VINCERE

Bullet-Proof Your Tech Strategy

A CRM BUYER'S GUIDE FOR RECRUITERS

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE?

As a recruiter, you've spent most of your waking hours thinking about business strategy. Next quarter plans, financial statements, scaling up: this is your lifeblood.

But what about your tech strategy?

Well, you might think, of course, a tech company would ask about tech strategy. But make no mistake: a CRM is one of the most impactful tools you can invest in for your business.

There's a missing piece to your plans if you're not working to future-proof your business. You're either strategizing or lagging behind.

Think ahead, and buy the system not only for the business you run today but for the one you want to run in the future.

Here's a scenario: you're primarily a Perm shop but want to grow your contract desk. You want a new CRM to help. To meet this plan, your next system must have a feature set that can back those ambitions. Contractor reports, timesheets, and other features will be the support structures for growth. Getting that foundation in place even before you build will set your business up for success.

Rule #1

BEFORE YOU START SHOPPING... GET ORGANIZED

First up, build a feature checklist or an RFI (Request For Information). This keeps your CRM evaluation focused. The desire to find a system that can do everything you want is an easy trap to fall into.

Don't get caught up with shiny new toys on the market and all the possibilities new Tech tools on the market seemingly offer. "It's new! It's exciting! It's... wait, what is it again?" Why pay for something that isn't actually going to move the needle?

The secret to creating an effective RFI that works for your business starts with a clear vision for your tech stack: the "Why," "When" and "What."

Define the "why."

- What business outcomes are you hoping to achieve?
- If you're looking to change systems, why now?
- What processes are you looking to improve?
- Which features are an absolute "must" for your daily rec operations?

Then it's time to get practical.

Knowing your timeline is key

- When does your current CRM contract end?
- Can you dedicate time to carry out all due diligence, migrate and onboard your team?
- If you're currently tied into a long contract, when do you plan to reach out to new vendors?
- How much time do you need? When should you start shopping?

An easy and often overlooked trick is to mark these dates on your calendar. If you miss a contract deadline, that's another year or two with a vendor who falls short. A costly oversight.

For "What," therein lies the most imperative task: your feature checklist. This is the evaluation rubric you'll use to compare vendor capabilities against your needs. For a full list of capabilities you may want to evaluate, **here's a done-for-you RFI checklist**. Start with our template to save yourself time to create your own customized RFI.

Next up, assemble your "Dream Team."

The Dream Team is made up of project stakeholders who will help with mapping out priorities and goals, as well as with vendor demos and the implementation itself. Having people "own" the implementation will make the process a whole lot easier.

Don't leave it until two weeks before go-live. 63% of all CRM projects fail because of poor implementation and user adoption.

Learn how you can put together the right "Dream Team" for your CRM roll-out.

> Behind every successful CRM implementation is a 'Dream Team'

The biggest challenge of recruitment CRM implementations are people.

Coming from someone whose main job is training and onboarding new Vincere customers, I've seen implementation teams of all shapes and sizes. I've consulted for many recruitment firms and know what makes or breaks a "Dream Team."

One thing's for sure - assembling a Dream Team requires careful consideration. You'll need to put together a cross-functional team of specialists who are passionate, committed and ready to champion change.

You've got people on the bench but the real question is: who should you pick?

My top advice:

1. Don't make the mistake of putting certain people into the job just because everyone else is too busy to own it. The best Dream Teams are made up of individuals who were advocates from day one. They believe in the need for a new CRM and are enthusiastic to own the role.
2. Job titles versus ability: choose people based on their abilities, not their job titles. A senior executive may know the business inside out, but they're often too busy to commit the amount of time and care required for a proper CRM transition.
3. Work with a vendor that provides high quality professional services and support. This will help if you're dealing with CRM implementation for the first time. A good CRM vendor will have a clearly defined implementation roadmap and project management strategy in place. Ask them for advice and references from past implementation projects.

- Mark Gilham
Global Solutions Architect

ASSEMBLING YOUR DREAM TEAM

The Dream Team are your MVPs. The ones who are going to execute the CRM vision. At a basic level, every Dream Team needs individuals who can fulfill these roles:

1| CRM Project Leader

This person is the leader of the Dream Team - the one who has a "final say." The CRM Project Leader is someone who knows what the business really needs, has the skills to make a plan and get it done in the best possible way.
This person should also have the authority to make decisions about recruitment business processes and finances, and if disagreement arises, play the role of mediator.

