

Compensation Planning Buyers Guide

Software Provider and Product Assessment



EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

***ISG** Research™



Compensation Planning

The strategic oversight of compensation planning and management processes plays a crucial role in how businesses attract, retain, and motivate talent within a competitive marketplace. Recent trends and innovations have significantly influenced this area, particularly through the adoption of technology and data analytics. As the digital transformation accelerates, enterprises are utilizing advanced software and artificial intelligence-driven tools to streamline compensation processes, enhance wage equity, and personalize employee rewards. Additionally, the rise of remote work and the gig economy has prompted a re-evaluation of compensation strategies to accommodate diverse work arrangements and expectations. This evolution necessitates flexible and inclusive approaches that not only address the changing needs of the workforce but also foster a more engaged and productive workplace culture.

ISG Research defines compensation planning as determining and managing an enterprise's overall remuneration strategy, including salary structures, bonuses and benefits, to ensure competitive and equitable compensation for employees.



A growing emphasis on skills-based evaluations and personalized packages is changing how enterprises approach compensation planning, fostering inclusivity, and fairness.

This process helps businesses maintain competitiveness in the labor market, align compensation with business objectives and support employee engagement and loyalty. Effective compensation planning can positively impact employee experience, and it ensures that the organization can respond swiftly to changes in the job market or workforce dynamics. Currently, compensation planning is shifting towards continuous methodologies that require real-time data and analytics to adjust compensation strategies proactively. A growing emphasis on skills-based evaluations and personalized packages is changing how enterprises approach compensation planning, fostering inclusivity and fairness.

Employees expect a more personalized experience in the workplace, especially when it comes to compensation and rewards. Total rewards, including compensation, benefits, perks and development opportunities, are competitive differentiators and should be a key part of an organization's efforts to attract and retain top talent. As

the world experiences innovation and rapidly changing conditions, enterprises are feeling increasing pressure to accommodate worker preferences in total compensation, where flexibility and personalization combined with equitable practices are critical. AI and machine learning technologies increasingly make it possible to personalize compensation and rewards in a way that scales. Today's digital tools for compensation management are innovating rapidly. They don't just personalize rewards; they also allow enterprises to model funding for compensation pools and structure pay according to their unique needs. These systems can handle a multitude of complex plans and automatically tweak compensation packages



whenever an employee's situation changes. They can also match jobs with market compensation data even when there are no direct comparisons available, helping enterprises understand the costs of making pay adjustments for specific job families or business sectors. This is especially important now that skills-based hiring is gaining traction. Enterprises are looking beyond just job titles to evaluate roles and pay based on the actual skills and competencies required, making it easier to ensure that everyone is compensated fairly, no matter where they fit in the organizational hierarchy.

In the past, compensation management involved issuing a compensation statement annually that outlined base salaries and bonuses. These statements have evolved significantly, to align with the expectations of workers, now showcasing the comprehensive investment an organization makes in each employee. This includes not only benefits—beyond just insurance and retirement plans—but also the value of accrued paid time off, potential variable compensation, incentive payout scenarios, various non-financial rewards and even investment in professional development. What was once a dreaded yearly review cycle for compensation and rewards has transformed into a more modern approach focused on continuous compensation management, met with enthusiasm. Historically, enterprises followed a cyclical process, assessing market conditions annually, or less frequently, to ensure competitive and fair employee remuneration. While this structured method helped gauge market trends, today's competitive landscape has prompted enterprises to adopt continuous planning as a crucial strategy. Those that use technology to constantly monitor and adapt their compensation plans will be better equipped to stay agile and responsive in an ever-changing market. By 2026, one-third of enterprises utilizing compensation planning tools will require them to support complex (salary increase and bonus) budget allocation modeling scenarios, rules and guidelines, by both P&L and talent segments.

