Why Choose a Single-Vendor Payment Solution?

With bill transactions shifting from cash and in-person payments to mailed and electronic payments, local governments are seeking more efficient processes that streamline the collection of multiple payment types from varied locations and across departments. Increasingly, cities, counties, and utilities are recognizing the value of a single-vendor payment and financials solution that eliminates the complexity of a disconnected payment ecosystem.

Single-vendor solutions are:

- Simplifying operations by lessening the burden on IT staffs to maintain complex connections between multiple vendors

- Increasing data control and security by reducing the number of vendors with information access and aiding security compliance

- Improving data sharing by streamlining reconciliation and internal information sharing to surface real-time financial details

Put simply, a single payment solution can optimize your operations and enhance security by eliminating the classic "too many cooks" scenario. As the Government Finance Officers Association notes, "Fewer disparate solutions means more control."[1]

To maximize the advantages of a single vendor for payments and financials, an ideal provider would handle all aspects of the payment process, including onboarding, payment support, reconciliation, and hardware. The ideal payment solution would seamlessly connect with the same vendor's financial solution. This ensures data is uniformly updated throughout an organization, improving payment activity reconciliation, eliminating silos, and providing accurate, timely financial data to help local governments make more informed decisions.

Here are three ways a single-vendor solution can help your operations:

Simplifying Connectivity

Connecting multiple vendors in a payment system requires time-consuming API (application programming interface) configurations of disparate software, often requiring customization. These connections must be carefully maintained to ensure compatibility. This can be especially challenging in a system where multiple vendors are releasing updates on varied schedules.

On the other hand, a single vendor will provide software purpose-built to connect seamlessly. A single vendor will deliver software upgrades designed for seamless integration from the ground up to prevent messy incompatibilities, eliminating time-consuming customizations and workarounds. The simplification of connecting single- vendor software across an organization reduces the burden on IT staff, who also benefit from consistent tools. (In fact, all users benefit from a unified experience that builds efficiency with an interface that provides staff with a consistent user experience.)

And support is improved in a single-vendor situation because of a solitary point of contact with customer support. A city or county no longer needs to play detective while contacting multiple vendors with questions about a problem. Reaching an expert on the entire system is a single request away.

[1] Government Finance Officers Association. (2020) Accepting Credit Card Payments: What Governments Should Know About Vendor Services, Fees, and Risks. Retrieved from www.gfoa.org/events/accepting-credit- card-payments-what-governments-should

Why Include Cashiering in an Integrated Payment Solution?

An ideal payment solution vendor will provide a cashiering solution, enabling over-the-counter transactions to simplify your payment operations further. An integrated cashiering solution standardizes your collection process. It creates a single-entry point for payments, providing greater control of the workflow, making compliance reporting easier.

Your vendor's cashiering solution should include the following features:

- PCI/PA-DSS security standards and Image Cash Letter (Electronic Check Deposit) compliance

- Chip card (EMV) hardware that meets all POS best practices via approved gateway providers

- Cash drawer limits for access and maximum amount of cash on hand through security controls

- User permissions to control data access, activity levels, transaction processing, and more

- Assurance of gateway approval through integrated credit card authorization before completion of a transaction

How Do I Know a Vendor Meets Industry Standards?

To ensure industry standards for security are being met, a vendor should be:

- Compliant with the Payment Card Industry Level 1 Payment Application Data Security Standard (PCI/PA-DSS). Following the PCI/ PA-DSS means you will avoid banking penalties for not using a compliant system.

- A registered merchant service provider (MSP) equipped to handle all aspects of the payment process, including onboarding, shopping cart, check-out, fee handling, and receipts. Integrating payment and cashiering tasks reduces the number of entities required to handle citizens' sensitive information and simplifies operations.

Building a More Secure Process

Data security is top of mind for both consumers and local governments. In the world of data security, a key goal is to reduce exposure to sensitive data. A single-vendor payment solution means multiple vendors will not have access to payment information.

A single-vendor approach also simplifies the implementation of strong security standards and can limit credit card processing gateways to only those using point-to-point encrypted device communication. This single-vendor solution should adhere to strict security standards for product payment data, including a point-to-point encrypted (P2PE) credit card gateway.

An integrated cashiering solution standardizes your collection process and creates a single-entry point for payments, providing greater control of the workflow. Working with a single vendor also simplifies PCI/PA-DSS reporting and compliance since the entire process rests with one provider.

Streamlining Reconciliation and Keeping Data Current

An integrated, web-based solution can collect on all payments from any office made to an organization, miscellaneous receivables, and bills generated by third-party vendors. A web-based solution can be accessed from any workstation with browser connectivity. This offers clients flexibility of deployment and supports the collection of funds from offices across a community. Whether paid at city hall or via a convenient, user-friendly portal, the web-based solution provides scalability and connectivity.

A single-vendor solution streamlines the reconciliation of payments by eliminating unique integrations that are dependent on third-party providers. Reconciliation uses one solution rather than two. On the other hand, using a third-party payment merchant means you need to work in two software packages to see payments received.

In a single-vendor workflow, information flow is improved with real-time reconciliation and access to summary or detail reports on payment transactions in real-time and historically. For cashiers and supervisors, this adds up to easier, end-of-day processing for balancing and reviewing payments.

An integrated solution means that financial data is uniformly updated throughout the organization, improving payment activity reconciliation, eliminating silos, and providing accurate, timely financial data to help you make more informed decisions.

If you'd like more information about ERP solutions, contact us at info@tylertech.com or visit tylertech.com.