Best person for the job: the end goal thinker

- Someone already in a strategic role
- Familiar with existing recruitment processes yet able to take a bird's eye view of how info flows around the business
- Understands the needs of different departments and outcomes
- Keeps bigger picture in mind
- Has political skills and influence

2| Data Migration (DM) Project Manager

The DM Project Manager owns the success of data migration and serves as the main point of contact throughout the migration project from start to finish. This person should have a good knowledge of the database and how recruitment data is documented and used in business workflows.

Key responsibilities include managing and controlling the scope of migration, tracking deliverables, milestones, and working closely with the vendor and team to mitigate and resolve issues related to data migration.

Best person for the job: the process-driven or detail-oriented person

- Self-starter with great project management skills
- Not afraid to get hands dirty, gets down to the nitty gritty
- Obsessive about details, insistent on quality
- Someone you trust as this person will deal with the sensitive data living in your old CRM

3| CRM Champion

The CRM Champion is the go-to in-house product expert for your organization.
This person will be the key enabler, documenter, trainer and troubleshooter for your new system.

During the implementation process, the CRM Champion attends all training sessions. They will also be in charge of configuring global account settings like email/document templates, mandatory fields and layouts, tags and skill codes, etc.

Once the CRM goes live, they will become the resident expert, train the rest of the team, and get them up to speed on using the system.

You can have a dedicated person, or multiple people as it depends on the size of your organization and the technical capabilities of your consultants. As a rule of thumb, we recommend 10 consultants to 1 Champion.

Best person for the job: the new thinker or the people person

- Not afraid to ask questions and challenge existing processes
- Someone who will think outside the box
- Innovative and not afraid to suggest new approaches
- Able to problem-solve to find workarounds and quick wins
- Coordinate activities with the CRM vendor and hold everyone accountable
- Could be anyone from the front office or operations

4| Pilot Group (for Review & Testing)

This is a small group of users who are trained by CRM Champions after the data migration has completed. They will be responsible for reviewing the data and testing recruitment workflows.

If you have a holistic platform with front, middle, and back office features, it is beneficial to have the team leaders or heads of each department as the Pilot Group. As team leaders start using the new system, they will know first-hand how to use the system, encourage others on their team to follow, smoothing the way for the others to adopt the new CRM.

Best person for the job: the results-oriented team leader

- Strong on interpersonal and relationship building skills
- Able to champion the benefits of the new CRM & create buzz
- Influential, do not necessarily have to be senior
- Popular with their peers & well networked across the business.
- Can call in support from other teams

Rule #2

ASSESSING OVERALL PRODUCT <> BUSINESS FIT

As recruiters, we know that a good candidate & client fit is critical. CRMs are no different: make the right choice and your recruitment firm wins.

Any "interview process" - for candidates or CRMs - starts with due diligence. Here are a few "dont's" before you get to the "dos":

- **Industry endorsement.** Check reputable recruitment or software publications for CRMs with a good name. An unknown brand, or one that never gets good mentions, is a no-go.
- **Customer base.** Research the vendor's featured customers. You should see similar customers with needs like yours. If this CRM has no application for your speciality, it's not a good fit.
- **Review platforms.** Online reviews can be tricky, but still a good first indicator of quality. Take the time to run vendors' names past some software review sites. A low overall rating, or numerous bad reviews, means looking elsewhere. We'll cover this more later under Rule 9.
- **Testimonials.** A wide variety of good testimonials should be readily available on the vendor's website and social media. CRM vendors without a strong track record of happy customers should be looked at warily.

After getting past any possible objections, it's time to start interviewing.

The first and most fundamental CRM "interview question" is whether the system was designed for recruitment. The simplest system to implement will have recruitment-specific workflows and features.

Use the right tool for the job. Keep in mind the requirements of your business based on recruitment type. For example, temp recruiters may want more rostering and scheduling-related features in their CRM. Perm recruiters may be more interested in CV parsing and pipeline management.

Then there's geography. If you're an ANZ-based recruitment firm, concerns about time zones make local support a high priority. For anyone looking to expand globally, ask whether your tech vendor can support your ambitions.

