REGENTS CONSULTING

Modernizing your recruiting tech stack

6 SMART DECISIONS HIGH-PERFORMING COMPANIES MAKE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY



Strategize today, scale tomorrow



As the global gig economy edges towards $5 trillion,[1] the staffing and professional services sector is riding a wave of emerging talent models and technologies. Automation and digitalization are just the tip of the iceberg; companies must contend with a multitude of platform choices, which are competing within a "new battleground."[2] And they must leverage technology not as a survival tool, but as a source of operational and cultural differentiation. Starting today.

TRY TO KEEP UP

Without belaboring the point, the post-COVID environment has accelerated the pace of change for talent-centric business models. System implementations and integrations that used to take years have been condensed into months, supported by agile methodologies, flexible architecture, and plug-and-play point solutions. But many of our clients feel overwhelmed by choices and the pressure to adapt and advance.

WHAT THE EBOOK COVERS

This report offers a big picture perspective gained from dozens of large-scale, complex deployments Regents Consulting has conducted in recent years. It does not provide a step-by-step guide to modernization, rather a framework to make important decisions along the implementation journey, from strategic planning and vendor selection to implementation and adoption. There are cautionary tales embedded, but the focus is on the positive decisions leaders make to manage change and realize value.

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1. Create a future-ready strategy

When building a business case for modernization, executives often wonder, "Where do we begin?" Regardless of whether you're starting from cobbled-together homegrown systems or overly-customized ERPs, you're likely facing a mountain of technical debt. Taking a closer look at the sources and impacts of that debt informs your strategic digitalization plan.

CODED INTO A CORNER

In regards to technical debt, clients face the choice of ignoring the business need or establishing manual processes or workarounds. In the moment, it's a choice for speed over scalability, functionality over flexibility. But over time, debt accumulates—often for perfectly logical resourcing reasons. Cumulatively, it creates barriers to realizing true automation and digital transformation.

So how do you move forward without the custom workflows, interfaces, and reports your users have gotten used to? An end-to-end cloud tech stack won't be fully customizable. That's a fact. But choosing a flexible platform avoids the accumulation of technical debt by increasing agility as the system matures. It's a tradeoff, but one that will help you in the long run.

As you reimagine your system, consider these additional questions:

Is a lack of flexibility in your platform holding back your growth plans?

When comparing current to future state processes, just how efficient and productive could you be?

Are current vendors creating barriers to change and boxing you in?

The adoption of SaaS solutions helps your organization realize the benefits of continuous improvement and real-time modernization. It also brings you closer to a self-service environment, a trend reinforced in one recent study that found 80% of employees want self-service tools to help them be more productive in the digital workplace.[3]

By increasing productivity, you keep your employees from becoming trapped in manual tasks and free them to tackle new challenges. And you make it easier for clients and consultants to do business with you, on their terms and timelines. Ultimately, those are powerful goals that should clarify and crystallize your technology vision into a workable roadmap.

RISKS OF DOING NOTHING

68% OF STAFFING BUYERS ARE LOOKING TO CONSOLIDATE SUPPLIERS,[4] AND THEY'RE GOING TO PRIORITIZE KEEPING THOSE WITH EASY-TO-USE PLATFORMS

"The decisions you make today may take years to come to fruition, and they may change several times along the way. Building a business capability model can help create a common, shared definition for business and technology professionals to prepare a roadmap everyone can get behind."

Aldo Cistrone
Principal, Regents Consulting

2. Build a flexible roadmap

The talent acquisition technology landscape has become "crowded, complex and overwhelming," according to Aptitude Research. "With thousands of providers in the market and new categories that seem to emerge every month, it is difficult for companies to understand what they need to be successful."[5]

BOILING THE OCEAN

These marketplace realities may lead to paralysis by analysis. "Business leaders often fall into the trap of thinking that the roadmap has to be fully planned out," says Rick Morgan, Managing Partner, Regents Consulting. "But you're never going to get to 100% optimization from day one. Clients tell us they wished they'd managed to the 80–90% risk level and gone live six months earlier."

The urge to prescribe exact workflows and "show me" scenarios comes from a well-intentioned place:

To minimize scope creep, leaders insist on pre-configured workflows

Specific client demands lead to "must-have" workarounds

Functional teams rely on the status quo as the starting point for the tech roadmap

As one industrial staffing firm vice president shares, "People in the business think 'I need this solution' and then they tell tech to 'build it this way.' Instead of talking about the outcomes they are trying to achieve, they dictate how to do it. That hasn't been very successful." There's a more collaborative and productive way to go about it.

