Workforce Management
All-in-One vs. Best-of-Breed:
## *The Reality of a Suite Software Solution*

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"**A**ll-in-one suite solution." If your company has begun to explore new technology to boost productivity and compliance, you may have noticed this recent trend in software systems—the standalone product, designed to satisfy a range of business needs that are traditionally accommodated by separate vendors.

In the realm of workforce management software, suite solutions cover a variety of business areas, including Time and Attendance, Payroll/HR Management, Benefit Administration, etc. A typical all-in-one package may be presented as follows:
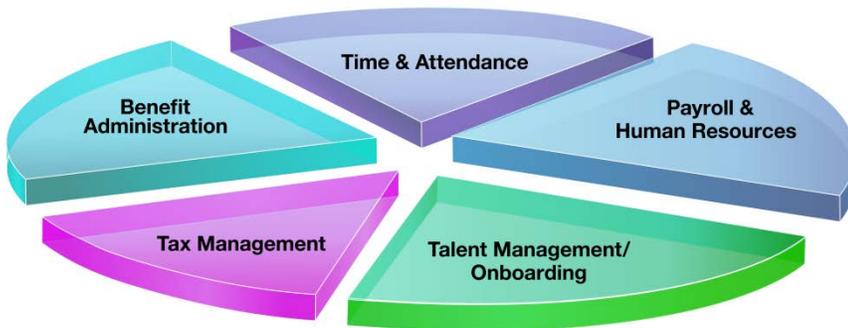

What are the <u>proposed</u> advantages of an all-in-one suite?

1) Fully integrated software modules;
2) Single-source datasets;
3) Simplified support; and
4) One vendor ("one throat to choke").

In theory, an all-in-one suite is the ideal solution. It would be reasonable to assume that this type of software package is developed as a single unit and designed to facilitate a quick implementation, single sign-on capability, and seamless functionality across each module, ultimately leading to user happiness and satisfaction. This must be too good to be true, right?

The short answer is, unfortunately, yes. Many suite products are comprised of disparate components of self-developed, acquired, and/or open-source software. Exploring how these modules share data and operate collectively may lead to the discovery of an assortment of web services, flat-file integration, database queries, and other aspects of connectivity that are less seamless than expected. A look beneath the idealized presentation of the all-in-one suite above may reveal a surprising disarray of integration elements:
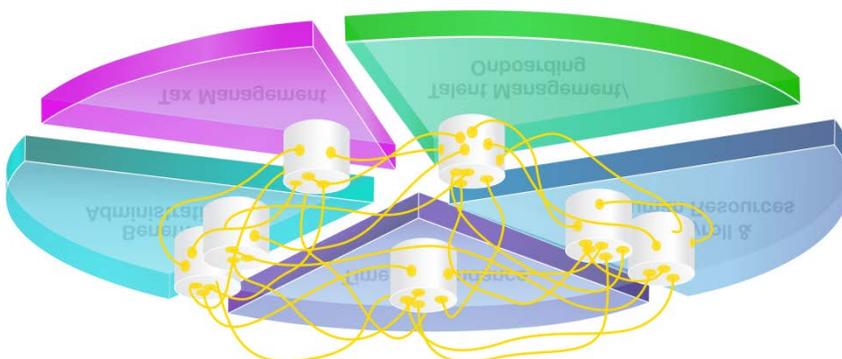
What type of solution do you trust to process your important information?

As one of the most complex segments of a workforce management solution, Time & Attendance software is the frontline to a large amount of labor data, including the following.

Would you trust an all-in-one solution to contain all of these features, or would you go with a company specializing in Time & Attendance and integration?

- *Overtime*
  - *Daily*
  - *Weekly*
  - *Consecutive days*
  - *Holiday*
  - *24-hour windows*
  - *Out of shift / schedule*
  - *State compliance (CA, CT, CO, etc.)*
  - *Federal compliance (FLSA)*
  - *Reporting*

- *Special pay*
  - *Shift differentials*
  - *Day premiums*
  - *Incentive pay*
  - *Piece rate calculations*
  - *Bargaining agreement / labor contracts*

- *Compliance*
  - *Meal premiums*
  - *Mandatory leave / sick pay*
  - *Minimum wage*

- *Accruals management / real-time calculations*

- *Attendance policies / points calculations*

- *PPACA requirements*

- *Scheduling / advanced rosters*

- *Plus much more!*

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All-in-one suites are commonly comprised of separate applications that support their own data formats, rule setup, user interfaces, and functionality. While this contradicts the implication of full integration and a single-source dataset, it also raises concern regarding support. How are software bugs managed if the provider's resources are diluted across various applications? How are new features incorporated into the disjointed integration? The truth is, with the exception of having a single vendor, the proposed advantages of a software suite are misleading.

So, is it truly advantageous to seek out an all-in-one software suite?

The answer may be easier to come by when considering this: While utilizing an all-in-one product, there may be one or two modules that offer functionality that is the most suitable for your company, but you will most likely be making compromises with the remainder of the suite. This results in drawbacks and issues that could have been avoided if each aspect of your workforce management solution precisely fit your business needs. Taking the alternate route by choosing separate software products allows you to implement best-of-breed solutions that maintain the highest level of compatibility with your unique operations—without compromise.

What is a best-of-breed software solution?

Essentially, a best-of-breed product is the best of its type. Gartner, Inc., the world's leading information technology research and advisory company, elaborates on the term:

> *"Enterprises often purchase software from different vendors to obtain the best-of-breed offering for each application area. For example, enterprises may purchase a human-resource package from one vendor and an accounting package from another. Although enterprise resource planning (ERP) vendors offer numerous enterprise applications and claim that their integrated system is a superior solution, all modules in an ERP system are rarely best-of-breed."* – Gartner IT Glossary[1]

A best-of-breed software company focuses on building, enhancing, and supporting an application that belongs to its core area of expertise. This type of undivided attention results in a superior software solution that is fine-tuned to suit your business needs.

Additionally, because best-of-breed solutions must almost always integrate with other products, developers of these applications hold a higher degree of expertise when it comes to moving data from one system to another. The integration components of best-of-breed products receive greater attention, which results in seamless data communication. The integration capabilities are optimized to function properly, even when application updates and enhancements are applied, creating reliability that is unmatched by all-in-one suite solutions. Whether it's through web services or flat files, best-of-breed vendors offer the same usability that all-in-one companies offer, while providing industry-focused solutions.

So, while integrating multiple best-of-breed solutions from separate software providers does present you with more vendors to work with, the risk of problem areas is significantly reduced. Fewer obstacles over time yield fewer confrontations with the various application providers, and a more powerful and complete solution will ultimately boost your company's performance.

[1] http://www.gartner.com/it-glossary/best-of-breed

NOVAtime Technology, Inc. was established in 1999 and is headquartered in Diamond Bar, California. By applying the most innovative technology and providing best practice services, NOVAtime has become a leader in the Time and Attendance / Workforce Management industry. Over 10,000 organizations have benefitted from the use of NOVAtime solutions, and the world's best-managed companies continue to select NOVAtime as the preferred solution provider. For more information about NOVAtime, please visit www.novatime.com or call 1-877-486-6682.