Geography affects legality, too. For example: a rec firm in Australia will face down different state-level labor hire rules, compliance, awards & agreements which detail minimum work and pay requirements, on top of the National Employment Standards. All countries will have their own hoops to jump through. If you're making overseas placements and need to meet other legal standards like GDPR, ask whether the CRM's compliance functionalities can deal with the nuances of the law.

Rule #3

FEATURE GAPS: INCLUSION VS. INTEGRATION

Feature Gaps

Many CRMs push a heap of integrations with their product. You might think that the right combination of add-ons could create the perfect platform.

But before you collect all of these widgets and whirligigs, take a good look at the CRM. Are some of these integrations really outsourced key features? A solid platform won't leave feature gaps like this, only to ask the buyer to make up for it with add-ons.

Features that should be a standard part of the platform are:

1. Video Interviewing: Put a face in the race. Increased digitisation means more tech in recruiting, which is good news for getting the job done - even when you're not working.
2. Internal Chat & Collaboration: The new hybrid workforce needs a comms hub when a chat at the water cooler is unworkable. The time for collaboration tools is now, before your employees get stranded using smoke signals.

Turning to APIs

Every business and its workflows are unique. It's not uncommon to find businesses turning to APIs to bridge automation gaps. However, an integration's API capabilities goes beyond asking, "what's that?"

One-way vs Two-way Sync

Even if you agree that integrations are a good pick, not all are created equal. Look at data synchronization. An integration can have one-way or two-way data sync.

What's the difference? Think of it as a push-pull motion. With one-way sync, the integration pulls data from your platform and keeps it tidied away. When you update a file, it's changed on the main CRM platform and then "pushed" into the integration.

If you change a file inside the integration? Now the data on the main platform is outdated. This creates an admin hell for users, who have to keep track of where their data is current.

Another problem with one-way sync? Compliance. Every tool you use contains data, which means one more dusty drawer to clear out when you get a GDPR or right to be forgotten request. This is an admin headache that's totally avoidable.

Two-way sync is what it sounds like: it pulls your data, stores it, but also pushes that data right back. If a user updates or deletes a file within the integration, its twin file gets changed automatically on the main platform.

Integrations are about automation, making your life easier. That won't be true if your employees have to go cleaning up the data themselves.

Don't stick your recruiters with data admin. There's no billing in Excel hell.

The API is the key to the kingdom. Without it, or with an incomplete one, you won't get the system benefits that you're looking for.

- Kristy Gilham
Director of Product at Vincere

Here are 6 must-ask questions to pressure test vendors when you hear: "Yes, you can do that with our API."

Is the API documentation publicly available?
Get it in writing. If there's publicly available documentation, that means the team publishing the API have the confidence and know-how to explain it to users. Hidden or unavailable documentation means chasing the vendor for information.

How comprehensive and robust is the API documentation?
The only thing worse than no documentation is bad documentation. Your development team needs clearly-written documentation, or they'll suffer. Bad documentation also indicates that the API development was poorly done.
A good product would have good instructions.

Get your developer to look at the API documentation beforehand. They can give you the green light, or tell you to steer clear.

What is the API support like?
If you need help, where will you go for support? Ask the vendor if they have any dedicated resources for integration support.
Is there a team from that company that can support your integration? Consider weaving that in as part of your contract if so. Everyone could use a "get out of jail free" card sometimes.

Here are 6 must-ask questions to pressure test vendors when you hear: "Yes, you can do that with our API."

Is there a sandbox?

Your dev team will need a place to test-drive with their code before implementing it. Does this API give them a sandbox? Without this environment, developers can't safely test any new changes to the system.

This is a point where we'd especially like to advise caution. Using a sandbox assumes that you have in-house experts to develop and support custom integrations. If you don't have these resources already, is it something you want to take on?

What's the cost?

Building an API integration isn't cheap. It costs around $19,500 USD just to build a simple one.

Depending on a number of factors - from research time to documentation time to the amount of APIs - the price tag could be even higher. A new firm with a small team might have a cost close to that $19,500 USD range. However, an enterprise firm with 150 employees might be looking at a build cost of over $127,000 USD, to take place over more than 40 weeks. It's a huge task for anybody.

