allows you to run reports both annually or by project.



Engagement & Recognition

Culture doesn't live in compliance modules. It lives in how employees feel seen, valued, and rewarded. Having the right technology in place allows you to automate and scale your culture, and also measure it. Adding recognition, rewards, and social sharing capabilities transforms your stack from transactional to relational. Surveys and feedback collection tell you what's working and what isn't. It's also the fastest path to creating engagement data your C-suite actually trusts.



Learning & Development

Growth is retention's best-kept secret. Embedding skilling, reskilling, and compliance training directly into the employee journey ensures learning isn't bolted on but built in. A strong L&D capability doesn't just keep employees compliant, but also committed.



Together, these capabilities form the blueprint for a structure that grows, adapts, and keeps talent anchored.

HOW TO FIX YOUR CURRENT STACK

No two HR tech stacks look the same. Some companies are starting fresh, some are deep into Workday or SAP, and some are straddling payroll and timekeeping systems like ADP or UKG. But no matter what your foundation is, the challenge is the same: your system of record is the foundation, but you still need the details that make it livable.

The path forward isn't about ripping out what you've already invested in. It's about completing it. Rival layers onto your existing foundation to deliver the experience, automation, and insights your suite was never designed for.

In this section, we'll walk floor by floor through the blueprint, showing you where the foundation is strong, and where it leaves rooms unfinished. Think of it as an architectural walkthrough of your stack: we'll highlight what the big HCMs do well, where they stall, and what you can add on to transform a sturdy base into a complete, modern structure.



IF YOU'RE STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Starting fresh can be a breath of fresh air, especially if you've ever grappled with legacy systems, bloated stacks, or a whole lot of "we've always done it this way." But it also means the decisions you make now will set the tone (and the cost) for years to come.

But don't panic. You don't need everything at once. You just need the right foundation, built smart.

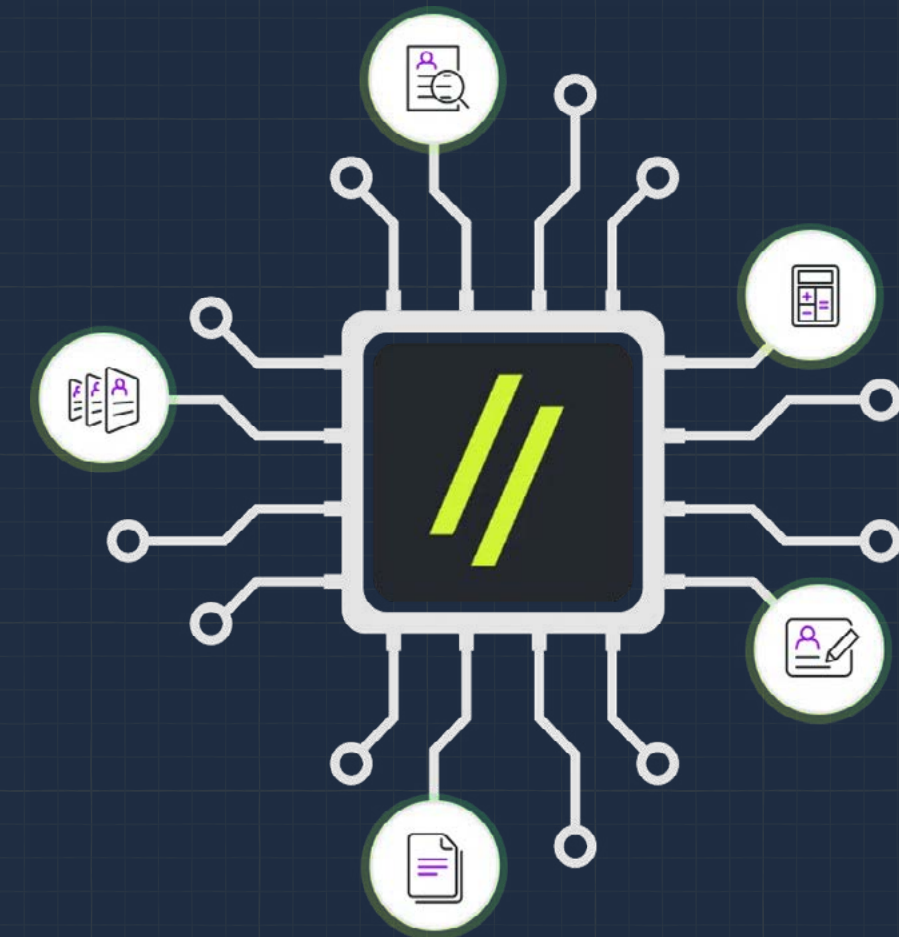
Where to Start:

- **HRIS as backbone:** Pick a modern core for compliance and payroll—the foundation every stack needs.
- **Recruiting first:** Hiring is where cracks in the foundation show up fastest. Get an ATS that actually helps you compete in a complex hiring market with both inbound and outbound capabilities.
- **Onboarding & journeys:** Automate the messy middle—from offer to day one to exits—so HR isn't buried in administrative tasks or missing critical milestones that expose the organization to compliance risks.
- **Engagement & performance:** Layer in recognition, feedback, and growth once the basics are humming. Culture is a retention tool, not a "nice-to-have."
- **Analytics, integrations, and automation:** Don't tack these on later; make sure they're embedded from the start so your stack scales with you, like an electrical system that can scale as you add appliances.

