BenefitWerks

WHITE PAPER

THE FIVE RULES OF BUYING BENEFITS SOFTWARE

BY: DAVID CARTER

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The Benefits of Automation Software

1. **Streamlined processes and workflows**

2. **Make managers and employees more self-reliant**

3. **Enhance the integrity of data**

4. **More effective recruiting and talent management**

5. **Automation software pays for itself many times over**

Not Sure How to Find the Right Benefits Automation Software for Your Company?
These Five Rules-and a Good Benefits Broker-Will Help

By David Carter, Director, BenefitWerks

Maybe you've heard the value of HR software extolled so many times that you can recite them in your sleep: improved processes, streamlined workflows, greater data integrity, major time savings, reduced costs … the list goes on. But with dozens of software products on the market, how are you supposed to determine which—if any—are right for your organization?

Don't despair! By following a few basic rules as you explore your HR automation software options, you'll be able to choose a product that truly fits your organization's needs and budget. And if you're still not sure about which product is right for you, a benefits broker can be a tremendous help.

The Five Rules of Buying Benefits Software

With so many software options available, narrowing down your choices can be a challenge, even for a seasoned HR pro. But these five rules will help you identify your best options and make your final selection with greater confidence:

Rule #1—Don't let software drive your processes; make sure your processes drive your software selection. Too many organizations end up unhappy with their choice of software because they neglect this rule. They focus on features and price point when shopping for HR software. That's not necessarily a bad thing but they fail to give equally serious consideration to whether the software will accommodate and improve their actual day-to-day work processes. Be sure you're considering an appropriately *flexible* product—i.e., one that will adapt to your current processes and the ways you'd like those processes to evolve in the future.

Rule #2—Choose software that offers a straightforward and intuitive user experience. If you don't, the software will eventually go unused. Take online benefits enrollment software, for example. If the software makes it difficult for your staff to interface with and share information with your providers and carriers, they'll likely revert to the manual, time-consuming processes you were hoping to replace. Alternately, if employees have a hard time inputting their data or finding important information, they'll not only balk at using the software but they'll hold you accountable and very likely take up your staff's precious time asking questions and seeking assistance—the very problems you wanted the software to alleviate. No matter how you slice it, a simple and easy user experience is essential.

Rule #3—The service you get is just as important as the product you get. In other words, purchasing software is just the beginning of your relationship with its vendor/maker. For example, you might want to have the software customized before implementing it. Or you might need the vendor's guidance after implementation to fine-tune the software or master certain features. Select a vendor who will "be there" for you, providing the level of the software. Get service levels and parameters spelled out in writing, if necessary. A good vendor is going to be your partner long after you've made a purchase, so choose wisely.

Rule #4—Software that allows you to generate accurate, meaningful reports is worth its weight in gold. This holds true whether you're buying a comprehensive HRIS product or a product to handle just one aspect of your operations. Being able to run quick, accurate reports that deliver meaningful data can significantly

enhance your department's strategic value to senior management. Naturally, what constitutes "meaningful data" varies from company to company; once you have determined which data are meaningful to your organization, be sure that the software you're considering analyzes these data appropriately. And if you're buying software for a particular task, such COBRA administration, you need to be certain that it integrates smoothly with your legacy HRIM system.

Rule #5—Neglecting any of the four preceding rules will usually result in disappointment and a search for a better solution. Worse still, you might decide that your organization simply cannot benefit from HR automation software—which is almost never the case—and your staff will go back to handling tasks manually and less time-effectively.

One last suggestion: don't rush to a decision, especially if the ideal choice isn't immediately apparent. Review what you've learned during your comparison-shopping and talk it all through with others on your staff. Make your purchase only after you've identified a clear "winner."

The Benefits of Automation Software

Streamlined processes and workflows—*By integrating and automating the various technologies, systems, providers and partners that drive your business, you enhance efficiency, reduce errors and save time.*

Brokers Help in Many Ways

Indeed, brokers are becoming an increasingly vital source of strategic information, especially as healthcare regulations continue to evolve and place new demands on employers.

Make managers and employees more self-reliant—*By improving access to and control over key data (such as employee profiles, documents for open enrollment, online training modules, etc.) managers and employees rely less on HR staff to answer questions.*

Enhance the integrity of data—*By giving individuals control of their own information, data is more accurate. And the software enhances your ability to share data securely with key partners and vendors.*

More effective recruiting and talent management—*By unifying disparate systems and the data they contain, you improve your ability to evaluate candidates, assess performance, track progress, monitor issues and more.*

Automation software pays for itself many times over—*By converting print documents (such as SPDs and plan updates) to online documents, you eliminate the need to print and distribute them. Automation software also reduces errors in manual processes such as duplications of payments, issuing payments for fraudulent claims or services, etc.*

A Broker Can Be a Helpful Ally

If you'd like some assistance in your research or want to do a sanity check on your findings, consider consulting your benefits broker. Brokers often possess a depth of software knowledge that you simply don't have the time to develop on your own. Plus they have firsthand experience working with a wide range of HR products and vendors, which gives brokers the ability to help you intelligently analyze your organization's key needs and then select solutions accordingly. This is especially true when it comes to benefits enrollment and administration software.

If you don't currently work with a broker, seek personal recommendations from trusted resources in your professional network. If this doesn't pan out, an Internet search will reveal a range of choices including local brokers, nationally renowned brokers and even those who specialize in international clients.

About BenefitWerks
BenefitWerks delivers smart HR software solutions to smart companies throughout the global business community including the United States, Europe, Asia and South, Central and North America. BenefitWerks' HR software solutions help employers, insurance carriers, brokers and other organizations streamline benefits enrollment, reduce administrative costs, and manage and exchange crucial HR data accurately and securely.

Look for a broker who will take a consultative approach to partnering with you. The consultative broker takes time up front to get to know and understand your organization, its needs and its basic challenges. She/he asks probative questions about your company, its HR challenges and direction, your employees and your budget. Sales-driven brokers move through this process quickly and are more apt to suggest a software solution early in your interaction. Both types of brokers can be helpful, depending upon your needs. However, the ideal broker acts as your advocate, putting the emphasis squarely on finding you the right solution rather than on making a sale.

Consultative brokers want to help educate you and provide the tools and information you need to make buying decisions that will improve your operations, reduce costs and serve your employees more effectively.

A benefits broker can be a great help to you in several key areas including regulatory issues, your health plans and coverage rates. This kind of expertise can be especially valuable to smaller organizations with fewer HR staff members—but larger organizations benefit from broker relationships as well. Indeed, brokers are becoming an increasingly vital source of strategic information, especially as healthcare regulations continue to evolve and place new demands on employers.

When it comes to choosing HR automation software, making the right investment will pay for itself many times over. So make the most informed decisions by following the five basic buying rules, and consider consulting a broker if you need a bit of guidance.