How does the API roadmap look?

A good tech partner invests in their roadmap so that your recruitment workflow evolves in tandem with market needs and developments. On their product roadmap, what's the plan for future features and updates specifically for API? To ensure that your business runs smoothly, you'll also need to confirm that any new changes would also be updated in their API accordingly. You don't want anything to break.

The leading CRMs today come with APIs, but that doesn't mean they are good. Different integrations don't always want to "talk" to each other.

When integrations don't talk and only have one-way sync, the onus will be on you to update and chase down data. Admin work, IT support, and workarounds all cost time and money that add to the weight of this system. So much for automation.

All of these factors will come into play when you consider the impact on your total cost of ownership. After you've invested in implementation and training packages, the last thing you want is to be weighed down by hidden costs like these.

Rule #4

BE WARY OF CUSTOMIZATION VS. CONFIGURATION

CRM customization is no free lunch. It takes a surgeon's precision to reconfigure a software system. These changes are possible, but you need to have someone with technical expertise. You could also end up with the tail wagging the dog, where fussy user requests slow or damage the platform.

By contrast, "configuration" means that many possible changes are pre-built into the system. You don't need to risk re-wiring the software to make these changes; they happen at the flick of a switch. This is the fastest way to tweak the system to your needs without advanced intervention or help (and extra $$$) from your vendor's support team.

When you're looking at a new CRM, configuration is key.

Remember that you're not just choosing the CRM for today, but for years to come as your business grows. This is where configuration is also useful, as you can tweak the system down the road.

As your rec business grows, it's natural to expand from mainly Perm to adding on a Temp division. Managing Temp is a whole different ball game. There are many moving parts and you'll soon find that without a configurable system to start with you'll probably need to pay extra $$$ for customization or purchase an entirely new system to support your Temp operations. The trick is finding a system that is flexible: one that allows you to adapt workflows to your needs across sectors, geography and size. Your CRM should grow with you.

> There's an awful C-word that torments the CRM buyer: "customization."
>
> **- Lisa Burgess**
> Implementation Executive at Vincere

"CUSTOMIZATION"

CRM buyers may look at this shiny word and think, "Well, what's wrong with getting exactly what I want? I'm paying for the system, after all."

Careful what you wish for.

Over the years that I've dealt with recruiters and CRMs, I've found some of the same mistakes get repeated. Especially at the beginning of the process when the system is being purchased or set up. Customization is one of these dead-ends.

As a business owner, you'll have firm ideas about what you want in a CRM. Many providers will be happy to take you down the customization path, promising a system that meets your exact needs.

But what happens when those needs change? When your business grows, when you switch from focusing on Temp to Perm, when new regulations are handed down?

This is when "customized" becomes "crystallized." Your tech, which was made to exact specifications earlier, has now been locked out of regular system updates that non-customized users will get. Every tech vendor has a roadmap for product development, but your CRM won't be included in these updates once it's been taken off that path. If you do want to change the system again or get away from it, it'll cost you.

This is why our Recruitment Operating System is designed with configuration in mind. A highly configurable system is designed to allow for system changes. You can have flexibility without getting left behind by the next software update.

Configuration means change without the financial and logistical burden of a complete re-do.

A carefully designed, minimally invasive configuration process still allows you to adapt the system as needed. And if that new feature turns not out to be what you need? Switch it off.

Rule #5

AUTOMATE YOUR ANALYTICS

Excel is great. Don't we all love a bit of Excel? But if you're still thinking of relying on Excel for reporting, or analytics is at the bottom of your RFI list, you're making a huge mistake.

For many top-performing businesses, agility has been the key to survival. We've seen from our most successful customers [a commitment to data-driven insights] to make quick, astute business decisions.

It could take up to a dozen people to maintain a manual reporting system, doing everything from managing data stores to updating on projects. Manual reporting could cost up to $77,000 USD per year, with 900 hours of productivity lost and untold sales revenue gone. It bleeds money.

Sales Demos Are Not Real Life
When you go shopping for a CRM, beware of what you're offered. Sales teams might offer "demo candy": the sweet stuff that looks good in the shop front, but doesn't actually go home with you.