KEEP UP OR CATCH UP

TALENT PLATFORMS ARE PROLIFERATING | FROM 80 | TO MORE THAN 330 | IN JUST OVER A DECADE[6]

ASK, DON'T TELL

A best practice for proactive decisioning is adopting a big picture mindset, starting from defining requirements and soliciting RFPs. Rather than telling your partners what to do, share your vision for the business and ask them how to best achieve it through a modern system that leverages your blend of people, process, and technology.

The talent platform landscape is evolving rapidly, requiring a commitment to change management and continuous improvement. As new talent models emerge and suppliers consolidate, it's more critical to tap into the expertise of experienced technology and integration partners. Listen, learn, and collaborate on a solution.

"How you approach core business functionality today isn't how you'll accomplish it tomorrow. If it is, why are you investing in new technology? Choose the most progressive, most agile platform you can justify; otherwise, you'll increase the risk of just getting by instead of getting ahead."

John Matthews
Managing Partner, Regents Consulting

3. Choose the optimal platform

Staffing and professional services firms tend to overestimate the amount of technical differentiation they require. What was previously handled through customization can be handled in many cases with configuration, particularly using pre-built integrations.

As a global staffing technology leader notes, "Everyone in our organization recognizes that our home-grown system doesn't allow us to explore and expand into other markets. At the same time, we're dealing with the whole budget issue, so we have to choose our processes and partners wisely."

BUILT-IN BEST PRACTICES

Visionary transformation requires the integration of technology solutions with pre-built, fully-automated best practices for utilization and integration of the systems. A true integration partner should understand your need and apply best practices to use the systems as delivered, rather than customizing. This integrated approach enables you to execute on your current scope of work and be confident that future business requirements—even the ones you haven't imagined yet—can be accomplished.

Here are a few areas to think about green-lighting for best practice analysis sooner rather than later.

Mission-essential

- Governance protocols
- Ops standardization
- Security and privacy
- Pay-bill continuity

Brand-enhancing

- Candidate experience
- AI-matching technology
- Client workforce dashboards
- Maintenance and support

An industry-specific integrator can help you navigate these options and identify appropriate partners. Chances are, someone's already figured out a more efficient way to tackle your specific challenge.

DO YOU NEED TO GO BEYOND APIs?

It's also important to understand whether you need a Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) architecture that offers a full integration layer and a robust marketplace. Find an integration partner that fully understands your needs and can help you ask the tough questions.

Even the most respected platforms aren't going to provide a total solution, but they will let you integrate like it's no big deal. While APIs establish a specific point-to-point connection between two systems, a PaaS architecture enables all technologies in your portfolio to work as a single orchestrated system, preserving your flexibility and extensibility.

"At Sirenum, our partner ecosystem is a dynamic extension of our business that increases the value our platform delivers to our customers, their staff, and their customers. When we're really in sync with our partners, we truly become thought partners where we share and advance industry best practices and even better, develop new practices altogether."

Joshua Pines
Co-founder, Director of Corporate Development and Marketing, Sirenum

4. Go for quick wins

Staffing companies have what you might call a slight obsession with margins. As self-service, human cloud, and MSP models expand, it becomes harder to squeeze efficiency out of the pay-bill delta. The trick is maximizing return on sales by capturing demand at the (expiring) moment of availability to drive more GM to the bottom line.

FIND YOUR FOCUS

When undertaking a modernization initiative, focus on incremental improvement opportunities you can achieve early on in the deployment, and then use them to build excitement for the journey ahead. You don't have to solve every problem on day one. Get some quick wins while you take time to rethink business processes and workflows that are not working for you.

How do you seize these windows of opportunity? By lowering talent acquisition costs. Increasing redeployment rates. Raising your proportion of productive consultants. These are all KPIs that a well-designed cloud tech stack can help you achieve.

PARALLEL EFFORTS

Staffing firms in the midst of a modernization initiative may find it difficult to get over the finish line as new requirements and suppliers pop up. A continuous improvement approach prioritizes effort around the greatest inefficiencies and opportunities, a practice that adapts well to shifting priorities and budget scrutiny. Even as you tackle some low-hanging fruit, you can implement the plan to transform functionality that preserves the integrity of operational and technological differentiators.

