



ClearCo

PLAYBOOK

# Where To Start Connecting Your Talent Systems

# It's Time To Fix Fragmentation

If you've read about the AI risks hiding in your fragmented HR stack, you already know what the problem is costing you:

1. Invisible bias compounding across disconnected tools
2. Analytics that require manual reconciliation before anyone trusts them
3. Compliance exposure that grows each quarter you don't have a governance framework in place

What's harder is the step that follows: translating that diagnosis into a plan your CFO will fund, your IT team will support, and your HR organization will actually adopt.

This 90-day framework is built for when you're past the question of whether to act and focused on how. It covers many of the decisions you'll need to make, the governance scaffolding to put AI on a solid foundation, and early proof points that build organizational momentum.

You don't need to rip out everything at once. You need a sequenced plan with clear owners, measurable milestones, and a first wave that demonstrates ROI fast.

## Why Unified Systems Win

The business case for integration isn't theoretical at this point. Connected talent systems aren't outperforming fragmented ones by just a little — they're delivering roughly **twice the ROI** and **responding to organizational change 57% faster**. With 92% of CHROs pushing for **deeper AI integration** this year, the gap between those two realities will only widen.

**62%**

of orgs run 2-4 disconnected HR systems

**\$12.9M**

avg. annual cost of poor data quality

**~2x ROI**

for fully connected talent systems

**57%**

faster change response with unified platforms

The Cost of Staying Fragmented	What Connected Systems Deliver
46% of HR leaders call <b>integration their #1 technology pain point</b>	~2x ROI vs. siloed tool users
<b>\$12.9M average annual loss</b> from poor data quality	57% faster response to organizational change
81% say poor integration prevents achieving HR goals	<b>15.9x larger eligible talent pools</b> with skills-based hiring (U.S.)
31% of HR tech budgets spent on maintenance overhead	<b>98% better retention</b> of high performers
95% of generative AI deployments producing <b>zero measurable return</b>	87% of employees report increased efficiency when AI is properly integrated

# The Connected Talent Platform Roadmap

Most integration projects stall not because the goal is wrong, but because the pacing is. The phases below are built to avoid the most common failure points: starting with vendor selection before outcomes are defined, scoping too broadly for Wave 1, and treating governance as something to figure out post-launch.

Follow these steps in order to build a strong foundation for a connected talent platform. The 90-day frame is a guide for pacing, not a hard deadline. What matters is that Phase 1 is complete before Phase 2 begins, and Wave 1 is scoped to something you can actually finish.

## Phase 1: Diagnose, Align, and Build the Decision Package

*Suggested Timeline: Days 1–30*

**Phase 1 Goal:** Establish clarity on business outcomes, your actual data reality, and the minimum viable unification plan worth funding.

### 1. Define outcomes that matter to the business, not just HR

Before you begin vendor conversations, identify 3–5 enterprise outcomes that your talent strategy is responsible for. Think in terms of business impact:

- Reduce time-to-fill for critical roles
- Improve internal mobility to extend bench strength
- Increase retention of high performers
- Reduce compliance risk and audit effort
- Sharpen workforce planning accuracy

For each outcome, identify the workflow that drives it and the metric that proves it's improving. This framing is what earns CFO credibility.

**Deliverable:** 1-page outcomes map linking each goal to a workflow and KPI

### 2. Map your stack and find the breaking points

Document every system in use, every manual workaround, and every place where data is entered twice. The useful question isn't just "What do we have?"— it's "Where do disconnects cause the biggest business pain?" Speed, cost, compliance, and decision quality are all valid lenses. Shadow spreadsheets and reconciliation rituals are usually the clearest signals.

**Deliverable:** Stack map + top 5 integration pain points, ranked by business impact

### 3. Quantify the cost of fragmentation

Build a simple ROI baseline before anyone asks you for one. Account for time lost to manual reconciliation, reporting delays, candidate experience friction, and compliance exposure. Benchmark against your industry's average losses for poor data quality — that number tends to move conversations. Your baseline doesn't need to be perfectly precise, but it does need to be honest and credible.

**Deliverable:** Baseline ROI model: current cost + expected savings + strategic lift

#### 4. Establish AI governance early

80% of HR professionals use AI tools. Only 31% have embedded AI in formal workflows. The gap clearly isn't in capabilities — it's in governance and data readiness. Establish your governance framework before you scale:

- Types of decisions AI may support
- Required data quality thresholds
- Bias testing expectations
- Human-in-the-loop approval points
- Audit log requirements

Getting this in writing before you select a vendor puts you in a stronger negotiating position.

**Deliverable:** “Responsible AI in Talent” governance one-pager

## Phase 2: Design Unified Talent Model and Evaluate Solutions

*Suggested Timeline: Days 31–60*

Phase 2 Goal: Define your target operating model and validate solution fit against real workflows before you sign anything.

#### 5. Design your unified talent operating model

Map the workflows that must be end-to-end connected: candidate to employee, performance to learning to mobility, learning to skills inventory. Standardize the definitions your organization will use — what does “time to fill” actually mean here? What counts as a high performer? Build a KPI dictionary that HR, finance, and operations leadership can all agree on. Disagreements about definitions are cheaper to resolve now than after you've built dashboards around them.

