

The **UKG** Buyer's Guide

A research-enhanced framework for deciding whether UKG fits your workforce complexity, payroll and time discipline, and readiness to transform how people are scheduled, paid, and managed.

PREPARED BY
Align HCM

BUILT FOR
CHRO · CFO · HRIS · PAYROLL

**THE CORE
IDEA**

UKG is not one decision. It is four working together: **product fit, workforce complexity, payroll & time discipline, and long-term ownership.** This guide turns each one into a working evaluation you can defend to the board.

WHAT'S INSIDE Contents



Fourteen chapters, from the fit framework to a buyer workbook you can fill in.

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◆ HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

UKG is an established, capable platform. The question is not whether it works. It is whether your organization has the **workforce complexity to justify it, the payroll and time discipline to configure it, the manager readiness to sustain it, and the ownership clarity to keep it healthy after go-live**. Those four factors predict UKG outcomes more reliably than any feature comparison.

Executive Summary

The organizations running the most complex workforces in the world share one challenge: how they schedule, pay, and manage people drives business performance, and their current systems were never built for it. **UKG was built for exactly that reality.**

UKG is the category leader in workforce management, purpose-built for organizations where scheduling, time, payroll accuracy, and compliance create real operational pressure. The buyers who get the most out of UKG treat it as an **operating-model decision**, defining how work actually happens before they configure the system, and naming who owns scheduling, payroll, manager support, and the platform long after the implementation partner leaves.

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #f4a460;">INSTALLED BASE</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: #f4a460;">80,000+</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: white; font-size: 0.8em;">organizations worldwide run on UKG</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #f4a460;">PRODUCT PATHS</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: #00a0e3;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: white; font-size: 0.8em;">Pro, Pro Workforce Management, and Ready</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #f4a460;">BUILT FOR</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: #f4a460;">WFM</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: white; font-size: 0.8em;">time, scheduling, payroll & compliance depth</p>
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! The smartest questions to ask before you sign

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How does this align with our broader AI strategy? <hr/> ■ What business outcomes drive the project, and what is the case? <hr/> ■ Which product and modules fit our complexity and budget? <hr/> ■ Are HR, Payroll, Ops, Finance & IT aligned on who owns what? <hr/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are pay, union, premium, accrual & scheduling rules documented? <hr/> ■ Will managers own their workflows and the payroll impact? <hr/> ■ Do we have clean data and realistic payroll test scenarios? <hr/> ■ Who will own UKG after the implementation team leaves? <hr/> |
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◆ BUYER TAKEAWAY

The organizations that get fast results use UKG as a **strategic lever to operationalize productivity and cost savings**, treating the rollout as an operating change, not a technology swap. That discipline is what turns the investment into measurable gains in productivity, cost, and compliance.

What Buyers See When They Get It Right

UKG pays back the organizations that invest in it seriously. Forrester's **Total Economic Impact** study of UKG Pro Workforce Management found the following results for a composite enterprise customer.



Outcomes reported across industry briefs

- **Grupo Bimbo:** nearly 20% of manager time saved on scheduling & time
- **Bon Secours Mercy Health:** pay corrections cut 50% in one market
- **Super Retail Group:** overtime cut by 70%
- **North American airline:** compliance requests closed 50% faster

A 3% gain in workforce optimization. The data foundation underneath it makes every people decision faster and more defensible, from hiring and scheduling to promotion, succession, and cost management.

FORRESTER TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT · UKG PRO WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

The UKG Decision Buyers Are Really Making

For many buyers, UKG is the answer to a workforce operating reality their current systems were never built to handle.

- Payroll requires manual validation after every cycle
- Managers approve time late or inconsistently
- Schedules are built outside the system, off the books
- HR and Operations need a clear owner for workforce data
- Accruals, premiums & exceptions get manual review every period
- Reports are exported, reworked, and debated before decisions
- Compliance risk lives in spreadsheets and tribal knowledge
- Licensed features have real value waiting to be unlocked

The decision usually has five layers

- 1 Product fit**

Pro, Ready, and Pro Workforce Management serve different needs: enterprise HCM depth, growing-business all-in-one, or advanced WFM.
- 2 Workforce complexity**

UKG makes the most sense when scheduling, time, labor rules, locations, compliance, and manager execution create real pressure.
- 3 Payroll and time discipline**

Undefined policies and manual exceptions don't disappear during implementation. They become configuration decisions.
- 4 Data and integration governance**

UKG needs clean employee, job, pay, schedule, and benefits data, plus integration ownership across finance, identity, and reporting.
- 5 Long-term ownership**

New releases, AI, and process improvements create ongoing work. Buyers need a post-go-live model that keeps UKG healthy.