Total Compensation Management

Market Assertion

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Matthew Brown
Director of Research, HCM



ISG Research™

Long-standing behaviors of compensation professionals have many businesses still leaning heavily on spreadsheets for managing and reporting data during compensation cycles. This process creates barriers for collaboration and deprives the enterprise of the benefits to be recognized through the adoption of compensation technologies. Research indicates that nearly one-third of enterprises using spreadsheets encounter occasional errors that result in incorrect employee payments, with an additional one-half identifying error before payment is processed. In 2024, there are far too many enterprises that still depend on spreadsheets in their compensation practices. Fortunately, today's top rewards platforms have evolved to offer a more user-friendly experience that mimics spreadsheet layouts, drastically reducing the learning curve while providing superior security and version control. Software today now



includes powerful visualization tools, seamless integration with employee data and market pricing information, and enhanced modeling capabilities for what-if scenarios—far surpassing what traditional spreadsheets can deliver. These systems significantly reduce the risk of data errors, which can lead to financial discrepancies or employee dissatisfaction, and position organizations for greater accuracy and efficiency in their compensation practices.

“Today, ensuring pay equity is more critical than ever as workers increasingly expect fair compensation across all demographics, including race, gender, ethnicity, age and even geography.”

Today, ensuring pay equity is more critical than ever as workers increasingly expect fair compensation across all demographics, including race, gender, ethnicity, age and even geography. This expectation aligns with the growing investor focus on environmental, social, and governance criteria, where social consciousness is becoming a vital consideration in investment choices. Coupled with evolving regulatory and legal requirements around pay transparency and compensation practices, the spotlight on pay equity is intensifying. Yet, strikingly, fewer than one-half of enterprises actively manage compensation equitably. To address these challenges, using these advanced systems, businesses can make informed and equitable compensation decisions, streamline compliance with regulations, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to fairness and inclusivity in their compensation practices.

The ISG Buyers Guide™ for Compensation Planning evaluates products based on their ability to deliver

against the capabilities as defined to support general best practices for compensation planning processes at large enterprises. Software for compensation planning is essential for ensuring that pay structures are designed to be both competitive and sustainable, helping enterprises to attract and retain top talent while maintaining budgetary control. To be included in this Buyers Guide, products must include capabilities that support overall compensation planning and strategy needs, as well as the needs of multiple personas involved in the compensation planning activities (managers, administrators and executives), integration with various tools and processes in support of compensation planning practices, and support for multiple aspects of ensuring pay equity. Some of the providers featured in this guide may also offer features that support aspects of compensation management processes, but those capabilities are not in scope for this report.

This research evaluates the following software providers that offer products that address key elements of compensation planning as we define it: 15Five, ADP, Anaplan, beqom, Cornerstone OnDemand, Dayforce, HRSoft, Infor, Lattice, Oracle, Pave, Payscale, PeopleFluent, Salary.com, SAP, UKG, Unit4 and Workday.



Buyers Guide Overview

For over two decades, ISG Research has conducted market research in a spectrum of areas across business applications, tools and technologies. We have designed the Buyers Guide to provide a balanced perspective of software providers and products that is rooted in an understanding of the business requirements in any enterprise. Utilization of our research



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methodology and decades of experience enables our Buyers Guide to be an effective method to assess and select software providers and products. The findings of this research undertaking contribute to our comprehensive approach to rating software providers in a manner that is based on the assessments completed by an enterprise.

The ISG Buyers Guide™ for Compensation Planning is the distillation of over a year of market and product research efforts. It is an assessment of how well software providers' offerings address enterprises' requirements for compensation planning software. The index is structured to support a request for information (RFI) that could be used in the request for proposal (RFP) process by incorporating all criteria needed to evaluate, select, utilize and maintain relationships with software providers. An effective product and customer experience with a provider can ensure the best long-term relationship and value achieved from a resource and financial investment.

In this Buyers Guide, ISG Research evaluates the software in seven key categories that are weighted to reflect buyers' needs based on our expertise and research. Five are product-experience related: Adaptability, Capability, Manageability, Reliability and Usability. In addition, we consider two customer-experience categories: Validation and Total Cost of Ownership/Return on Investment (TCO/ROI). To assess functionality, one of the components of Capability, we applied the ISG Research Value Index methodology and blueprint, which links the personas and processes for compensation planning to an enterprise's requirements.

The structure of the research reflects our understanding that the effective evaluation of software providers and products involves far more than just examining product features, potential revenue or customers generated from a provider's marketing and sales efforts. We believe it is important to take a comprehensive, research-based approach, since making the wrong choice of compensation planning technology can raise the total cost of ownership, lower the return on investment and hamper an enterprise's ability to reach its full performance potential. In addition, this approach can reduce the project's development and



deployment time and eliminate the risk of relying on a short list of software providers that does not represent a best fit for your enterprise.

