

Ework's guide to VMS – finding the right procurement system for consultants

Intro

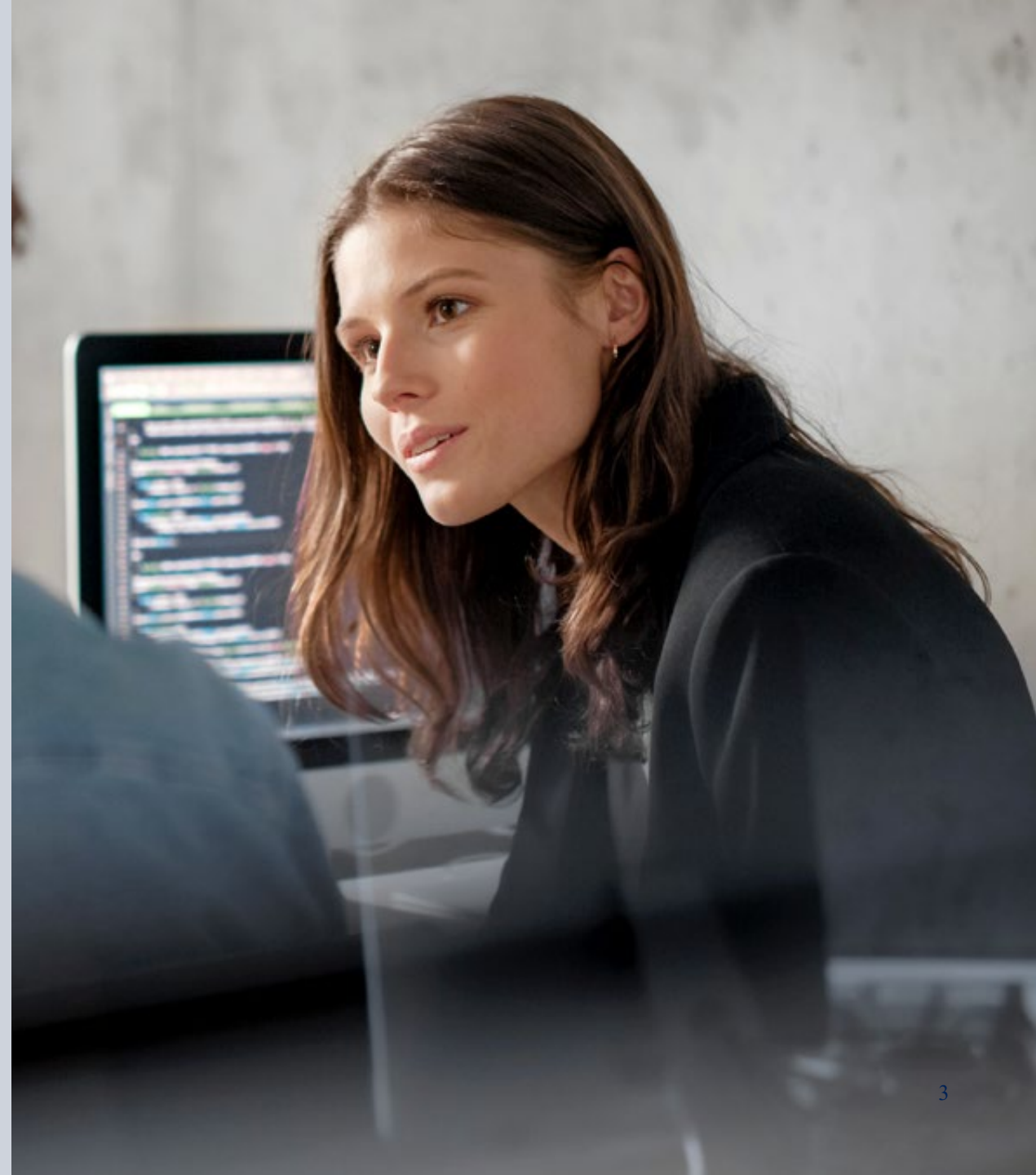
Managing the procurement of consultants manually is often a challenging and time-consuming task. Nevertheless, a significant portion of today's larger companies lacks an automated system for their consultant procurement. With a Vendor Management System (VMS), you not only save time and money but also gain a better overview of the process and greater control over your consultant acquisitions.