The Workforce Opportunities UKG Is Built to Unlock

Organizations evaluating UKG are typically pursuing **workforce operations excellence**: payroll that runs with confidence rather than manual validation, time and attendance that closes compliance gaps, scheduling that lives inside the system where managers trust it, and a post-go-live environment that keeps improving. Six areas define where UKG has the highest potential to deliver lasting value.

- 1 Payroll confidence without manual validation**

Configure pay rules, deductions, exceptions, and accruals so results are trusted on first review, not validated after the fact.

Buyer question: which payroll scenarios, tested before go-live, will build the most lasting confidence in the system?
- 2 Time & attendance under governed control**

Missed punches, transfers, differentials, meal rules, overtime, union rules, and leave all flow into payroll and compliance. Get them right once.

Buyer question: which timekeeping exceptions repeat every period, and could be handled automatically inside the system?
- 3 Scheduling as a governed, trusted workflow**

Coverage, skills, certifications, labor budgets, fatigue, and compliance working together, the area where better tools create the most visible gain.

Buyer question: which scheduling rules are business-critical, and which are habits that should be redesigned?

Opportunities, Continued

4 A single, trusted source for workforce data

Connect HR, Payroll, Ops, Finance, and IT data so reporting is trusted and decisions don't depend on who last exported a spreadsheet.

Buyer question: who owns each workforce data domain after go-live?

5 Managers as the engine of adoption

Managers approve time, publish schedules, and review exceptions. The best training connects their daily actions to payroll, compliance, and experience.

Buyer question: which manager behaviors, when supported, will accelerate the most value from UKG?

6 A post-go-live model that keeps improving

Go-live is the beginning of the most valuable phase: stabilization, ticket review, enhancement intake, release testing, and reporting governance.

Buyer question: who will own and grow UKG after the project team transitions out, and what resources will they need?

If those workforce opportunities resonate, with payroll confidence, governed time, trusted scheduling, connected data, manager-led adoption, and continuous improvement, then UKG is worth serious evaluation.

THE UKG BUYER'S GUIDE · ALIGN HCM

When UKG Is the Right Fit

UKG is strongest when workforce operations are central to the business and leaders need HR, payroll, time, scheduling, and WFM to work together cleanly.

Strong-fit signals

- Hourly, shift-based, frontline, or multi-location workforces
- WFM optimization affects profitability, coverage, or compliance
- Healthcare, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, public sector, logistics
- Payroll depends on complex time, premium, accrual & compliance rules
- Managers need better scheduling, approval & exception tools
- HR and Payroll need a cleaner operating model, not just a record
- Moving off Kronos Workforce Central, UTM, or disconnected tools
- Executive sponsorship, internal capacity & budget are in place

Common UKG fit profiles

The WFM buyer

Complex schedules, time rules, locations, and compliance the current process can't handle cleanly.

The payroll-confidence buyer

Payroll must be more accurate, more governed, and less dependent on manual heroics.

The frontline-ops buyer

The business depends on better scheduling, time, and labor decisions at the location level.

The modernization buyer

Already on UKG or Kronos and needs to migrate, optimize, or get more value from the environment.

The optimization buyer

Live on UKG but facing recurring tickets, reporting gaps, configuration drift, or unused modules.

The long-term buyer

Wants a durable HCM and workforce platform, not a short-term payroll fix.

When UKG May Not Be the Right Fit

UKG is purpose-built for specific kinds of workforce complexity. The best buyers are honest about whether that complexity matches their reality.

UKG may be too much platform when...