Be wise and ask whether the features shown come with the package you're being sold, or if you'll have to reconstruct them in a DIY process later. If it's the latter, you'll need an in-house Business Intelligence (BI) team to make it. Even if you have this resource, it's good to ask whether this is the best investment of your time and effort.

There's a difference between analytics and reports.

Reports can give some key information and a high-level overview, but a closer look won't give you any more detail.

Analytics gives you the ability to drill down and to make it easier, the best dashboards come with pre-built filters. When it comes to your business data, you don't want to take one look then chuck it away. Analytics is like the five-star restaurant knife set: slice, dice, mince or julienne your data.

Drilling down will allow you a chance to support your team regardless of whether your workplace is remote or in-office: personalize one-on-one coaching for your consultants, identify bottlenecks across teams, locations, brands and divisions, & more.

THE 6 IDEAL DASHBOARDS & THE 3 "W"S

Analytics is all well and good, but which are the best-practice dashboards do you need - and how do they look? For each dashboard, ask the 3 "W"s: What (what is the dashboard measuring), Why (how does it benefit you), and Watch (key points for this feature).

KPI Tracking

What: KPIs are the gold standard for measuring your team's success. Objective, measurable, adjustable.

Why: A hybrid workforce is the new normal. One dashboard for centralized KPI tracking surveys all teams' activities.

Watch: The best KPI tracking lets you drill down into teams' and individuals' activities. Not every goal needs to be the same for everyone, or stay the same forever. KPI monitoring dashboards give an instant view on who needs training or something more demanding.

Mobile Dashboards

What: A quick peek at biz stats on the go.

Why: Stay in the know no matter where you are. Take control of your data and your business any place, any time.

Watch: Mobile shouldn't mean sacrificing functionality. You'll still want pre-built filters. And it shouldn't be an afterthought - look for a native mobile app.

Data Integrity

What: Highlights and gives you a bird's eye view of data quality across your database. This shows where data is missing, duplicate records, and other gritty bits that should be cleaned up for better search results.

Why: Searching your own database - and trusting those results - is the most efficient use of your money. According to the HCMC Business Intentions Survey July 2021, 45% of recruiters thought their database was flawed or incorrectly tagged. This led them to rely on job boards, spending more when they could've sourced the same candidates internally with better data integrity.

Watch: Specificity is key. Look for a system that lets you place your own value on missing data fields to mine the best results. Make sure it allows you to take actions like merging records, instead of just pointing fingers at dirty data and leaving your disgruntled team to clean up.

TV Dashboards

What: A TV dashboard displays key business metrics in real time on a television or wallboard.

Why: Nothing motivates like a score to beat. Visualized goals and productivity are easy to spot, foster friendly competition, and allow celebration of wins in real time.

Watch: See if this dashboard can track not just basic KPIs like revenue, but other metrics like Placements, Activities Done, or Top Performers. (We find the last category gets people really fired up.)

Fees & Forecasting

What: A measure to calculate how much revenue your business will take in.

Why: Assess individuals' and business performance, plus have the visibility to plan and invest going forward. Know exactly how much money's coming in, including booked, deferred, and recognized fees over time.

