

VENDOR-NEUTRAL. BUILT FOR FILM & TV PRODUCTION FINANCE.

The Buyer's Framework for Production Payroll Platforms

Eight dimensions, one scorecard, and the questions that reveal what's underneath the feature list. Use it in any entertainment payroll vendor conversation.

Production Payroll & Accounting Platform Evaluator

A structured scorecard for evaluating vendors on the dimensions that matter most. Complete one copy per vendor. Score each dimension 1–5. Start with Dimension 01 — it frames every score below. Compare scorecards side by side before deciding.

Vendor Information

Vendor / Platform Name	Evaluation Date
Evaluator Name & Role	Production / Show Type

Start here — this score frames the credibility of every score below.

01. Platform Architecture

Core question: Was this platform built on a single database, or assembled through acquisitions or integrations?

Ask in demo: "Is payroll and accounting on a single database? What was built natively vs. acquired?" Also ask: - Walk through a timecard correction flowing to the cost report — live. - Where does the chart of accounts live — shared natively across payroll and accounting? - What was acquired vs. built in-house?	Evidence / what they showed: Watch for: <i>Vague answers about "integration" or inability to demo end-to-end data flow live.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td>OK</td><td colspan="2">Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK	Proven	
1	2	3	4	5								
Risk		OK	Proven									

02. Feature Breadth & Depth

Core question: Were core features built natively, or layered on through acquisition or third-party integration?

Ask in demo: "Show a payroll correction flowing through to accounting and cost reporting in real time." Also ask: - Walk through timecard coding from start work to posting. - How are AP, POs, and petty cash handled — in the same system as payroll? - What features were added in the last 18 months and how?	Features demonstrated: Watch for: <i>Features demoed in isolation with no cross-system data flow shown.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td>OK</td><td colspan="2">Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK	Proven	
1	2	3	4	5								
Risk		OK	Proven									

03. Operational Depth

Core question: How does the platform handle fringe rules, retro rate changes, multi-entity cost reporting, and corrections under deadline?

Ask in demo: "Walk through a retro rate change after payroll has already run — end to end." Also ask: - How do you handle a guild fringe rate change mid-season? - Show multi-entity or multi-location cost reporting across a full season. - What happens when a correction runs on a Friday at 6 p.m.?	Edge cases demonstrated: Watch for: <i>Scenarios answered in theory rather than shown live.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td>OK</td><td colspan="2">Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK	Proven	
1	2	3	4	5								
Risk		OK	Proven									

04. Compliance, Union & Audit Strength

Core question: How quickly can the platform produce audit-ready backup — and what is its track record with union and studio audits?

Ask in demo: "Show how you'd prep payroll backup for an audit from eight months ago." Also ask: - Which unions and locals do you have deepest compliance depth in? - Is your audit trail unified or reconstructed across systems? - SAG-AFTRA or IATSE audit with a client in the past 12 months?	Audit and compliance evidence: Watch for: <i>Audit prep described as a process rather than a button.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td>OK</td><td colspan="2">Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK	Proven	
1	2	3	4	5								
Risk		OK	Proven									

05. Enterprise Trust & History

Core question: How long has this vendor operated in this space, and which production tiers rely on them routinely?

Ask in demo: "Most complex production in the last 12 months? Can you share a reference?" Also ask: - Largest active show by crew size? - Which studios or networks are current clients? - How many productions run simultaneously at peak?	Production scale / reference evidence: Watch for: <i>References limited to small or non-comparable productions.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td>OK</td><td colspan="2">Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK	Proven	
1	2	3	4	5								
Risk		OK	Proven									

06. Usability & Speed

Core question: How fast can a production reach first payroll, and how does the platform perform for crew, accounting staff, and finance leadership?

Ask in demo: "How long from contract signature to first payroll on a typical scripted series?" Also ask: - Walk through crew onboarding and timecard experience. - How do corrections affect payroll processing speed? - Show the cost report view a CFO would use daily.	Onboarding and UX observations: Watch for: <i>Strong UX with no evidence of underlying data reliability.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td>OK</td><td colspan="2">Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK	Proven	
1	2	3	4	5								
Risk		OK	Proven									

07. Support Escalation

Core question: When something breaks Friday at 7 p.m., who owns the issue — and do they have authority to fix it?

Ask in demo: "If something breaks Friday night, who owns it and what does escalation look like?" Also ask: - Support hours and channels? - Support staff per active production? - Has the support team changed in the last 12 months?	Support structure observations: Watch for: <i>Support described as a ticketing system with no named escalation path.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td>OK</td><td colspan="2">Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK	Proven	
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08. Vendor Financial Health

Core question: How does this vendor's capital structure affect service reliability, product investment, and pricing stability over 3–5 years?

Ask in demo: "How does your capital structure support service and product investment over 3–5 years?" Also ask: • Profitable or fundraising-dependent? • Layoffs or restructurings in the last 18 months? • How is your product roadmap funded?	Financial structure observations: Watch for: <i>Deflection on financial questions or reliance on VC runway language.</i>	Score (Select one) <table><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Risk</td><td colspan="2">OK</td><td>Proven</td></tr></table> Rationale:	1	2	3	4	5	Risk		OK		Proven
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Summary Scorecard

#	Dimension	Score (1–5)	Top strength	Biggest risk / open question
01	Platform Architecture			
02	Feature Breadth & Depth			
03	Operational Depth			
04	Compliance, Union & Audit			
05	Enterprise Trust & History			
06	Usability & Speed			
07	Support Escalation			
08	Vendor Financial Health			
	TOTAL	/ 40		

Score Guide

35–40	Strong candidate. High confidence across all dimensions. Proceed to reference checks and contract review.
26–34	Qualified with conditions. Solid in most areas. Identify low-scoring dimensions and determine if disqualifying.
16–25	Proceed with caution. Material gaps in one or more critical dimensions. Require remediation plans before advancing.
Below 16	High risk. Not recommended for complex, union-heavy productions without substantial additional vetting.

Final Recommendation

Key differentiator vs. other vendors evaluated	Disqualifying concerns (if any)	Recommended next step