- The workforce is mostly salaried with simple, stable pay rules
- Scheduling and time complexity aren't significant drivers
- The priority is basic HR administration, not WFM depth
- Leadership prefers a single-database enterprise architecture
- The org isn't ready to define ownership or fund data cleanup
- Managers aren't expected to own their workflows consistently
- The goal is a fast tool swap, not an operating change
- No testing and training plan exists before implementation

Patterns worth addressing before you buy

- 1 The feature-shopping buyer**
Strong product research done. Now ready to move from comparing features to defining the operational problems the platform must solve.
- 2 The underfunded-implementation buyer**
Strong licensing budget, but the full implementation investment (data, testing, training, integrations, change management) still needs building out.
- 3 The unclear-owner buyer**
HR, Payroll, Ops, Finance & IT must work through ownership; naming owners before configuration makes everything downstream faster.
- 4 The manager-resistant buyer**
Managers will own approvals, scheduling & exceptions. Set them up with training, accountability, and support for far better adoption.

Implementation Readiness



The strongest UKG implementations don't begin with configuration. They begin with clear pain, named owners, clean data, realistic testing, and a post-go-live plan.

The live UKG buyer's guide frames implementation as a **six-to-eighteen-month effort** depending on complexity, module selection, data migration, integrations, and change management. Ready, Pro, and Pro Workforce Management do not create the same project shape.

1 Define the business problem

Start with specific, named problems, not broad goals. The clearer the pain, the faster the configuration, testing, and adoption.

2 Name decision owners

Payroll owns payroll. Ops owns scheduling. HR owns lifecycle and policy. Finance owns labor cost. IT owns security and integrations. Managers are represented.

3 Build the data-cleanup lane early

Review employee, job, location, pay-group, accrual, schedule, benefits, security, and historical data before build creates dependency on bad assumptions.

4 Treat testing as a payroll rehearsal

Test real pay scenarios, schedule changes, missed punches, transfers, retro, leave, overtime, premiums, integrations, reporting, and self-service.

5 Fund change management beyond comms

UKG changes daily behavior. Managers must approve, review, and publish; employees must trust self-service; admins must know when to fix or escalate.

6 Plan the first 90 days after go-live

Defect management, payroll stabilization, manager support, reporting cleanup, integration monitoring, and transition to SmartCare or long-term support.

Data, Integrations & Workforce Governance

UKG value depends on trust: in time, pay, schedules, reports, and approvals. That trust is built through governance, defined before configuration begins.

Data & Reporting Governance

- Official owners for employees, jobs, locations & pay groups
- Timekeeping, overtime, premium & differential rules
- Accruals, leave balances, schedules & coverage rules
- Cost centers, security roles & manager approvals
- Report definitions, source logic & historical data

Payroll & Workforce Governance

- Which pay scenarios are business-critical?
- Which require parallel testing & sign-off?
- Who owns retro, off-cycle & corrections?
- Who owns scheduling rules & transfer logic?
- What's a hard compliance rule vs. a preference?

A strong integration plan defines

- Source of truth for each data element
- Frequency of data movement
- API or file-based approach
- Error-handling process
- Business owner and technical owner
- Testing scenarios & go-live criteria

◆ BUYER TAKEAWAY

UKG creates trust when the organization **governs the data, payroll rules, schedules, integrations, and reports** that drive daily decisions. That governance is what makes UKG a platform people rely on rather than one they work around.

AI, Bryte & Adoption Readiness

UKG's positioning includes people-first AI through **Bryte AI** across Pro and Ready. The value depends on whether users trust the guidance enough to act on it. AI readiness is mostly adoption readiness.

Evaluate AI through practical questions

- Which manual HR, payroll, or manager tasks benefit most?
- Which workforce decisions would benefit from timely guidance?
- Which managers need help with staffing, fatigue & coverage?
- Which employee questions could become better self-service?
- Which reporting or analytics workflows could get easier?
- What data-quality issues would limit AI usefulness?

The four pillars of adoption readiness

Awareness

Users need to know what exists. Features introduced clearly in training are the ones that get used.

Trust

Confidence that guidance is grounded in the right data, policies, and context, built through narrow use cases first.

Governance

Clear rules for what AI can recommend, what humans must review, and how exceptions are handled.

Measurement

Measured by outcomes: reduced tickets, faster decisions, fewer exceptions, cleaner self-service.

◆ BUYER TAKEAWAY

UKG AI delivers the most value when it is **tied to real operational goals** and backed by a plan to train users, build trust, and measure adoption. Organizations that approach it that way see results that justify the investment.