In this guide, you will discover why you need a procurement system for consultants, what it takes to find the right solution for your specific company, and what Ework can offer. By evaluating your needs and understanding the processes, you will soon realize the multitude of benefits a VMS brings to the future of consultant procurement.

Consultant procurement: Navigating complexity and maintaining control

Procuring consultants involves a fundamentally complex process with numerous steps, all while keeping the focus on the people involved. Without a comprehensive overview of the entire chain, there is a looming risk of losing control over both the process and the outcomes of consultant acquisitions across the organization. Failing to evaluate consultant management makes it impossible to streamline and improve, potentially resulting in squandering funds into a bottomless pit.

Many companies, including larger organizations handling 100 or more consultants, still manage their consultant procurement manually. However, when dealing with such a multitude of consultants, the opportunity for a clear overview and efficient coordination often slips away. This can lead to lack of control and insight into purchases, ultimately not knowing the true cost of consultants.



With a procurement system for consultants, also known as a Vendor Management System (VMS), you gather all your information in one place. This system provides you with control over the process, allowing you to digitally manage the entire consultant procurement journey — from the initial need and request to the consultant's project completion. By focusing on the right aspects and directing resources where you can truly make a difference, you free up both time and money for the entire organization.



The definition of a Vendor Management System (VMS)

A Vendor Management System (VMS) is a system that digitizes and centralizes the entire consultant procurement process, from request to offboarding. A VMS consolidates everything related to the company's consultant procurement in one place. All processes handled along this journey are integrated and linked within the system to facilitate the entire chain. The requesting manager can easily create a consultant request, if needed, using pre-filled templates for common categories, roles, and assignments typically sourced, such as IT, engineering, construction, technology, etc. In the pre-filled template, the manager can add project-specific information and an appropriate title for the consultant assignment before submitting the request for approval and authorization within the organization. Even the approver does this directly within the VMS.

In the system, you then link your framework agreement suppliers, making it easy to send requests to those who can provide candidates for the assignment. Subsequently, the next processes take over, including contract creation and time reporting, both of which are also integrated (if needed).



How to prepare for the purchase of a VMS system

1. Evaluate if you're ready

Working with a VMS requires effort. You can't simply purchase a system and expect everything to fall into place – it necessitates work and clear goals to succeed with your expected strategies.

Therefore, it's essential to start by considering if you are prepared for this type of change. Or should you outsource this work? What are our goals in adopting a VMS? Are there parallel IT projects currently underway that require attention, or are there other mission-critical challenges we need to address before considering a VMS? If the timing isn't right, it's better to wait until the organization is better positioned.

If/when you decide to proceed, prioritize the implementation!

2. Map your challenges and needs

Small companies face entirely different challenges than large ones when it comes to consultant procurement. If you have a flow of *over 50 consultants per year*, there is every reason to scrutinize your methods to identify the challenges and deficiencies. Afterward, it's crucial to prioritize what needs to be addressed first.

You want to start simply and, preferably, choose a provider where the system can evolve over time. You can either begin with a specific part of the process or within a particular department and add more modules as your needs are met.

3. Set goals and decide what to evaluate

One of the initial reasons for implementing a VMS is that it provides better opportunities for monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, it's necessary to *answer early on what you actually want to achieve – and why*.

The VMS can lead to significant cost savings in your operations and also enhance your supplier relationships, so they can deliver better consultants in the future. Your goals should drive the entire strategy forward.

4. Investigate your internal processes

Just as you need to map your needs and challenges with consultant procurement in the company, it's essential to be aware of your internal processes. This can be a challenge in itself as it's common for different people to do things differently.

The purpose of a VMS is to integrate existing processes into the system, but if you're unsure about what they actually look like, this is something that can be clarified with a VMS provider. They can also demonstrate best practices in the system and help you envision an ideal scenario for how the process should be. But remember, start simple. It's a new way of working for the organization.

