What to look for in a life sciences incentive compensation (IC) suite: A buyer's checklist

Today's IC teams need more than just a tool. They need a suite of interconnected applications that's intelligent, scalable and built for the complexities of life sciences. Use this checklist to ask the right questions, compare vendors objectively and make a confident, future-ready choice.

	What to look for	Questions to ask vendors	Why it matters
	Readiness		
☐	Productized suite, not a custom build	Is the suite truly productized with shared updates and a transparent roadmap?	Productized applications avoid hidden services, accelerate innovation and lower the total cost of ownership.
☐	Full IC life cycle coverage	Does the suite support plan design, crediting, eligibility, payouts, reporting and field engagement?	A unified suite ensures continuity, reduces integration effort and simplifies issue tracking.
☐	Prebuilt pharma IC logic	Is the suite preconfigured for pharma-specific IC structures like ranks, management by objectives, contests and local rules?	Out-of-the-box pharma workflows, built on industry best practices, speed up implementation, increase accuracy and reduce the need for custom coding.
	Scalability and performance		
☐	Global-scale performance and configurability	Can the suite support multicountry execution, local rule differences and high-volume IC cycles from a single instance without performance issues?	Global IC needs centralized control with flexibility. Integrated suites that can't scale lead to delays, errors and manual workarounds that slow decision-making.
☐	Unified, modular architecture	Does the suite offer native integration across its own modules such as plan management, payouts and reporting—and with enterprise tools like customer relationship management, human resources and finance systems?	An integrated suite reduces data inconsistencies, streamlines execution and eliminates manual reconciliation. This ensures a smoother user experience and fewer support needs—especially important in global operations.

	What to look for	Questions to ask vendors	Why it matters
		Automation and intelligence	
☐	Embedded automation and validations	Are key processes such as crediting, eligibility and payout validations automated with built-in checks?	These processes reduce manual effort, improve accuracy and speed up cycle time—all critical for large teams.
☐	AI-powered insights and detection	Does the suite use AI for trend analysis, anomaly detection or issue root-cause identification?	AI helps indentify issues proactively and improves decision quality at every stage of IC execution.
☐	Gen AI for rep experience	Do reps have access to tools such as earnings calculators or AI assistants that explain payouts?	These tools help improve transparency and trust with the field, reducing disputes and boosting motivation.
		Self-service and adoption	
☐	Business user self-service	Can IC operations teams make rule changes, run cycles and manage disputes without IT support?	This autonomy gives control back to the business, shortens response time and reduces cost and dependency on vendors.
☐	Structured onboarding and enablement	What kind of training, certification and user support is offered post-implementation?	Training and support ensures faster ramp-up and long-term adoption that are critical for business continuity and decentralization.

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