

Can the Suite Compete?

What Every Recruiter Needs to Know

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Intro

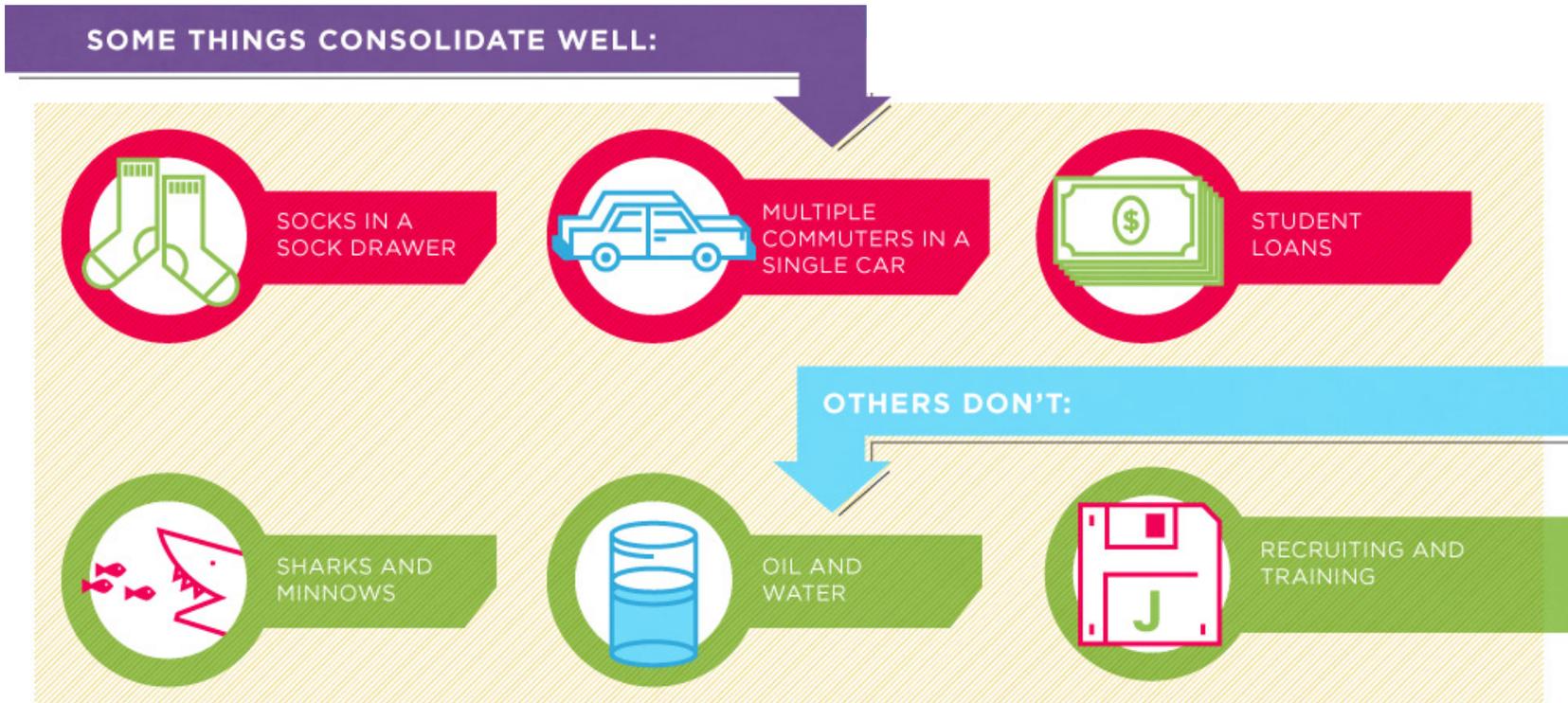
Ah, the great Best-of-Breed vs. Suite debate. People have been avidly engaged in the discussion for over a decade. Should you purchase an entire software set, even if you only need one or two areas of functionality, because it claims to connect all your business systems easily? Or do you turn to vendors that focus on delivering high-quality solutions in a single arena, so you only have to buy the systems you need?

While consolidation can sometimes be a good thing, recruiters should look closely before buying into big corporate HR bundles. Recruiting tasks can be extremely specific in nature. Not all companies are alike. Job requisitions are often widely varied. And recruiters are not HR generalists; they don't care about benefits and payroll—they simply want automated, efficient process workflow that speaks to their everyday needs, so they can find and hire the best candidates. In other words, recruiting technology should be built to make a recruiter's job easier. It should be dynamic and innovative, following industry trends like social networking. And it should intuitively function the way recruiters work. HR solution suites don't often meet these criteria. They tend to be piecemeal sets grown through acquisition, rarely produced through focused engineering innovation. Consequently, suite functionality can be limited, and agility is questionable at best.