5. Communicate to the entire organization

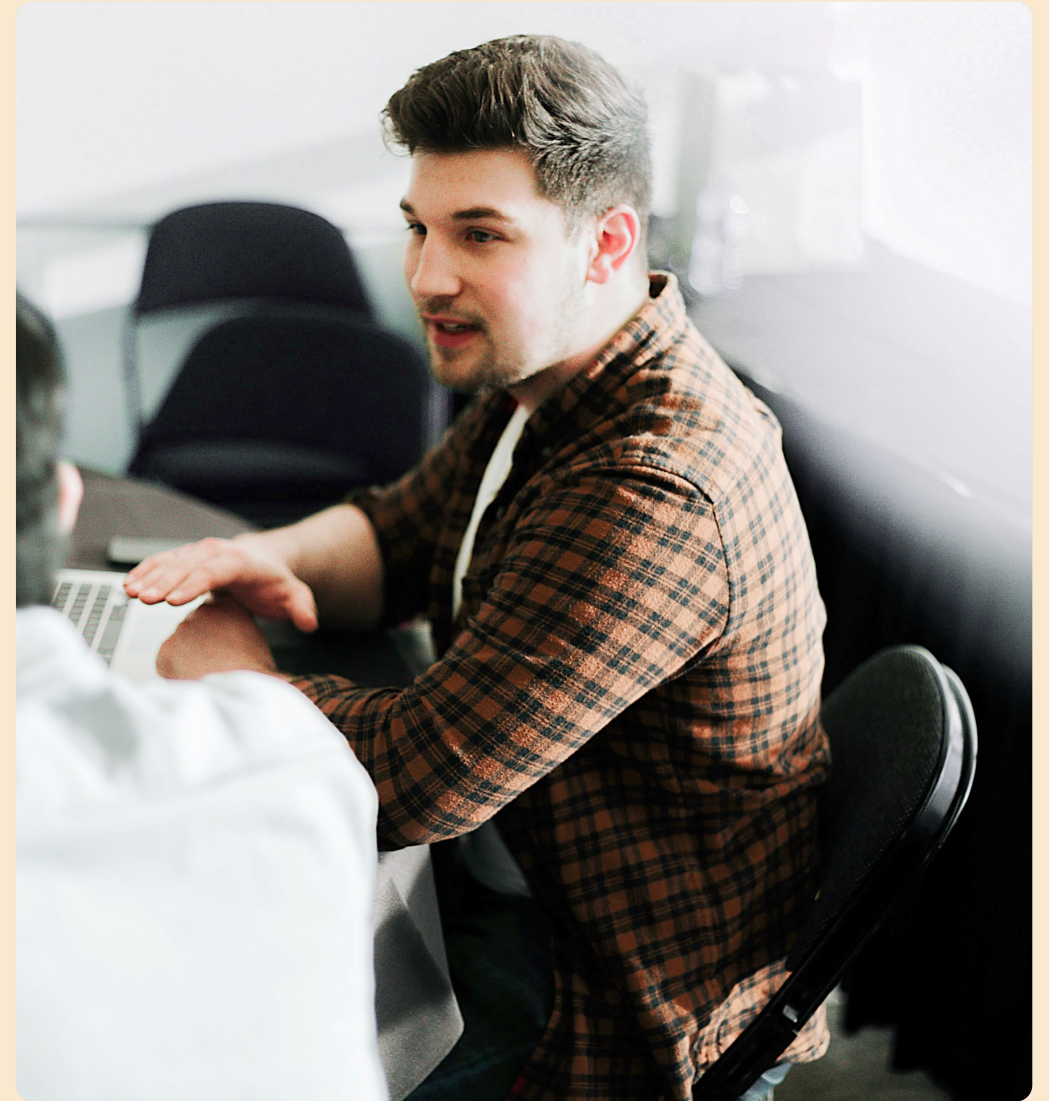
A final crucial aspect before purchasing a VMS is communication – both within the internal organization and to your existing suppliers who deliver consultants today.

Everyone must understand and be aware of what the future looks like with a VMS and what they can contribute to make the implementation as successful as possible.