ISG Research believes that an objective review of software providers and products is a critical business strategy for the adoption and implementation of compensation planning software and applications. An enterprise's review should include a thorough analysis of both what is possible and what is relevant. We urge enterprises to do a thorough job of evaluating compensation planning systems and tools and offer this Buyers Guide as both the results of our in-depth analysis of these providers and as an evaluation methodology.



How To Use This Buyers Guide

Evaluating Software Providers: The Process

We recommend using the Buyers Guide to assess and evaluate new or existing software providers for your enterprise. The market research can be used as an evaluation framework to establish a formal request for information from providers on products and customer experience and will shorten the cycle time when creating an RFI. The steps listed below provide a process that can facilitate best possible outcomes.

1. Define the business case and goals.
Define the mission and business case for investment and the expected outcomes from your organizational and technological efforts.
2. Specify the business needs.
Defining the business requirements helps identify what specific capabilities are required with respect to people, processes, information and technology.
3. Assess the required roles and responsibilities.
Identify the individuals required for success at every level of the enterprise from executives to frontline workers and determine the needs of each.
4. Outline the project's critical path.
What needs to be done, in what order and who will do it? This outline should make clear the prior dependencies at each step of the project plan.
5. Ascertain the technology approach.
Determine the business and technology approach that most closely aligns to your enterprise's requirements.
6. Establish software provider evaluation criteria.
Utilize the product experience: Adaptability, Capability, Manageability, Reliability and Usability, and the customer experience in TCO/ROI and Validation.
7. Evaluate and select the technology properly.
Weight the categories in the technology evaluation criteria to reflect your enterprise's priorities to determine the short list of software providers and products.
8. Establish the business initiative team to start the project.
Identify who will lead the project and the members of the team needed to plan and execute it with timelines, priorities and resources.



The Findings

All of the products we evaluated are feature-rich, but not all the capabilities offered by a software provider are equally valuable to types of workers or support everything needed to manage products on a continuous basis. Moreover, the existence of too many capabilities may be a negative factor for an enterprise if it introduces unnecessary complexity. Nonetheless, you may decide that a larger number of features in the product is a plus, especially if some of them match your enterprise’s established practices or support an initiative that is driving the purchase of new software.

Factors beyond features and functions or software provider assessments may become a deciding factor. For example, an enterprise may face budget constraints such that the TCO evaluation can tip the balance to one provider or another. This is where the Value Index methodology and the appropriate category weighting can be applied to determine the best fit of software providers and products to your specific needs.

