10 REAL Questions to Ask When Choosing a Global Expense Solution

DATABASICS WHITEPAPER

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10 REAL QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING A GLOBAL EXPENSE SOLUTION

Global expense implementations pose unique challenges: local statutory requirements, standards, and customs in addition to intra-enterprise variability with respect to business processes, policies, accounting and integrations.

Keys to success in meeting these challenges are (1) understanding local requirements, (2) knowing what questions to ask and how to find answers, (3) having necessary functionality available, including flexibility in being able to limit and assign the scope of configurations, (4) leveraging solutions to common requirements across applicable localities and (5) maintaining the capacity to "roll-up" information to regional or enterprise levels.

All reputable Expense Reporting solutions offers product support 24/7/365, and should also provide time zone, date and number format, as well as multi-language support in the product.

Below are 10 questions to ask to help ensure that your procurement for a global expense reporting system is successful:

1. WHAT ARE YOUR OBJECTIVES?

Your company is unique: the importance of your history, values, strategy, leadership, culture and way of doing business should not be ignored, or diminished, in the procurement process. To assume a global roll out of an expense system is a cookie cutter process, and that an expense reporting system is a commodity is a disservice to your prospective suppliers as well as yourself.

Identifying your objectives, gaining leadership buy-in, and communicating these clearly to the shortlisted vendors will allow them to propose a solution that meets these objectives to the best of their ability and to your ultimate benefit.

2. WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

Objectives do not exist in a vacuum. "Fast" is just as valid an objective as "Comprehensive", but typically these are seen to be basic roll-out objectives in conflict. Identifying priorities, and communicating these with your prospective suppliers offers further insight to allow a proposal to be prepared that treats you and your requirements with integrity.

Once prioritized "Fast" and "Comprehensive" don't have to be in conflict as long as your selected solution offers flexibility to allow a timely initial roll out, as well as the possibility for you to make improvements (with or without the vendors help – again, what is your objective?) once the solution is in production.

3. WHO ARE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS?

There are formal and informal stakeholders that needs to be identified, and managed, through the procurement as well as roll out process: Organization leadership, solution owners and managers, owners of tangential processes and systems, frequent travelers, unions and work councils.

Each group should be recognized and form part of change management and communication plans as appropriate.

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4. WHO OWNS AND WHO WILL MANAGE THE SOLUTION?

- What is your vision for ownership and management of the global solution?
- Do you have a Shared Services structure in place and will leverage this, will the solution be managed locally, or maybe you have a hybrid approach in mind?
- How does this affect your roll-out and communication plans?
- How do you look to control the management of the solution?
- Do you have a role management and / or process audit requirement for the ongoing management of the solution?
- How will you comply with various privacy requirements across Europe and Asia?

5. HOW CAN YOU FACILITATE FOR USER ACCEPTANCE?

Your end users may not be the solution owners, but they are a very important stakeholder. User acceptance is likely to be high on your list of objectives and is a central part of a successful roll-out. The user experience should be simple, efficient and intuitive.

Although expense reporting is an employee facing extension to your accounting system(s), providing the detail required by accounting should not be at odds with the user experience and your end users should be able to fluently move between desktop and mobile platforms in the reporting lifecycle.

Involve end user representatives in the procurement process. Communication, and change management strategies should be integrated as these relate to formal requirements in certain localizations.

6. WHAT ARE YOUR PAIN POINTS?

Any specific pain points that are currently experienced by end users, managers or administrators will not automatically disappear with a new system. Gain insight from the current experience and make sure that your prospective vendors are as serious in proposing a solution as you are about procuring for process improvement.

In light of your objectives and priorities, ask to see specifically how the proposed solution allows for simple things like maintaining mileage reimbursement rates in France or Costa Rica, and more complex requirements like tax factoring for mileage in Canada and the UK. Ask to see how Northern European per-diem rules and associated corporate and fringe benefit taxation rules are maintained, not just on paper, but in a real working system.

7. WHAT DOES "MULTI-CURRENCY" REALLY MEAN?

A currency solution that facilitates for control of exchange rates, accurate reimbursements, invoice payments and expense postings is just scratching the surface of true multi-currency functionality.