How Rival Makes it Better:

With Rival, you don't have to buy analytics, automation, and integrations as bolt-ons. They're out-of-the-box features baked into recruiting, preboarding, and onboarding workflows from day one. That means you're not stacking more tools on top of tools; you're actually building a system that's modern and flexible by default.

Starting from scratch? Build lean, build smart, build for growth. Rival is your shortcut.



IF YOU'RE ON WORKDAY

Workday is the gold standard system of record. Enterprise-grade. Secure. Built for compliance. It's the reason so many Fortune 500s sleep at night knowing payroll will run and auditors will nod. As a foundation, it's rock solid.

But here's the catch: Workday was built as a storage closet, not a living space. It's brilliant at storing data. It's not designed to delight candidates, guide managers, or flex with the pace of change. And that gap shows up everywhere.

Where Workday Falts:

- **Rigid workflows:** Great at linear tasks, but ask it to handle complex logic (nurse vs. doctor vs. finance manager, each with different compliance needs) and you're in IT purgatory for months.
- **Candidate drop-off:** Required job portals feel like filing cabinets: functional, uninspiring, and often abandoned.
- **The preboarding black hole:** Once the offer's signed, Workday more or less shrugs. Background checks, IT setup, welcome comms are manual at best, forgotten at worst.
- **Manager blind spots:** Portals are clunky. Tasks vanish into inboxes. No nudges, no visibility.
- **Static analytics:** Dashboards that tell you what happened, not what to do next.

How Rival Makes it Better:

Rival doesn't replace Workday. It completes it—turning a compliant vault into an agile, people-first system.

- **Recruiting that competes:** AI sourcing, matching, and outreach layered right onto your Workday reqs.
- **Day-one readiness:** Automated preboarding and onboarding workflows that close the "offer accepted → start date" gap.
- **Complex logic and integrations made simple:** Build conditional flows across roles, geos, and divisions in days, not quarters. Moreover, this integration is fully maintained by Rival, so the days of complex IT integrations or outsourced support are over.
- **Manager dashboards, not portals:** Guided steps and proactive alerts instead of email chases.
- **Insights that act:** Real-time signals on skills, compliance, and risk—not static reports.



With Workday + Rival, you get the best of both worlds: the foundation everyone trusts, and the experience layer everyone actually needs.

IF YOU'RE ON SAP SUCCESSFACTORS

SAP is the compliance giant. Nobody touches its global payroll coverage. One hundred-plus countries. Tight ERP integration. It's the system multinationals cling to when complexity and regulation rule. As a foundation, it's serious infrastructure.

But infrastructure alone doesn't win talent. **SAP is ERP at heart—slow, rigid, and not built for humans.**

Where SAP Falts:

- **Recruiting pain:** Most SAP customers realize post-implementation that its recruiting is weak, and end up bolting on another ATS or recruiting tool.
- **Awful UX:** Portals are dated, slow, and not mobile-first. Candidates bail. Managers complain.
- **No portal of record:** Employee experience feels fragmented across modules.
- **Workflow rigidity:** Even small changes demand IT or consultants and updates take months, not days.
- **No automated preboarding:** Stops cold at "offer accepted." IT, compliance, and welcome steps left to chance.
- **Weak analytics:** Lackluster visualization. Little real-time insight.

How Rival Makes it Better:

- **Recruiting that works:** AI-powered outbound sourcing, matching, and nurture campaigns on top of SAP reqs.
- **Seamless preboarding:** Automated workflows to close the gap SAP leaves wide open.
- **Complex workflows simplified:** Build conditional, cross-border flows without an IT army.
- **Manager & employee dashboards:** One clear hub instead of fragmented modules.
- **Analytics that matter:** Offer-to-start conversion, onboarding success, retention signals.



With SAP + Rival, you get the best of both worlds: compliance power with an experience people actually want to use.

IF YOU'RE ON ORACLE HCM

Oracle is the enterprise powerhouse. Tightly integrated with ERP, databases, and finance. It's the safe bet for regulated industries. CIOs love it because it feels like one system to rule them all.