Overall Scoring of Software Providers Across Categories

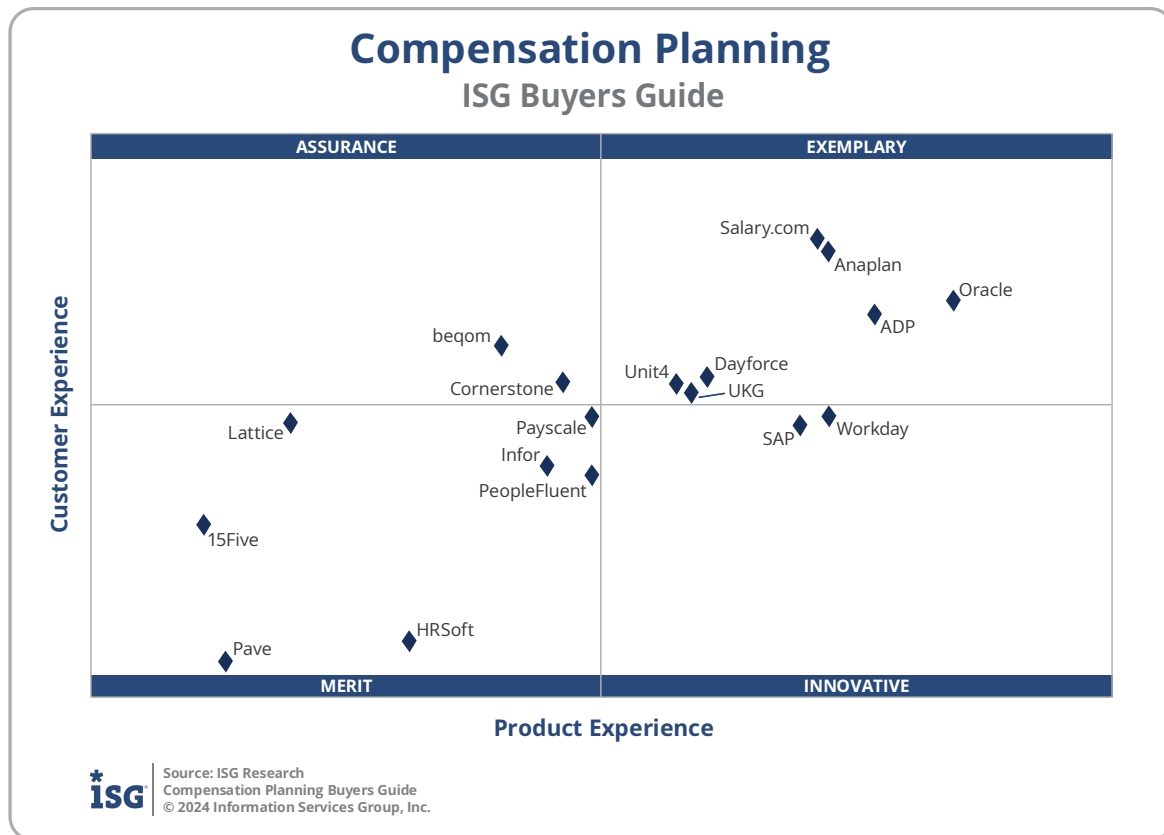
The research finds Oracle atop the list, followed by Salary.com and ADP. Companies that place in the top three of a category earn the designation of Leader. Oracle has done so in six categories; ADP in four; Salary.com and Anaplan in three; UKG in two and SAP, Dayforce and Workday in one category.

The overall representation of the research below places the rating of the Product Experience and Customer Experience on the x and y axes, respectively, to provide a visual representation and classification of the software providers. Those providers whose Product Experience have a higher weighted performance to the axis in aggregate of the five product categories place farther to the right, while the performance and weighting for the two Customer Experience categories determines placement on the vertical axis. In short, software providers that place closer to the upper-right on this chart performed better than those closer to the lower-left.

The research places software providers into one of four overall categories: Assurance, Exemplary, Merit or Innovative. This representation classifies providers’ overall weighted performance.

Compensation Planning			
Overall			
Providers	Grade	Performance	
Oracle	A	Leader	88.9%
Salary.com	A	Leader	88.0%
ADP	A-	Leader	87.0%
Anaplan	A-	Leader	87.0%
Workday	A-		84.1%
SAP	A-		82.6%
Dayforce	A-		82.5%
UKG	B++		81.3%
Unit4	B++		81.0%
Payscale	B++		79.8%
beqom	B++		79.6%
PeopleFluent	B++		79.3%
Cornerstone	B++		77.8%
Infor	B++		76.0%
Lattice	B+		71.3%
HRSOFT	B+		70.0%
15Five	B		66.9%
Pave	B		66.7%

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Exemplary: The categorization and placement of software providers in Exemplary (upper right) represent those that performed the best in meeting the overall Product and Customer Experience requirements. The providers rated Exemplary are: ADP, Anaplan, Dayforce, Oracle, Salary.com, UKG and Unit4.

Innovative: The categorization and placement of software providers in Innovative (lower right) represent those that performed the best in meeting the overall Product Experience requirements but did not achieve the highest levels of requirements in Customer Experience. The providers rated Innovative are: SAP and Workday.

Assurance: The categorization and placement of software providers in Assurance (upper left) represent those that achieved the highest levels in the overall Customer Experience requirements but did not achieve the highest levels of Product Experience. The providers rated Assurance are: beqom and Cornerstone.

Merit: The categorization of software providers in Merit (lower left) represents those that did not exceed the median of performance in Customer or Product Experience or surpass the threshold for the other three categories. The providers rated Merit are: 15five, HRSoft, Infor, Lattice, Pave, Payscale and PeopleFluent.

We warn that close provider placement proximity should not be taken to imply that the packages evaluated are functionally identical or equally well suited for use by every enterprise



or for a specific process. Although there is a high degree of commonality in how enterprises handle compensation planning, there are many idiosyncrasies and differences in how they do these functions that can make one software provider's offering a better fit than another's for a particular enterprise's needs.