WILLINGNESS TO INVEST

55% OF TECHNOLOGY LEADERS RECEIVED A BUDGET INCREASE IN 2020, DRIVEN BY OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES, CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT, AND NEW PRODUCT AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

CHALLENGES TO CONNECT

30% OF COMPANIES REPORT THAT INTEGRATION IS THEIR BIGGEST FRUSTRATION WITH TALENT ACQUISITION TECHNOLOGY[7]

"Implementing multiple integrated applications is a daunting but exciting task that requires overarching project management with attention to even the smallest details. It also requires an appetite for change. Proactive firms realize their new system won't be (and shouldn't be) just like the old one with a new user interface, but a redesigned value realization tool."

Holly Cohoon
Founding Partner, Regents Consulting

5. Make technology culture-centric

As sticky notes give way to Slack messages and spreadsheets to dashboards, staffing employees may feel like they're drinking from a firehose of change. Digital transformation certainly causes disruption, but it also creates the path to alleviate it.

Viewing technology as an essential element of your corporate culture sets up your organization to be more agile and engaging in the future. Let's look at some proof points related to key stakeholders:



Recruiters spend about 30 hours a week on administrative tasks,[8] time that could be better spent elsewhere, like connecting with candidates and clients in meaningful ways. As an example, each corporate job offer attracts 250 resumes on average.[9] Automation and integration strip inefficiencies out of their work, making recruiting more fun and less stressful.



Job seekers find searching for a job to be incredibly frustrating, slow, and disrespectful. Poor application processes drive candidates away, and 63% of job seekers will likely reject a job offer because of a bad candidate experience.[10] Making future employees stumble through terrible interfaces and never responding to them won't do your employment brand any favors.



Clients increasingly seek to consolidate labor suppliers and demand low-touch, low-cost methods to engage. They want information rather than data, so analytics and data science must be fit for purpose, guiding better decisions based on past performance. An end-to-end cloud platform puts your staff in a position to shift discussions from tactical to strategic.



Employees want to feel connected, especially across increasingly remote workplaces. Creating a modern, usable platform encourages collaboration within the system, where transparency is rewarded and intellectual capital is readily preserved.

ANTICIPATE CHANGE TO ACCELERATE GROWTH

Prioritizing digital transformation ensures you're in a position to flex, no matter whether disruptions are positive or negative. Or even both, as was the case when healthcare staffing firms experienced a tremendous surge of activity due to COVID-19.

The best way to prepare for change—and to minimize its cultural impact—is to avoid getting locked into a platform that's not adaptable and scalable in the face of the unexpected. When you do that, your employees will gain confidence in their ability to roll with the punches.

"We believe that there are actually two "gig economies"—the Gig Economy, where work is commoditized and the platform is the differentiator, and the Talent Economy, where the talent is the differentiator and the platform is an enabler."

Remote Work Platforms: Trends In Temp Labor Marketplaces, Talent Tech Labs[11]

EXPECT RAPID FIRE CHANGE

46% OF STAFFING FIRMS ARE ACCELERATING THE ADOPTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN RESPONSE TO MARKET CONDITION CHANGES[12]

6. Take the long view

Any modernization project includes moving targets, tough decisions, and competing priorities. With so many vendors pressuring you to return the call, do the demo, take the meeting—it's easy to get mired down in technology choices, much less create a thorough and thoughtful roadmap.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

If you're struggling to cut through the clutter and reduce anxiety about undertaking a modernization initiative, an agnostic, third-party resource like Regents Consulting can help. An integration partner with specialized staffing and professional services experience is well-equipped to benchmark best practices, untangle complexities, and make your future-ready roadmap a reality.

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Don't wait to start your implementation journey until everything is lined up perfectly. Staffing companies are getting into the technology game, raising the risks associated with watching and waiting. In the last seven years, nearly half of staffing firm mergers and acquisitions involved talent acquisition technology firms,[13] and funding continues to flow into online platforms.[14]

HERE'S SOME GOOD NEWS

A clear vision of the staffing tech stack of the future is available today. It's ready to go when you are. The beauty of a modernization project is that it will challenge your team to improve its flexibility and adaptability, delivering an immediate positive impact. A technology overhaul also affirms your long-term commitment to continuous improvement in an ever-evolving space.

We'd love to discuss your questions, concerns, and pain points. How is your technology holding you back? How quickly can you realize operational and financial value? These are questions Regents has helped answer for more than half of Staffing Industry Analysts' top 20 largest global and U.S. staffing firms. Let's connect.



About Regents



No one knows the staffing and services tech stack better than Regents Consulting. From decision support to disciplined execution, we're experts in accelerated modernization. Regents blends technical and functional experience to shorten learning curves, lower costs, and extend value. It's a pragmatic approach that unlocks your capacity to grow at scale.

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Endnotes

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