But "safe" doesn't mean usable. **Oracle has every module under the sun, but the experience is bolt-on, clunky, and the agility is nil.**

Where Oracle Falts:

- **Rigid, IT-heavy workflows:** Changes require consultants. Weeks or months, not days.
- **Clunky candidate experience:** Recruiting portals look like 2009.
- **Preboarding gaps:** Little automation between offer and day one.
- **Manager confusion:** Portals are labyrinths, not guides.
- **Analytics lag:** Powerful databases, but predictive insights are missing.

How Rival Makes it Better:

- **AI recruiting:** Modern sourcing, matching, and outreach layered onto Oracle reqs.
- **Automated onboarding:** IT setup, compliance, and communications done without IT bottlenecks.
- **Agile workflows:** HR makes changes themselves—no Oracle consultants required.
- **Manager enablement:** Clear dashboards and nudges replace complexity.
- **Retention visibility:** Links onboarding, engagement, and career pathing to retention outcomes.



With Oracle + Rival, you get the best of both worlds: the compliance fortress with the agility it never had.

IF YOU'RE ON UKG OR SOMETHING ELSE

These core HCMs are payroll or benefits workhorses. Timekeeping, scheduling, pay compliance, and basic benefits administration are handled. For industries with frontline or hourly workers, they're indispensable.

But they weren't built to carry the rest of the employee experience. **They keep the lights on, but don't keep people engaged.**

Where They Falter:

- **Recruiting gaps:** Candidate portals are dated, not mobile-first.
- **Onboarding weakness:** Manual, inconsistent, often skipped for contractors or frontline roles.
- **Benefits UX:** Enrollment is functional but rarely intuitive; employees see it as a compliance task, not an experience.
- **Fragmented talent tools:** Recognition, feedback, and development feel bolted on.
- **Analytics limited:** Great on pay and benefits reporting, weak on talent insights.
- **UX complaints:** Employees and managers find the portals clunky outside payroll and benefits.

How Rival Makes it Better:

- **Modern recruiting:** AI sourcing, matching, and nurture campaigns missing from UKG/ADP/Ceridian.
- **Seamless onboarding:** Automated workflows from offer to day one, across roles and geos.
- **Benefits in context:** Embed benefits education and selection into the employee journey so it feels personal, not transactional.
- **Continuous feedback:** Real-time performance alignment and recognition.
- **Unified analytics:** Tie payroll, scheduling, and benefits data to hiring, onboarding, and retention.
- **Manager visibility:** Dashboards and nudges into onboarding and compliance.



With UKG/ADP/Ceridian + Rival, you get the best of both worlds: the payroll backbone paired with the experience layer they never built.

FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR STACK

So now you've got an HR tech stack that works today.

The question is:

How do you make sure it still works tomorrow?

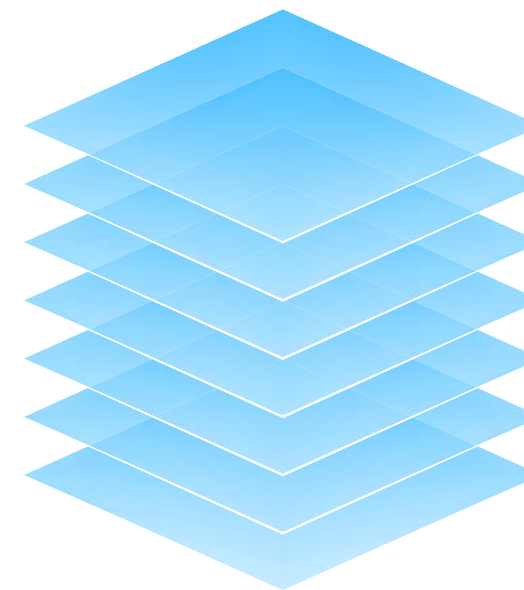
Tech is moving fast. Employee expectations are moving faster. And most of the big systems of record? They're not exactly known for agility.

That's where Rival comes in. Rival was built to flex so you can keep your stack current without forcing another painful rip-and-replace cycle.

The best stacks aren't going to stand still—they are the ones that adapt. Rival is the layer that makes sure your investment today doesn't become tomorrow's dead weight.

Future-proof stacks share a few traits:

- **Integrations that actually integrate:** Bi-directional data flows mean no workarounds and no tab-switching between systems. Maintained by Rival, they help relieve the technical burden placed on already strapped HR/IT teams.
- **Analytics that guide, not lag:** AI-driven insights flag risks and opportunities before you read about them in your attrition report.
- **Automation that does the boring stuff:** Compliance tasks, reminders, and checklists are all handled so your team isn't buried in busywork.
- **Innovation that grows with you:** From compliance to culture, the tools evolve with your workforce instead of holding you back.