So how do you know which side to take in the great debate? Here are some words of wisdom to keep in mind when considering your options.

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Bundled Talent Management Systems are meant to be complete solutions for today's HR professionals. **But “complete” can be misleading.**



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What's missing from the suite spot?

- **Expertise.** Most suite-based HR systems are compiled to serve the needs of HR professionals. But recruiters are not HR professionals. HR professionals cover a very broad range of duties, from benefits to payroll to safety compliance. Recruiters only focus on recruiting. It makes sense that you should seek software designed by experts in your field, rather than something pieced together without focus.
- **Real integration.** Suite vendors often run marketing campaigns that promise full integration and cohesiveness. But much of this is hype. Most of today's big business product bundles are simply step-siblings by acquisition—and acquired products aren't integrated products by design. Everything from developers to partners to supply chains will tangle when companies and products meld. Remember, acquisitions happen for financial reasons, not because Company A's products were destined to be with Company B's. Truly integrated products that work well together are designed to do that from the get-go.
- **Innovation.** The acquisition frenzy of many industry giants has turned former technology pioneers into technology management companies. Gone is the focus on development and creativity. They're not making technology anymore, they're just managing the inorganic piles of it they've amassed over time. Not surprisingly, a lot of bright engineers jump ship after acquisitions—so don't expect much ongoing innovation from big suite vendors.
- **Progress.** Big corporations bent on acquiring and bundling aren't motivated to be exceptional the way best-of-breed vendors are. In fact, they only need to do the bare minimum to keep you from switching providers. In other words, suite vendors have no reason to improve your products, and that's a red flag. Specialized functions like recruiting don't just demand specialized software—they demand exceptional technology. Exceptional technology is evolutionary.
- **Customer service.** Big-time suite vendors have a lot on their plates. In adding on other companies, they seek a more “complete” product offering, but the casualty in the equation is the customer. The bigger the company gets, and the more complex the bundle, the less likely it is that end users receive quality support, regular product updates, responsive invoicing, and so on.

Unlike many companies selling software suites, Best-of-Breed vendors have a singular focus that can **benefit recruiters substantially.**

5 REASONS TO AVOID THE TALENT MANAGEMENT SUITE:



-  **NO RECRUITING FOCUS:** Recruiting is different from other HR functions. Recruiters simply recruit, and they need tools to do it well.
-  **NO INTEGRATED DESIGN:** Beware the “comprehensive ecosystem” that’s likely masking product weaknesses. Real integration takes time, money, and the intent of integration.
-  **NO INNOVATION:** Disparate products that compile an inorganic suite are hard to manage. Companies busy with integrations don’t spare resources for product innovation.
-  **NO IMPROVEMENT:** Companies that grow inorganically have a different endgame: They need you to stick around, but they don’t need you to be happy. When it comes to improving individual products and services, the suite vendors just don’t have to.
-  **NO LOVE:** The more complex the suite, the harder to provide quality support for the user. Suite vendors aren’t courting you anymore. They might not even know who you are.

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What does Best-of-Breed bring to the party?

- **Ability.** This is a noticeable difference between companies that are dedicated to doing one thing well and the acquisition-happy corporate dillitantes. Best-of-Breed vendors don't let accountants drive product development. They understand that innovation comes from passionate experts who are given the right resources to engineer quality products.
- **Attention.** Because they're not occupied with enveloping products into suites, best-of-breed vendors have a whole lot less bureaucracy to contend with—which is always a plus for the end user. Product updates are likely to be more timely and more innovative, and trouble tickets will be answered faster. This is important for recruiters, who are typically engaged in a race to reach the best candidates first.
- **Agility.** Best-of-breed providers focus on designing, delivering, supporting, and maintaining specialized products of exceptional quality, and that means acting nimbly. Not just in terms of jumping big business hurdles, but in terms of thinking and listening. Best-of-breed vendors solicit feedback and respond to customer needs and feature requests. That's how they compete—not by keeping customers dangling on end-of-life products.

Conclusion

As social networking now becomes an integral recruiting strategy, sourcing and hiring processes will undoubtedly accelerate—and the race to find top talent will intensify. Recruiters would do well to seek technology from providers that can keep up with the pace.

Before taking on a bundle compiled for high-level HR requirements, ask yourself: Does an inorganic solution set really do what I need it to do when it comes to recruiting in this competitive market? And does this vendor have any interest at all in what I need, now and in the future?

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