We advise enterprises to assess and evaluate software providers based on organizational requirements and use this research as a supplement to internal evaluation of a provider and products.



Product Experience

The process of researching products to address an enterprise’s needs should be comprehensive. Our Value Index methodology examines Product Experience and how it aligns with an enterprise’s life cycle of onboarding, configuration, operations, usage and maintenance. Too often, software providers are not evaluated for the entirety of the product; instead, they are evaluated on market execution and vision of the future, which are flawed since they do not represent an enterprise’s requirements but how the provider operates. As more software providers orient to a complete product experience, evaluations will be more robust.

The research results in Product Experience are ranked at 80%, or four-fifths, of the overall rating using the specific underlying weighted category performance. Importance was placed on the categories as follows: Usability (20%), Capability (30%), Reliability (10%), Adaptability (10%) and Manageability (10%). This weighting impacted the resulting overall ratings in this research. Oracle, ADP and Workday were designated Product Experience Leaders. While not a Leader, Anaplan was also found to meet a broad range of enterprise product experience requirements.

Many enterprises will only evaluate capabilities for workers in IT or administration, but the research identified the criticality of Usability (20% weighting) across a broader set of usage personas that should participate in compensation planning.

Compensation Planning Product Experience		
Providers	Grade	Performance
Oracle	A	Leader 72.1%
ADP	A	Leader 70.2%
Workday	A-	Leader 69.2%
Anaplan	A-	69.1%
Salary.com	A-	68.9%
SAP	A-	68.5%
Dayforce	A-	66.3%
UKG	A-	65.9%
Unit4	A-	65.6%
Payscale	B++	64.4%
PeopleFluent	B++	64.1%
Infor	B++	63.0%
Cornerstone	B++	62.9%
beqom	B++	61.4%
HRSOft	B+	59.3%
Lattice	B+	56.5%
Pave	B	55.0%
15Five	B	54.5%

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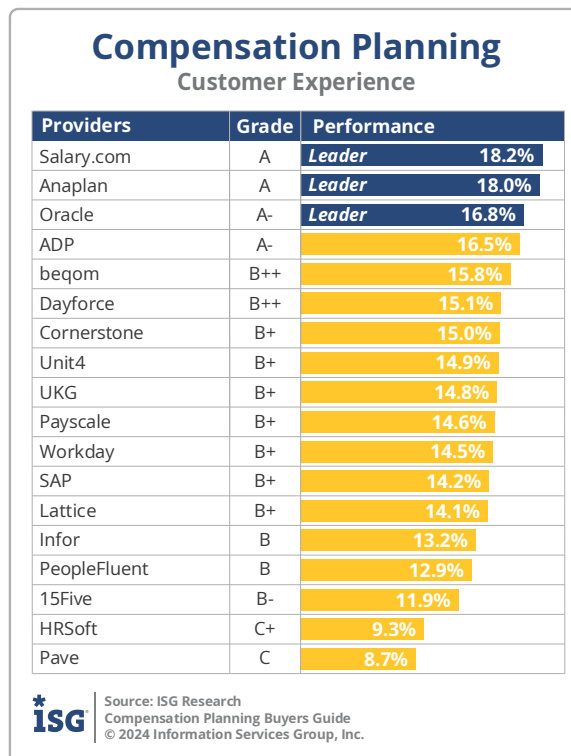


Customer Experience

The importance of a customer relationship with a software provider is essential to the actual success of the products and technology. The advancement of the Customer Experience and the entire life cycle an enterprise has with its software provider is critical for ensuring satisfaction in working with that provider. Technology providers that have chief customer officers are more likely to have greater investments in the customer relationship and focus more on their success. These leaders also need to take responsibility for ensuring this commitment is made abundantly clear on the website and in the buying process and customer journey.

The research results in Customer Experience are ranked at 20%, or one-fifth, using the specific underlying weighted category performance as it relates to the framework of commitment and value to the software provider-customer relationship. The two evaluation categories are Validation (10%) and TCO/ROI (10%), which are weighted to represent their importance to the overall research.

The software providers that evaluated the highest overall in the aggregated and weighted Customer Experience categories are Salary.com, Anaplan and Oracle. These category leaders best communicate commitment and dedication to customer needs. While not a Leader, ADP was also found to meet a broad range of enterprise customer experience requirements.



