RESEARCH NOTE

ANATOMY OF A DECISION: ULTIMATE SOFTWARE ULTIPRO

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THE BOTTOM LINE

In speaking with users of UltiPro, Nucleus has found that a large majority give Ultimate Software high grades for customer support. Furthermore, they believe they've achieved a positive return on investment (ROI) with the deployment and say that they'd buy again. Whether by replacing legacy systems or by choosing Ultimate Software over other competitors in the real cloud, with UltiPro, users see gains in productivity.

KEY FINDINGS

This year, Nucleus has reached out to several customers of Ultimate Software, asking them questions regarding their level of satisfaction with the product. All users of UltiPro that Nucleus has reached have indicated that they'd buy again from Ultimate Software. Additionally, a large percentage give the vendor a grade of A- or higher for customer support. Not one gives Ultimate Software a grade lower than a B for this, and the vast majority believe they have achieved an exceptionally positive ROI with their use of UltiPro.

All of Ultimate Software users with whom Nucleus has spoken say they would again buy from the vendor and believe they have achieved an exceptionally positive ROI by deploying UltiPro. Additionally, most give the vendor an A- or higher for customer support.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Stories emerged centering on how users' circumstances looked before their deployment of UltiPro and, also, the marked extent to which UltiPro improved their payroll and HR departments' lot in life. Customers shared tales of having run hodgepodges of applications: on-premise software for payroll, sometimes married to elements of homegrown solutions. Furthermore, legacy solutions from other vendors were often running time and attendance. Various combinations of these multiplatform systems

produced continual inefficiencies overall. Far from the single-suite ideal in the real cloud, these scenarios left administrators struggling with poor or no integration and, as well, needing an inordinate amount of time to process payroll. Employers trying to expand across large geographical footprints domestically and internationally encountered time-consuming manual workarounds just so their administrators could ensure that paychecks for employees in especially regulations-heavy regions were compliant.

Customers said:
- *"Payroll used to take a week to do. I hated going to work on Friday."*
- *"Our previous system's account executive couldn't fathom that we'd leave."*

Nucleus has found that these are typically the experiences of employers saddled with old, legacy-based systems for human capital management (HCM). Any mismatched mélange of platforms – even when some parts are newer, in the real cloud – can yield frustrations. Years-in-the-making customizations upon customizations of on-premise solutions can be a sticking point, for instance. One employer reported that, in its pre-UltiPro experience, every time users got on the phone with customer support, they had to repeat an explanation of how the vendor had customized its system for the employer.

ONE SUITE IN THE REAL CLOUD

A few vendors of real-cloud technology that offer most of HCM under the auspices of one suite, with as few separate applications as possible, solve most of these problems (Nucleus Research *p62 – Technology Value Matrix 2015 HCM*, April 2015). Their solutions help users not only leave the aforementioned frustrations behind, but also realize measurable gains in productivity, translated to dollars. UltiPro is among them and bests most competitors' solutions in that it comprises arguably the greatest breadth of HCM, encompassing not only the epicenter of HCM – core HR, payroll, and workforce management (WFM – e.g., time and attendance), but also much of talent management. Because of this, reporting across the suite is robust.

Customers said:
- *"We've saved a ton of money. We've saved hundreds of thousands of dollars. To me, it's just a miracle. We've just put so many tools and reporting in place."*
- *"I can't think of anything that we'd like to go outside for. The end-to-end reporting tool is just amazing."*

This efficiency extends to integration with other systems. One customer, for example, whose contracts include several for the government, is required to use another product to track time and attendance for those. This user noted that interfacing is straightforward, and the ability of UltiPro to receive this time and attendance data is sound.

VENDOR EXPERTISE BEYOND BASIC SUPPORT

Users said significant improvements in HCM workflow and efficiency followed their deployments of UltiPro. They also reported smooth implementations and praised the support mechanisms in place for users. Account managers are easy to reach and responsive. Additionally, answers to common questions are available to administrators at a user-accessible area of the Ultimate Software Web site. Additionally, users noted that Ultimate Software has been proactive in communicating information and furnishing functionality pertinent to compliance with the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (Nucleus Research *p133 – Ultimate Software deployment of critical ACA automation*, July 2015).

As one customer said, *"ACA compliance has been very good, very proactive – communication has been great."*

FAR INCREASED PAYROLL PRODUCTIVITY, BETTER ANALYSES OF THE PROCESS

Organizations were able to decrease the time necessary to process payroll every period – in one case, from more than 30 hours per week for a team of payroll administrators to just an hour or so, total. Because of their newfound time to devote to other tasks, users report being able to perform in-depth analyses of payroll – aided by tools found in UltiPro. These forward-thinking exercises help administrators to become proactive vs. reactive.

As one customer said, **"***Everything is an analysis now. Now, because we have time, we're able to drill down everything. We're now analysts.***"**

In all, UltiPro users' work becomes more strategic in the eyes of senior leadership. One employer noted, in fact, that following its deployment of UltiPro the executive suite added payroll to the company's strategic objectives for the first time in the organization's history.

As one customer said, **"***The fantastic part about UltiPro is it's helping us be visionary.***"**

ULTIPRO: PEOPLE-CENTRIC

It is notable that, in their vetting of other vendors' products, users who decided to deploy UltiPro said Ultimate's approach was particularly focused on the needs of HR, which they liked. In contrast, one user remarked, other vendors' solutions seemed engineered vs. people-centric. Specifically, employee self-service (ESS) and manager self-service (MSS) in UltiPro tended to be better than the ESS and MSS in other vendors' systems.

CONCLUSION

User observations here further affirm Ultimate Software's placement as a Leader showing strong usability in the latest HCM Value Matrix (Nucleus Research *p62 – Technology Value Matrix 2015 HCM*, April 2015). As the vendor continues to deliver on its product roadmap and further unifies its system, already nearly devoid of interfacing, Nucleus expects Ultimate Software to continue to resonate with users and outpace the competition.