The best stacks aren't going to stand still—they are the ones that adapt. Rival is the layer that makes sure your investment today doesn't become tomorrow's dead weight.

BUYER'S GUIDE

Most vendors will smile and tell you they can “do it all.” You know better. The real test is what happens when you ask the questions they hope you won’t. Ask the hard questions—the ones that reveal whether a system can create seamless experiences and still serve you five years from now.

Prep Work

Before you start down the path of evaluating vendors, get clear on your current state and future goals. This will help you spot real value rather than chase shiny features.

1. Take inventory of your current HR tech stack.

Use this table to map your current ecosystem. Categories might include payroll, recruiting, learning, performance management. etc.

Category	Tool Name	Owner	Primary Use	Note/Pain Points
HRIS	Workday	HR	Core employee data	Difficult to update workflows

2. Connect your goals to ROI metrics.

Before you invest in new technology, define what good looks like. Put a check mark next to the outcomes you're looking to achieve.

Goals for a new solution:

- Reduce manual work
- Reduce IT dependency
- Improve employee and manager experience
- Increase system adoption
- Strengthen compliance and reporting
- Improve candidate experience

Key ROI metrics:

- Improvement in time-to-hire
- Improvement in time-to-productivity
- Administrative hours saved
- Increase in eNPS

Evaluation Questions

Integration:

- The tools in my current HR tech stack are... *(see table on page 17)*
- What sort of integrations do you support? REST APIs? SFTP? No-code? Does data flow seamlessly between systems?
- Who sets up and maintains the integration(s)? Will it require tech support from my IT team or will you (the vendor) manage it?

Automation:

- Are automated tasks limited to onboarding or are tasks across the entire employee lifecycle automated?
- Are automated tasks limited to HR functions or are cross-departmental tasks (IT setup, finance, etc.) also automated?
- Does it automate critical preboarding steps like offer management, IT setup, I-9, and e-Verify?
- Are journeys self-service? Can they be easily changed by my team (HR) or do they require IT support/expensive consultants?
- Do journeys support dynamic content beyond simple email steps/reminders? Like videos, text messages, forms, e-signature, etc.?

Experience:

- Does it have manager and employee portals with real-time dashboards of all outstanding HR tasks?
- Does it support customized journeys by role and location? Or are they one-size-fits-all journeys?
- Is it mobile-friendly?

Evaluation Questions

Scalability:

- When my org changes (M&A, new locations, new roles, new compliance rules, etc.), can journeys be adjusted without heavy IT support/consultants?
- Can this fit into my long-term workforce strategy or is it only solving an immediate pain point?

Hiring:

- Does it support outbound sourcing vs. relying on job boards and inbound efforts?
- Does it have embedded candidate profiles?
- Does it have AI-powered candidate matching and outreach?
- Does it have branded career sites?
- Can a candidate self-schedule their interviews?

Evaluation Questions

Security & Operations:

- What is the average implementation timeline? Is it self-service or do you have a dedicated implementation team?
- What is your security framework? SOC2?
- Do you use customer data to train or fine-tune your AI model(s)? How do you handle PII (personally identifiable information)?
- Is the AI just a GPT or machine learning as well?
- Can you tell me more about your customer support model? Will I have a dedicated account manager? What kind of help center/assets do you have? How quickly can I expect to hear back from support after submitting a ticket?

Insights:

- Are reports self-service and designed specifically for HR? Or do they require a data analyst to pull and interpret?
- What sort of data visualization does the tool have? Are there real-time dashboards, funnel metrics, etc.?
- What ROI will we see from this investment? How quickly will we realize ROI? (*See key success metrics on page 18*)

A checklist like this is how you avoid buying shelfware. Ask these questions now, before you get stuck with a stack that can't move your workforce forward.

FROM SYSTEM OF RECORD TO SYSTEM OF IMPACT.

These questions aren't just for evaluating new HR technology vendors. Put your current stack to the test to figure out where it's failing your HR team, your managers, and your employees.

Your suite isn't broken. It's just unfinished. Let's complete it.

Rival is the AI-powered talent suite built for modern HR teams. From first touch to full potential, our modular suite of products helps you find the best people, launch them faster, and support their development throughout the employee lifecycle.

Rival meets HR teams where they are—with 750M+ embedded candidate profiles, AI-powered search and outreach, customizable workflows, AI knowledge agent, best-in-class analytics, and native learning and performance management. Whether deployed as a full suite or a smart layer to fit your existing stack, Rival brings people, processes, and technology together in one powerful hub.

At Rival, we make work flow.

The Rival logo features the word "RIVAL" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "V" is stylized with two parallel diagonal lines, one in white and one in a bright yellow-green color, creating a sense of motion and modernity.