A global expense reporting solution's ability to provide currency and amount detail with integrity across individual reporting companies, projects and activities, credit card relationships as well as in enterprise rollups is key to visibility in management reporting and reconciliation. The global solution should also allow for exceptions to the standard currency feed where this is a local statutory requirement.

8. HOW DO YOU EXPECT YOUR TAX REQUIREMENTS TO BE SUPPORTED?

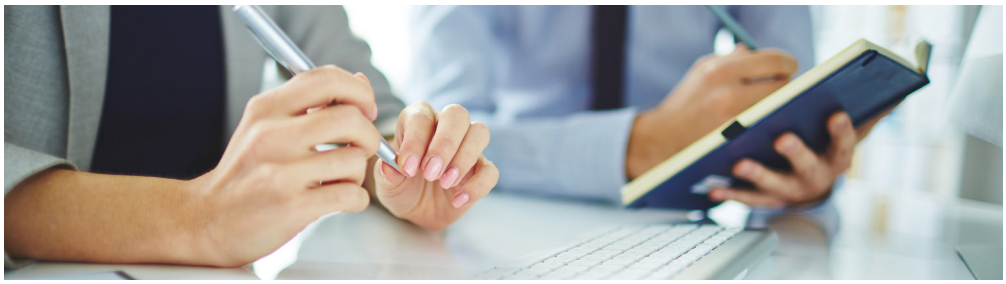
Consumption tax, sales tax, corporate tax and personal fringe benefit tax requirements are different by country, state and province. These requirements should be facilitated for in a robust framework as part of a global expense reporting solution that allows for exceptions in both process and policy where this is required.

Capturing relevant and accurate tax information in the application with minimum effort for the end user is the starting point. Support of the posting, reporting and recovery requirement are essential deliverables in a global roll out, and the management of the solution should be easy and intuitive for the administrator.

9. WHERE DOES EXPENSE REPORTING FIT IN YOUR GLOBAL BUSINESS APPLICATION ECO-SYSTEM?

You probably have global as well as multiple local systems that are tangential to expense reporting. In addition to ERP / Accounting systems, data is likely to be required to flow bi-directionally between Payroll system(s), HR system(s), Banks and Credit Card Provider(s), travel and booking systems and other systems that supports your accounting, billing and reimbursement process. This may also include feeds from direct bill providers, tax recovery services and other service providers, as well as outputs to business intelligence solutions.

- How will your interface requirements be met in your global roll out, do you have requirements related to intercompany transaction handling?
- Will you require tight integration with some, or all of the systems, or are you happy to accept a data-dump that you will manipulate to satisfy posting requirements in the individual systems?



10. DOES YOUR REQUIREMENTS REQUIRE CUSTOMIZATIONS?

Any expense reporting roll-out may have custom elements, but a mature expense reporting provider that takes global roll-outs seriously will be able to handle your expense reporting requirements through configuration of standard functionality.

Customizations are costly and require special attention in the ongoing maintenance of a solution. Be true to your requirements: you should expect a knowledgeable expense reporting partner to challenge your requirements and offer alternatives for solving issues, particularly if there are ways to improve a process and make it more efficient whilst still complying with statutory requirements. If a certain requirement is high priority for you, make sure to ask specific questions as you progress through the procurement process, and don't be satisfied with a power point solution demo.

The user experience should be simple, efficient and intuitive.

QUESTIONAIRE CHECKLIST

- ❏ What are your objectives?
- ❏ What are your priorities?
- ❏ Who are your stakeholders?
- ❏ Who owns and who will manage the solution?
- ❏ How can you facilitate for user acceptance?
- ❏ What are your pain points?
- ❏ What does "multi-currency" really mean?
- ❏ How do you expect your tax requirements to be supported?
- ❏ Where does expense reporting fit in your global business application eco-system?
- ❏ Does your requirements require customizations?

For additional information on this subject or to learn how DATABASICS can help you navigate global requirements, please contact us at:

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About DATABASICS

DATABASICS provides cloud-based, next generation Expense Reporting, Timesheet Management, and Invoice Processing automation. Specializing in meeting the most rigorous requirements, DATABASICS offers the highest level of service to its customers around the world.

DATABASICS is relied upon by leading organizations representing all the major sectors of the global economy: financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, research, retail, engineering, non-profits/NGOs, technology, federal contractors, and more.

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