Meet with suppliers and explore the system

The next step is to invite suppliers so you get the opportunity to get hands-on experience with the system. There's a lot behind the scenes of a VMS, and for you to gain insight into what it can actually do for your organization, it's essential to be clear about your needs and challenges. Be open and describe how your general process looks by painting an example or a classic scenario of how consultant management works in your organization.

The goal is for the supplier to understand and assist you, showcasing the right features in the system. Feel free to invite more people from the organization and delve deeper into various functions to understand how you currently operate and what needs you see for the future. It can involve everything from how you currently submit job requests to the consultant requirements you have moving forward.



5 questions to ask the supplier

1. What features does the system include, and what workflows can you establish?

Here, you want to ensure that the supplier can handle the fundamental requirements and cover the entire process.

2. What is the user-friendliness like for everyone who will be working in the system?

Here, you want to confirm that the system is easy and intuitive to use and that it seamlessly functions on mobile devices. After all, the average user is typically an occasional user.

3. How does the system comply with current laws and regulations?

Here, you want to ensure that the VMS meets your company's security requirements, such as GDPR compliance and other regulatory demands.

4. What is your implementation plan?

Here, you want to receive information about what is required from your end during implementation, the estimated timeline, and the level of support and assistance you can expect during the process.

5. How can you assist with the operation and maintenance of your VMS and consultant strategy?

Here, you want to gain insight into how the supplier can help drive change and support the organization in advancing your consultant strategy.





A modern VMS from Ework

With Ework's VMS, you get a comprehensive solution where we implement, maintain, and manage the entire system for you - entirely tailored to your current needs.

Additionally, Ework holds a unique position as a consultant broker, which provides you with additional advantages as a customer. The VMS system is fully integrated with our marketplace, Verama, where our partners and individual consultants participate. This allows you to choose whether to send your consultant requests to your existing suppliers or through Ework to access all other consultant profiles in the database – a variation of the trending Direct Sourcing process but with control.

Another crucial aspect is access to skills, and the right skills at that! More and more companies are adopting a consultant strategy to support and complete internal projects. This means that an increasing number of organizations are competing to secure the same skill sets. So, why should they choose you as their workplace?

In our VMS, we provide you with the opportunity to enhance your brand and engage in employer branding directly with consultants. Simultaneously, it allows you to position your organization in a way that attracts talent over time. Moreover, the built-in connection to the marketplace grants you access to unique reports, such as market trends specific to consultants.



6 benefits of Ework's VMS

1. **It streamlines and expedites the consultant procurement process** - both before, during, and after. By automating significant portions of tasks previously done manually, it frees up time for your personnel to focus on other critical activities.
2. **It provides benchmarks and simplifies competitive bidding.** The ability to evaluate and compare different suppliers directly within the same system makes it easier to assess consultants and prices.
3. **It creates transparency.** When the entire process is coordinated within a single system, it becomes straightforward to track who is doing what and monitor various actions.
4. **It centralizes consultant acquisitions.** By implementing a consistent approach to consultant procurement throughout the organization, you establish a unified process for all ordering managers and their business units.
5. **It enhances security.** Our VMS adheres to clearly defined GDPR and compliance rules, promoting greater IT security, traceability, and peace of mind.
6. **It simplifies evaluation and analysis.** Since everything is consolidated, generating reports and acting on the data the system holds becomes straightforward, allowing for more effective evaluation of your suppliers.



Summary

In a VMS, you gain an overview and control of your consultant procurement process from start to finish. To determine which VMS is right for you, you need to review how you could streamline your consultant procurement process and how you would like to work within the system. It's important to be aware that some effort will be required from you and others in the company, but ultimately, it's an investment that will save you both time and money.

Ework is a market-leading talent solutions provider with the largest network of

professionals in Northern Europe. We are listed on the stock exchange in Sweden and also operate in Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Poland. At Ework, we combine personal contact with well-developed systems, including our extensive consultant network, matching process, Workstyles, and our digital platform. We believe that the best results are achieved when these elements are combined. If you need assistance with implementing a VMS system, we are happy to help. Contact us for more information on how we can assist you.