Several software providers we evaluated have sufficient customer experience information available through websites and presentations. While many have customer case studies to promote success, others lack depth in articulating commitment to customer experience and an enterprise’s compensation planning journey. As the commitment to a software provider is a continuous investment, the importance of supporting customer experience in a holistic evaluation should be included and not underestimated.



Appendix: Software Provider Inclusion

For inclusion in The ISG Buyers Guide™ for Compensation Planning in 2024, a software provider must be in good standing financially and ethically, have at least \$10 million in annual or projected revenue verified using independent sources, sell products and provide support on at least two continents, and have at least 50 customers. The principal source of the relevant business unit's revenue must be software-related and there must have been at least one major software release in the last 18 months.

Compensation planning centers on the tasks and personas involved in strategizing compensation programs. It is about designing effective compensation structures to attract, retain, and motivate employees. Operationally focused compensation planning ensures that the organization's compensation strategies align with business objectives. Key activities include creating and adjusting compensation plans based on market trends, organizational goals, and individual performance. Compensation planners balance fixed (salary) and variable (bonuses, stock options) components, address equity and fairness and collaborate with managers and executives to plan compensation budgets.

The research is designed to be independent of the specifics of software provider packaging and pricing. To represent the real-world environment in which businesses operate, we include providers that offer suites or packages of products that may include relevant individual modules or applications. If a software provider is actively marketing, selling and developing a product for the general market and it is reflected on the provider's website that the product is within the scope of the research, that provider is automatically evaluated for inclusion.

All software providers that offer relevant compensation planning products and meet the inclusion requirements were invited to participate in the evaluation process at no cost to them.

Software providers that meet our inclusion criteria but did not completely participate in our Buyers Guide were assessed solely on publicly available information. As this could have a significant impact on classification and ratings, we recommend additional scrutiny when evaluating those providers.



Products Evaluated

Provider	Product Names	Version	Release Month/Year
15Five	Compensation powered by Comprehensive	SaaS	August 2024
ADP	ADP Compensation Management	SaaS	August 2024
Anaplan	Anaplan for Compensation Planning and Modeling	SaaS	August 2024
beqom	beqom	SaaS	August 2024
Cornerstone	Cornerstone Compensation	SaaS	August 2024
Dayforce	Dayforce Compensation	SaaS	August 2024
HRSoft	HRSoft	SaaS	August 2024
Infor	Infor Compensation Management	2024.04	January 2024
Lattice	Lattice Compensation	Summer 2024	June 2024
Oracle	Oracle Cloud Workforce Compensation	24C	August 2024
Pave	Pave	SaaS	August 2024
Payscale	Payfactors/MarketPay	SaaS	March 2024
PeopleFluent	Compensation	24.07	July 2024
Salary.com	CompAnalyst / CompXL	SaaS	April 2024
SAP	SuccessFactors Compensation	1H 2024	May 2024
UKG	UKG Pro Compensation	2024.R1	May 2024
Unit4	Unit4 Compensation Planning	SaaS	August 2024
Workday	Workday Compensation	2024R1	March 2024



Providers of Promise

We did not include software providers that, as a result of our research and analysis, did not satisfy the criteria for inclusion in this Buyers Guide. These are listed below as “Providers of Promise.”

Provider	Product	Revenue	Countries	Customers	Capability
Aeqium	Aeqium	No	No	No	Yes
Bettercomp	BetterComp	No	No	Yes	Yes
Compport	Compport	No	No	No	Yes
Decusoft	Decusoft Compose	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Syndio	PayEQ, Pay Finder, OppEQ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial
Zimyo	Zimyo Compensation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes



About ISG Software Research

ISG Software Research provides authoritative market research and coverage on the business and IT aspects of the software industry. We distribute research and insights daily through our [community](#), and we provide a portfolio of consulting, advisory, research and education services for enterprises, software and service providers, and investment firms. Our premier service, ISG Software Research On-Demand, provides structured education and advisory support with subject-matter expertise and experience in the software industry. ISG Research Buyers Guides support the RFI/RFP process and help enterprises assess, evaluate and select software providers through tailored [Assessment Services](#) and our Value Index methodology. Visit www.ventanaresearch.com to sign up for free community membership with access to our research and insights.

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