Total Cost of Ownership

UKG total cost is bigger than licensing. Buyers should evaluate the cost of implementation, support, ownership, adoption, and missed optimization.



Software & modules

Driven by product selection, module scope, employee count, and complexity.



Implementation services

Shaped by payroll complexity, time rules, conversion, integrations & testing.



Internal time

The team still runs the business: requirements, decisions, testing, training.



Data & integration cleanup

Clean data and clear integrations reduce implementation cost and risk.



Change management & training

Adoption depends on role-based, practical training that changes behavior.



Post-go-live support

Stabilization, ticket review, release testing, and enhancement planning.

The greatest opportunity in UKG ownership is activating every capability you have licensed. When planning, analytics, self-service, scheduling, and reporting are fully in use, the platform's return grows with every pay cycle.

COST CATEGORY SEVEN · HIDDEN & UNUSED CAPABILITY

Questions Buyers Should Ask

Good questions protect the buyer from purchasing a platform without buying the operating model needed to run it.

Ask the vendor

- 1 Which UKG product and modules fit our size, complexity, and goals?
- 2 How do Pro, Ready, and Pro Workforce Management differ for our use case?
- 3 Which capabilities are included in scope, and which need add-ons?
- 4 What standard support is included, and what requires premium?
- 5 How are releases tested, communicated, and adopted?
- 6 Which references match our size, industry, and complexity?
- 7 What is the roadmap for WFM, predictive analytics, and AI?

Ask the implementation partner

- 1 How many UKG implementations like ours have you delivered?
- 2 Who is on the delivery team, and what UKG experience do they have?
- 3 How do you handle decisions when HR, Payroll, Ops & IT disagree?
- 4 What is your data-conversion method?
- 5 How do you test payroll with business owners, not just admins?
- 6 How do you train managers for real operational workflows?
- 7 How do you help clients avoid underusing the platform after launch?

Ask Internally

The most important questions are the ones you ask your own team. They define the operating model UKG will run on.

Outcomes & process

- 1 What workforce outcomes are we trying to achieve?
- 2 Which processes are worth keeping?
- 3 Which current processes are only workarounds?
- 4 How will we measure adoption?

Ownership

- 1 Who owns payroll outcomes?
- 2 Who owns scheduling rules?
- 3 Who owns timekeeping exceptions?
- 4 Who owns reporting definitions?
- 5 Who owns integrations after go-live?
- 6 Who will own and grow UKG long-term?

Which references can speak directly to implementation experience, post-go-live support, and workforce-management ROI, and whether they would make the same decision again?

THE REFERENCE QUESTION THAT MATTERS MOST

◆ BUYER TAKEAWAY

If HR, Payroll, Operations, Finance, and IT can answer the ownership questions before configuration begins, **everything downstream moves faster**, and the platform is far more likely to be trusted after go-live.

UKG Decision Scorecard ✓

Score each area from 1 to 5. Total the sections, then read your result against the band below.

PLATFORM FIT

Enough workforce complexity to justify UKG	0 0 0 0 0
Payroll, time & scheduling are real improvement areas	0 0 0 0 0
Managers need better workflows	0 0 0 0 0
Consolidating systems reduces cost & risk	0 0 0 0 0
Product scope is clear (Pro / Ready / WFM)	0 0 0 0 0

TESTING READINESS

Payroll scenarios are defined	0 0 0 0 0
Timekeeping exceptions are known	0 0 0 0 0
Manager & self-service workflows in testing	0 0 0 0 0
Reports & integrations have go/no-go criteria	0 0 0 0 0

IMPLEMENTATION READINESS

Executive sponsor is named and active	0 0 0 0 0
Internal project owner has authority	0 0 0 0 0
HR, Payroll, Ops, Finance & IT aligned	0 0 0 0 0
Pay, time & accrual rules can be documented	0 0 0 0 0
Data audit can start before configuration	0 0 0 0 0

POST-GO-LIVE MODEL

SmartCare or managed support is planned	0 0 0 0 0
Reporting & release governance is owned	0 0 0 0 0
AI activation has use cases & measurement	0 0 0 0 0
Manager reinforcement is planned	0 0 0 0 0

<p>Below 50</p> <p>Invest in readiness first</p>	<p>50 to 64</p> <p>Conditional fit: resolve gaps</p>	<p>65 to 100</p> <p>Strong fit: proceed with discipline</p>
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How Align HCM Helps



Align HCM works for the buyer, not the vendor. Our job is to give you an honest view of UKG fit, and to make the investment pay back.



