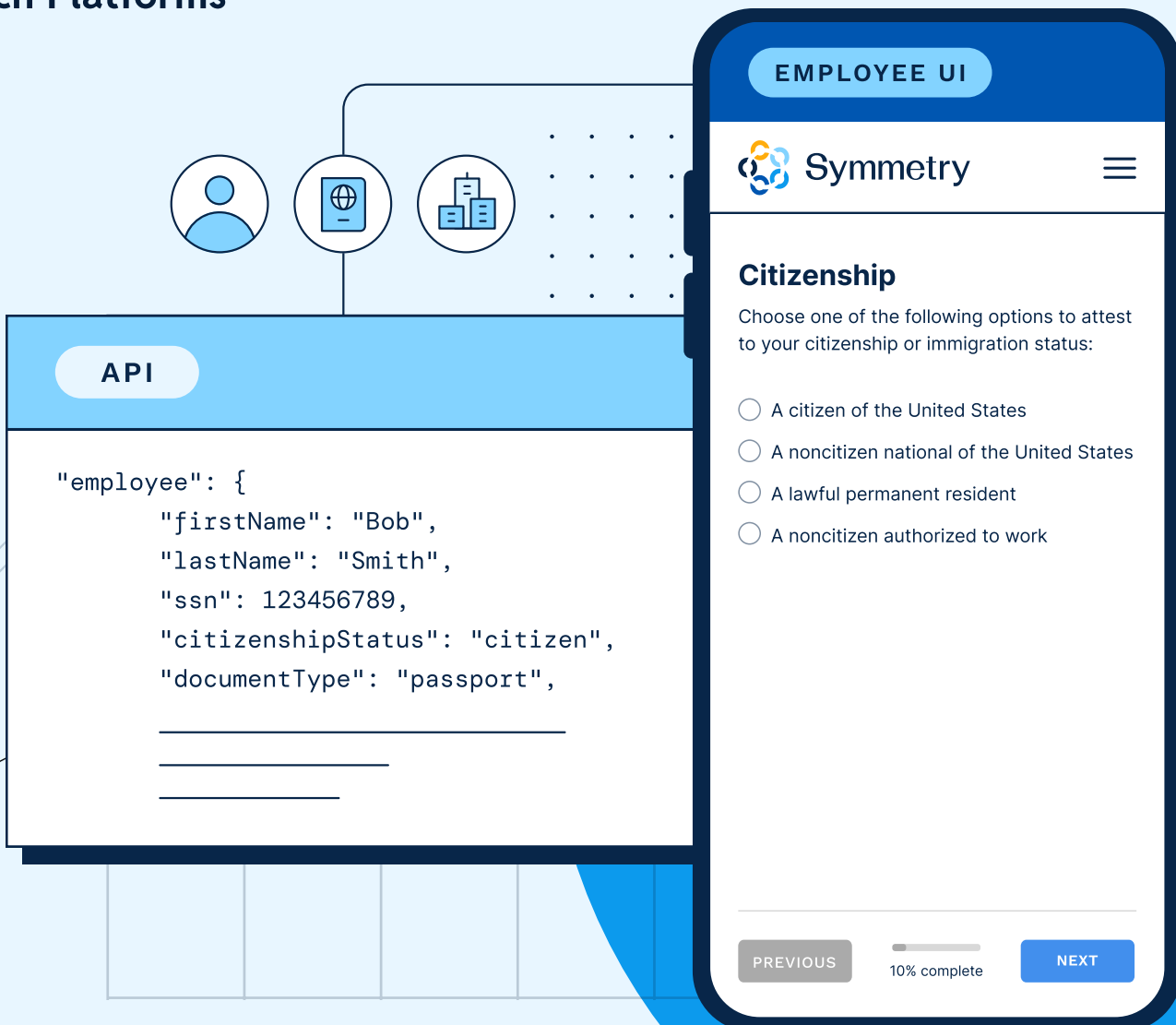




Automating I-9 Verification

A Growth Opportunity for
HR Tech Platforms



Introduction

Form I-9 compliance has become a defining pain point for HR and people teams.

For platforms that power HR, payroll, and onboarding, a compliant and full-featured I-9 offering is an opportunity to deliver real value. By automating I-9 verification, your platform shifts from a transactional system to a compliance partner that employers can't operate without.