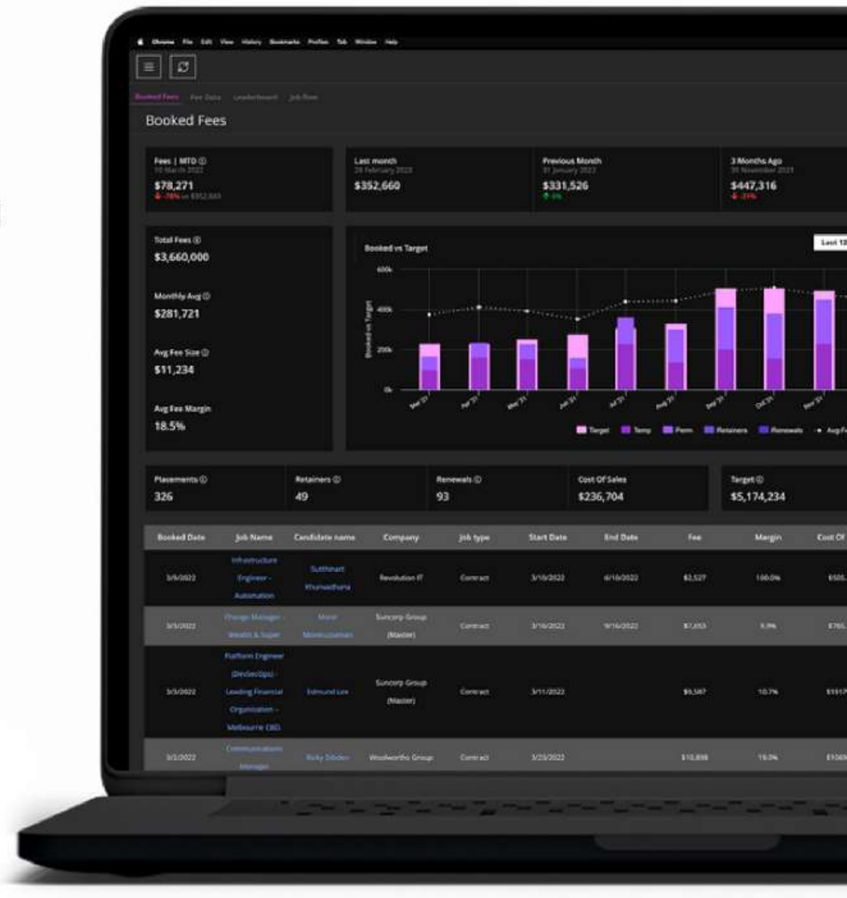
Watch: Take a deep dive into how the forecasting gets done. The best calculations are AI-driven.

Temp/Contractor Reports

What: Reports that track finishing dates, unutilized contractors, and redeployment rates (the percentage of contractors placed in a new assignment after their current role ends).

Why: Acquiring contractors costs money - placement, compliance, and pay all add up. 70% of contractors fail to be redeployed. That's easy money and a good investment walking away from your agency.

Watch: Beyond a simple redeployment rate, can you identify which individual contractors are not being sent out? Can you get contract finish dates and set up new placements for them before they slip away?



Rule #6

IMPLEMENTATION MATTERS

Implementation changes the whole game. You wouldn't expect any new tech to work unless it were properly installed and explained, and the same rule applies to CRMs.

63% of all CRM projects fail because of poor implementation. As a business owner, it makes no sense to invest time, money, and energy in a new system, just to have it flop. This is the key to CRM success: keeping your vendor and your team accountable for successful implementation.

When you're seriously considering a new CRM, have an honest conversation with your vendor. Ask them to run a session on the implementation process: who's involved, what the timelines are, and how it will be managed to ensure a successful outcome.

You'll want to get a project plan from your vendor, covering:

- **Data Migration**
  - How many years' worth of data & activity will need to be migrated?
  - Which data fields will be migrated, and how do they map on to the new system?
  - How will you deal with duplicate or archived records?
  - What is the scope, price, timeline, point of contact, and review process?
- **Training**
  - What training packages or courses are available?
  - Are they intended for new users, or can you receive ongoing training?
  - Can training options be tailored to the needs or size of your business?
- **Ongoing Engagement & Support**
  - What are the resources for support? A help center or customer support team? What are their hours?
  - What support services are available in case of:
    - Technical issues
    - Feature-related issues
    - Onboarding new users
  - Do they offer more advanced support, such as account audits, NPS reports, or educational webinars?

For a deep dive into the critical implementation process, take a look at Vincere's eBook, How to Nail Your CRM Rollout.

Rule #7

COMPLIANCE & SECURITY

Ask yourself: how secure is your recruitment data? Have you got recruitment data floating between your IT system, Outlook and spreadsheets? If the answer is "yes," you're putting your business and reputation on the line. The time to step up and protect your business is now.

Recruiters work first-hand with sensitive personal information. Screening candidates, vetting job applications, and liaising with clients all require best data protection practices. If you work at a recruitment or staffing firm, you can't afford to have your precious data compromised, deleted or stolen. Any breaches will cost you your business.

The CRM system that you choose should have data protection at its core. The tech vendor that you work with needs to not only keep data secure, but also allow you unlimited access. This way, your control over sensitive data will never be compromised.

Besides that, the vendor also needs to be in good standing with information security standards like ISO/IEC 27001. They should also follow up-to-date local legal requirements, for example being GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) or APP (Australia Privacy Act) compliant. It should be clear, even before signing up, that your tech vendor is on top of standards and regulations, and is transparent about data protection practices.