Assessment

Independent fit & readiness review across complexity, payroll, data, and ownership.



Implementation

Planning, configuration decisions, testing, go-live readiness, and stabilization.



Client-Side Services

We help your team decide, keep the project moving, and protect your interests.



Data Conversion

Map, clean, validate, and load the data UKG needs to operate properly.



System Integration

Plan and support integrations across payroll, benefits, identity & finance.



Training & Align Academy

Role-based training for HR, Payroll, Ops, managers, and administrators.



Optimization

Clean reports, refine workflows, activate unused capabilities, lift adoption.



SmartCare

Post-go-live support: stabilization, optimization, and transformation work.



Free Assessment

A clear, independent view of your UKG opportunity before you commit.

◆ FREE ASSESSMENT

Pressure-test your UKG decision before you commit. You receive an independent fit recommendation, a full readiness scoring review across payroll, time, scheduling, data, integrations & governance, and a recommended next-90-day action plan. Get in touch at alignhcm.com/contact and mention the UKG Buyer's Guide.

Source Notes

Figures are drawn from public vendor statements, an independent ROI study, peer-reviewed research, and Align HCM's own delivery experience.

Align HCM: The Strategic Buyer's Guide to UKG

Source for product architecture, WFM heritage, fit profiles, implementation realities, TCO, and Align's objective advisory stance.
alignhcm.com/blog/the-strategic-buyers-guide-to-ukg

UKG Pro, UKG Ready & UKG Pro Workforce Management

Official product pages positioning the three products across HR, payroll, WFM, time, scheduling, talent, analytics, compliance, and Bryte AI.
ukg.com/products/ukg-pro · ukg.com/products/ukg-ready

Forrester Total Economic Impact: UKG Pro WFM

169% ROI over three years, \$34.28M in benefits, payback under six months, and manager, payroll & compliance productivity gains for a composite enterprise customer.
Commissioned study of UKG Pro Workforce Management

Peer-reviewed academic research

Hong & Kim (organizational fit); Umble et al. (critical success factors); DeLone & McLean (IS success); Venkatesh et al. (technology acceptance, UTAUT).
Information & Management · EJOR · JMIS · MIS Quarterly

Analyst rankings and vendor figures support this guide's framing, yet they should not replace a buyer-fit analysis built on your own workforce complexity, payroll and time discipline, data quality, and readiness.

Buyer Workbook



Print these worksheets or fill them in digitally. They turn the guide into your own decision record.

Worksheet One • Define the Pain

The clearer the pain, the faster the configuration and adoption.

The workforce outcome we are pursuing with UKG is...

The current workaround is...

The business value of replacing it with a better process is...

The result we want twelve months after go-live is...

Worksheet Two • Map UKG Fit

Capture the numbers that shape product scope and project size.

Total employees

States or provinces

Hourly workforce size

Legal entities

Locations

Shift types

Pay groups

Critical integrations

Union / CBA rules

Likely UKG scope

Workbook, Continued



Worksheet Three • Payroll & Time Readiness

Score each area 1 to 5. Anything below 3 needs cleanup before build.

Pay groups & pay rules	0 0 0 0 0	Leave rules	0 0 0 0 0
Overtime & differentials	0 0 0 0 0	Manager approvals	0 0 0 0 0
Premiums & accruals	0 0 0 0 0	Parallel test scenarios	0 0 0 0 0

Worksheet Four • Reporting Governance

Define the owner, source logic, definition, and review cadence for each.

Headcount & turnover	Time & payroll exceptions
Labor cost & overtime	Accruals & leave
Schedule coverage	Compliance indicators

Worksheet Five • First 90 Days

Plan the most valuable phase of UKG ownership.

- 0 to 30 days:** stabilize payroll, approvals, integrations, defects & support...

- 31 to 60 days:** normalize reporting, self-service & recurring ticket patterns...

- 61 to 90 days:** optimize config, activate capabilities, transition to SmartCare...

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