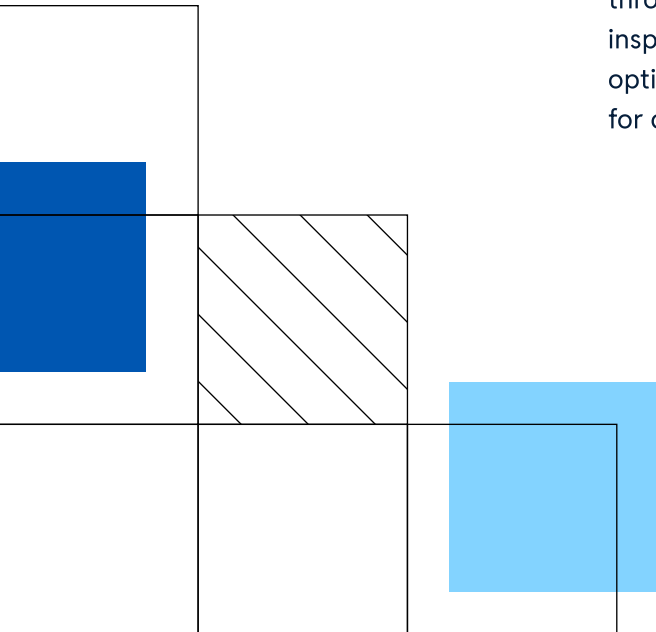
Form I-9 compliance has never been more critical. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has sharply increased penalties for violations, and enforcement continues to intensify. For employers, even a minor paperwork mistake—such as a missing signature or unchecked box—can trigger costly fines.

When audited, employers have just three business days to produce all I-9 forms and supporting documentation.¹ Failure to comply exposes organizations to escalating consequences:

- **Paperwork violations:** \$288 to \$2,861 per form.
- **Knowingly employing unauthorized workers:**
 - First offense: \$716 to \$5,724 per violation
 - Second offense: \$5,724 to \$14,308
 - Third or more: \$8,586 to \$28,619
- **E-Verify non-compliance:** \$973 to \$1,942 per employee for failing to notify DHS after a final non-confirmation.

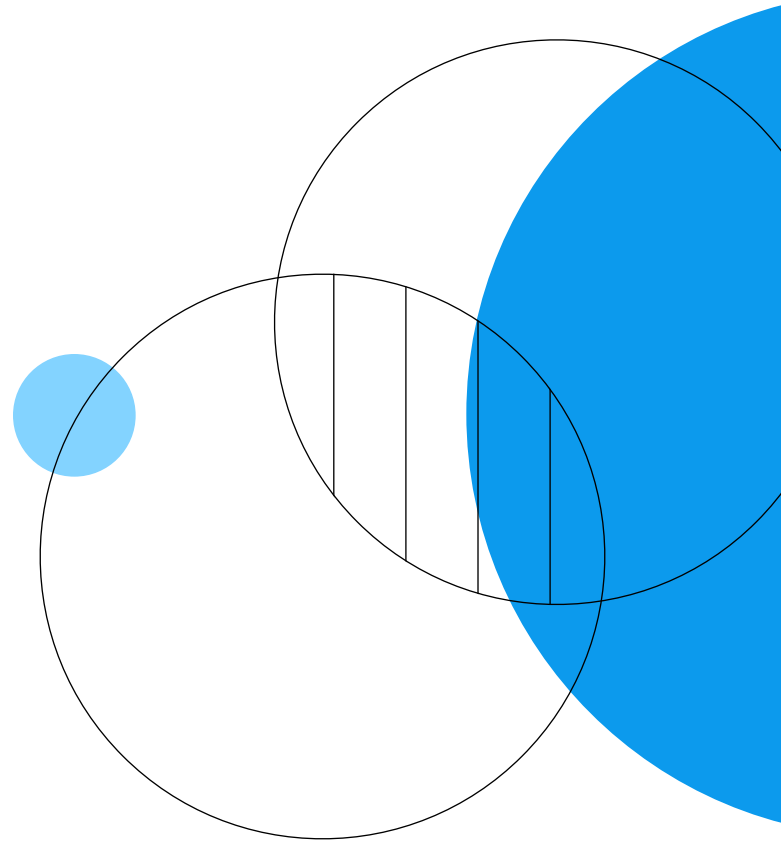
Beyond fines, severe cases can bring **criminal charges** for document fraud, loss of **government contracts**, or even **debarment**—a three-year ban (or longer) from federal procurement and certain commercial activities.

In 2023, DHS introduced an **alternative verification procedure** for remote employees. For employers enrolled in E-Verify, this allows I-9 verification through a **live video interaction** instead of in-person document inspection, provided copies of the documents are securely retained. While optional, this procedure represents a significant shift, offering flexibility for distributed and hybrid workforces.