Keeping track of security systems is highly technical, so read on for Vincere's Vendor Security Scorecard. Here are the questions you should ask when you run your due diligence.

QUESTIONS FOR TECH VENDORS ON SECURITY

Hosting Location

- Where are the data servers located? Are they close enough to your users for good system performance?
- What cloud storage service do they use? Does that provider have a good reputation?

Auditing and Reporting

- Does the vendor have a process in place for different kinds of audits?
- Data audit?
- Usage audit?
- Fit-for-purpose audit?
- Effectiveness?

Data Encryption

- What certificates do they have (excluding SSL encryption)?
- Do they create logs for potential later review?
- What compliance standards do they follow?

Security

- What is the vendor's data recovery plan in case of a breach?
- How do they plan for disaster recovery?
- How do they handle data back-up? Is the process automated?
- Has their system been audited by a third-party security expert?
- What set of protections do they have for internal vs. external security threats?

Permissions and Access Control

- How granular is their permissions system?
- What number of roles and levels of control do you have over system users' access?
- How easy is it to reconfigure permissions if needed?

Hosting Location

This can have an effect not only on security and compliance, but also on the speed and ease of use with your CRM. Vincere hosts our data on the state-of-the-art AWS Cloud across 5 different locations, strategically located across the globe to ensure best performance for our customers worldwide.

Security

Everything from unauthorized access on the inside to malware from the outside can be a threat to your data. AWS's comprehensive control environment includes the necessary policies, processes and control activities for the delivery of each of the web service offerings in a secure manner, so you can be assured that all your data is safe in the Cloud.

Permissions and Access Control

With a system as comprehensive as a CRM, you'll find that not everybody needs to peek in every corner. A granular permissions system like Vincere's fences off sensitive data from those who don't need to see it, while allowing for precise, flexible management of user controls that can grow along with your team.

Data Encryption

When it comes to data, scrambled is safer. We strictly encrypt all data processed through our platform, following Data Leak Prevention (DLP) procedure. We also create logs on all output channels for review.

Auditing and Reporting

Are you a tracking taskmaster? Everything should be tracked inside your CRM: tasks, meetings, comments, notes, and emails. With a (digital) paper trail safely established inside the platform, you'll not only have an easy time tracking actionable items, but also be ready to chase down any point where things went wrong.

Rule #8

READ THE ROADMAP

That which is measured, improves; that's why tech vendors have roadmaps to take their tech offering to the next level.

This roadmap, which sets out the next stages in the tech development process, will tell you what you need to know about this CRM.

First, you can see whether this vendor prioritizes innovation. What's their plan for product development? If the rate of innovation is low, this system may not be able to keep up with your businesses' needs. Similarly, if the vendor has a low investment in research and development, it leads to stagnation.

This is all assuming that the vendor is transparent about their roadmap. A vendor that shares key elements of their roadmap is showing a commitment to customers, and confidence in their own product. Vendors that keep this information hidden or unwritten don't make for good partners.

There are some tech vendors that allow their customers to influence the development roadmap. Will you have a say in future product development? Does the vendor show a willingness to listen to their customers and update accordingly?

While we can never expect to get everything we want from any tech system, the ability for a customer to be heard by their vendor (and vice versa) is the cornerstone of a great long-term tech partnership.

Rule #9

JUDGE BY THEIR REPUTATION

We all do it: judging a book by its cover. Using assumptions. Making snap judgements.

When it comes to purchasing a CRM, a critical eye can be helpful - but you have to know how and when to apply it.

The first thing you might look for is prestige. How many awards has this company won?

By themselves, awards aren't always an indicator of quality. They could be out of date, or won in an irrelevant category. "Gold Star for Best Effort 2011" may not be a convincing accolade, but industry-recognized honors can be a good sign.

The next level of reputation is personal. Trusted customer and peer reviews can be a gauge for system quality. Try searching around on:

- Software review sites
- LinkedIn groups
- Support forums
- Customer stories and case studies

Once you've done your due diligence with outside research, we recommend asking for a reference from a user of this CRM. Public reviews, while helpful, aren't going to answer all your questions.