**Deliverable:** Target operating model + KPI dictionary

#### 6. Set non-negotiable integration requirements

Before you evaluate vendors, know what you require. Work through five categories:

- Integration — APIs, prebuilt connectors, sync frequency, error handling, and fallback
- Data — master data strategy, identity matching across systems, data lineage
- Security and compliance — role-based access, retention policies, audit logs
- Reporting — real-time dashboards, export capability, standard and custom views
- Adoption — UX consistency, workflow automation, mobile accessibility

Weight each of these requirements based on importance to your org before you start scoring vendors. Changing your weights mid-process is a signal that a vendor is selling you rather than serving you.

**Deliverable:** Weighted requirements checklist

## 7. Score vendors on a decision-ready rubric

Evaluate shortlisted vendors across six categories. Give the most weight to integration maturity — it's the hardest thing to verify from a demo and the most consequential thing to get wrong.

Evaluation Criteria	Weight (Suggested)	Score (1–5)
Integration maturity — native connectors, sync reliability, API depth	25%	
Workflow coverage across the full talent lifecycle	20%	
Analytics and real-time reporting credibility	15%	
Implementation speed — realistic 90-day value, not sales-deck value	15%	
AI embeddedness and governance transparency	15%	
User experience and adoption enablement	10%	

**Deliverable:** Vendor scorecard + demo scripts tied to your top workflows

## 8. Run proof-based demos, not feature tours

Structure every vendor demo around your actual workflows. You might ask them to show:

- A real requisition moving through recruiting to hire to onboarding
- A performance review triggering development planning
- A skills-based mobility recommendation with a clear explanation trail
- A unified dashboard with drill-down capability

**Deliverable:** Demo evaluation matrix + finalist recommendation

## Phase 3: Commit, Launch Wave 1, and Prove Value

*Suggested Timeline: Days 61–90*

**Phase 3 Goal:** Finalize the decision, go live on your first integrated workflows, and generate early proof points that fund Wave 2.

### 9. Finalize the business case and secure approvals

Your decision package needs to answer four questions clearly:

1. What fragmentation is costing today
2. What you expect to save and gain
3. What risk you're reducing
4. Who owns what during implementation

Tie every number back to the outcomes you defined in Week 1. This is the document that gets a CFO to yes, and it's also the accountability framework that keeps the project on track after approval.

**Deliverable:** Board/CEO-ready business case deck with milestone owners

### 10. Launch Wave 1 — focused and measurable

Pick 1–2 workflows with clear, fast ROI, and don't try to do more. Good Wave 1 candidates include:

- Recruiting + onboarding + core data sync
- Performance + development planning + learning activation

Trying to integrate everything in 90 days is how integration projects fail. Build something you can point to, then use that proof to expand.

**Deliverable:** Live integrated workflow(s) + change management and adoption plan

### 11. Measure outcomes and lock in momentum

Track four things in your first 90-day report:

1. Cycle time reduction (time-to-fill, onboarding completion)
2. Data quality improvement (duplicate reduction, completeness thresholds)
3. Adoption metrics (usage rates, manager participation)
4. Reporting speed (time to produce an executive dashboard)

These numbers tell the story that funds Wave 2, and they're the evidence that repositions HR as a data-driven strategic function.

**Deliverable:** 90-day impact report + Wave 2 roadmap

# 10 Questions To Ask Every Vendor

1. Show me how you maintain a single source of truth across recruiting, HRIS, performance, and learning.
2. Which integrations are prebuilt, and which require custom development? Who owns that work post-launch?
3. How do you handle identity matching and duplicate records across systems?
4. What does your data lineage and audit trail look like for reporting?
5. Which AI capabilities are embedded in workflows, and which are add-on features?
6. How do you test for and mitigate algorithmic bias, and what do you log?
7. What does a realistic implementation look like? What's out of scope?
8. What adoption benchmarks do you track across comparable customers, and how do you support manager uptake?
9. How does your platform support skills data and a transition toward skills-based talent management?
10. What measurable ROI have customers in comparable environments actually achieved?

## Common Objections and How To Address Them

Even with a strong business case, internal resistance to big changes is normal. Here's how to address the most common pushback.



**“Integration is too complex. We'll deal with it later.”**

Delayed integration compounds. Every quarter your systems remain disconnected, your data quality deteriorates further, manual workarounds become more entrenched, and the cost of change goes up. The \$12.9M annual figure for poor data quality reflects the cost of waiting — not of acting.



**“AI isn't ready for formal HR workflows.”**

It's already in use. 80% of HR professionals are using AI tools today. The challenge is that only 31% have embedded AI in formal workflows, and 95% of generative AI deployments have produced zero measurable return. The culprit is data infrastructure, not AI maturity. A unified data foundation is what turns AI adoption into AI outcomes.



**“We can't justify the spend.”**

The spend is already happening — it's just distributed across licenses, integration labor, manual reconciliation, and rework. Organizations consistently find that 31% of their HR tech budget goes toward maintaining system connections. The question isn't whether to invest; it's whether to keep paying hidden costs or redirect that budget toward something that generates a measurable return.



**“We don't have the IT bandwidth for a major implementation.”**

This is a sequencing question, not a blocker. Wave 1 can be scoped to 1–2 workflows with prebuilt integrations and vendor-supported implementation. The goal is a fast, visible win that demonstrates value and builds organizational confidence for Wave 2 — not a full platform migration in a single sprint.

## There's the Plan. Here's the Platform.

Now you have the roadmap, and ClearCo has the platform behind it — connecting your talent data, putting AI to work inside your actual workflows, and giving you the reporting credibility to prove ROI at every stage.

[See ClearCo in action](#)



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