If possible, try to find a reference from a similar-sized firm, preferably with the same focus (Temp vs. Perm, for example). Speaking with other customers from your same geographic area, or with people from different departments in that rec firm - even better. This will give you the most balanced view of how the CRM could work in your company, across the front, middle, and back offices.

When you've reached out to your network and have a reference lined up, here are some suggested questions:

- Why did you choose this CRM?
- What are some of the benefits and limitations?
- What configurations were you able to do with this system?
- What has the total cost of ownership been?
- How is the ROI on this system?

With a little detective work, it's possible to get a better handle on what your CRM investment can potentially do for you.

Rule #10

SCRUTINIZE THE CONTRACT

You've done your due diligence. You're ready to sign on the dotted line.

But hang on for the grand finale. Now go back and read the Terms again.

Getting ready to sign a CRM contract is a delicate time. This is where we find buyers (rec firm owners and MDs like you) stepping into traps that will take an exorbitant amount of time, money and energy to get out of.

Some common contract traps are:

Contract duration: Short-term contracts seem appealing for their flexibility. But flexibility for you to leave the contract also means flexibility for the vendor to raise prices. (Think of it like signing a short-term lease where the landlord has the option to up the rent every month.) And you can't do yearly budgeting when you're on a variable monthly contract. If you're reluctant to sign on for a CRM for a year, why bother signing on for just a few months in the first place? A CRM is core to your tech and your business, so give it the investment that it's due.

Discounts: Smart shoppers naturally look for discounts, but do the math to make sure that they work for you. Some vendors offer discounts for a limited time - for the first year of your contract, maybe. Others offer discounts that carry over the duration of the contract. Be alert to the difference and don't get pulled in by short-term savings with later price hikes.

Fees: Watch out for pricing details. The contract might charge a fee per user. But is this per named user (people who can use the system at any time) or per concurrent user (restricting the number of people using the system, regardless of identity). Other fees to be careful of: early termination fees or additional costs for product upgrades.

Data Security: Especially if you're working across multiple countries and dealing with privacy regulations like GDPR or APP, you need control of your data. Look carefully at the security protections that the vendor provides. In your contract, make sure that it states that you as a business retain the right to data control and unrestricted access.

Data Hosting: Never hesitate to ask if your data will be hosted locally. This is especially true if you're recruiting for government jobs or compliance-heavy industries, where local hosting is best. In any case, we recommend keeping sensitive data close to home. Don't run the risk of losing all your data in the case of an early termination or simply wishing to change to a different provider.

CONCLUSION

Investing in a CRM is one of the most critical decisions you can make for your business. More than rent, more than payroll and legal obligations, this system will help define how you operate. The right choice will uplift your rec firm and accelerate growth.

The goal is to make an informed choice. That's why we decided to offer this buyer's guide. There are many factors to consider - from your businesses' specific needs to integrations to security requirements. Hopefully we've demystified the decision making process so that you can make the right investment.

Tech is a rapidly shifting, yet increasingly important element to your business success. Never feel intimidated by it; its purpose is to serve you.

With an eye on the horizon and a steady hand, you can make the right CRM purchasing decision that will help your business thrive.

ABOUT VINCERE

Vincere is the Recruitment Operating System, a modern OS purpose-built for recruitment firms globally.

We provide a single streamlined tech platform to enable seamless operational continuity between the front, middle, and back office of Exec Search / Perm / Contract / Temp businesses.

Vincere's suite of modules are natively built & pre-integrated from day one:

- **Vincere Core:** CRM/ATS
- **Vincere Timetemp:** shift scheduler, online timesheets, leave, expenses, invoicing and door clock apps
- **Vincere Intelligence:** AI, analytics, & custom dashboards
- **Vincere Portals:** Website CMS plus Client, Candidate, & Jobs portals
- **Vincere Comms:** Omni-channel chat collaboration & communication
- **Vinneo:** video interviewing and sales outreach

Vincere have a team of over 140 across 6 offices globally. Vincere currently equip 20,000+ Recruiters worldwide.

#1 rated recruitment tech platform across 3rd party review sites:
2022 Momentum Leader by G2 Crowd
2021 GetApp Category Leader for Recruitment Software
2021 FrontRunner by SoftwareAdvice

Contact us: sales@vincere.io

To learn more, go to https://www.vincere.io.

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