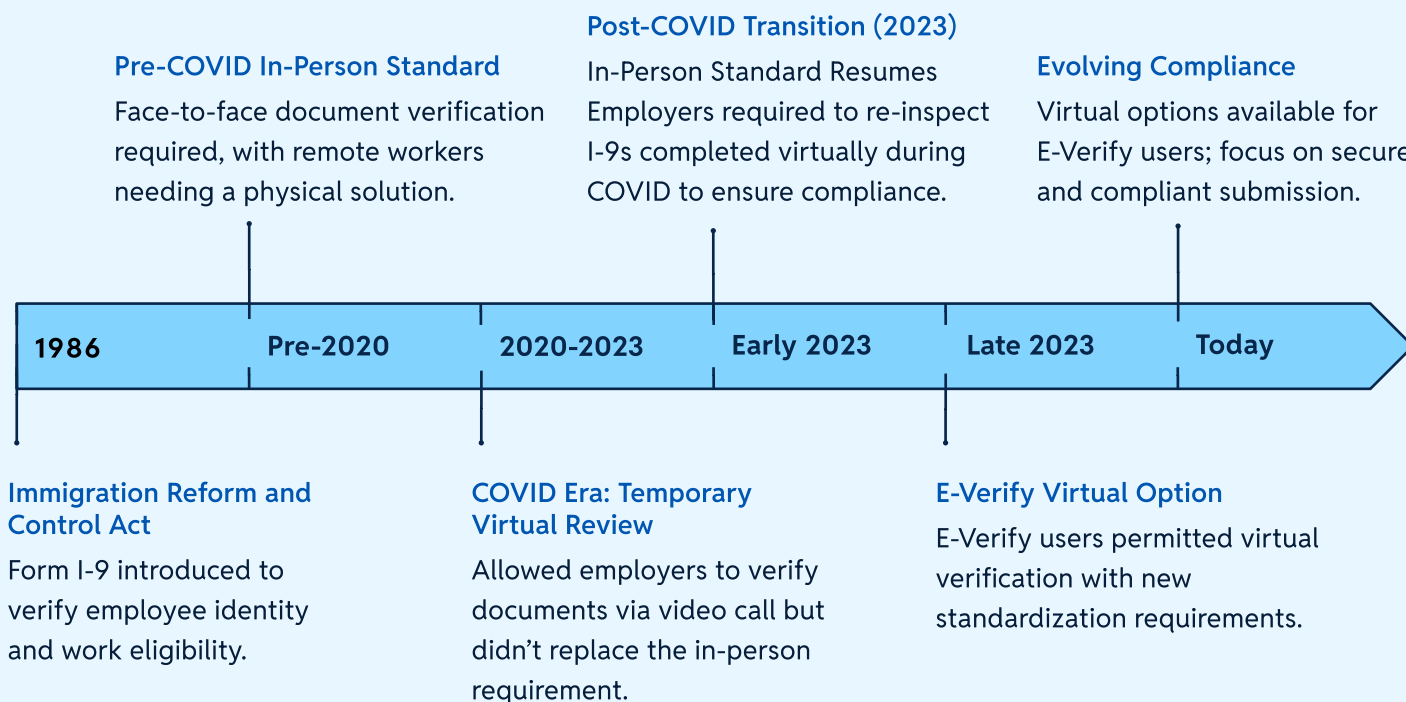


What's covered

Keeping up with Form I-9 changes	3
Inside the I-9 Verification Process: A Reality Check	4
Enabling I-9 Verification: Build, Buy, or Blend?	8
Checklist: Preferred Features in Embedded I-9 Solution	10
Symmetry I-9: Built for Embedded Compliance	13
Meet the Symmetry Tax Engine	13
The Solution for HR Tech Platforms	15



Keeping up with Form I-9 changes



Inside the I-9 Verification Process: A Reality Check

To understand how employers are managing Form I-9 compliance today, we surveyed 300 HR and compliance professionals responsible for managing the I-9 verification process in their organization. The results reveal a process that is still highly manual, prone to delays and errors, and filled with anxiety about audits.

These findings provide a critical lens and illuminates the features and tools employers say they need most to succeed.

Current Process

Most platforms remain stuck in partial automation, wasting time on manual data entry and in-person checks. For HR Tech, payroll, and onboarding platforms, this gap is your opening: embedding I-9 automation directly into your workflows positions your product as the answer to compliance inefficiency. The vast majority of employers are “stuck in the middle”—not entirely manual, but not fully automated either. They are spending time and resources maintaining partial systems that can't deliver speed or accuracy.

How would you describe your current I-9 process?

Findings:

- **61%:** Partially automated
- **13%:** Entirely manual
- **26%:** Fully automated



74%
still lack full automation

Bottlenecks & Delays

Where I-9 processes slow down is exactly where human involvement is highest. Nearly half of HR leaders identify Section 2 reviews as their biggest bottleneck. For platforms that support onboarding, these delays directly affect the efficiency and experience employers can deliver to new hires. Automating this step reduces friction, speeds up the process, and helps ensure compliance is handled smoothly within the platform. Imagine an HR manager trying to onboard 50 employees in a month. Each delay—whether resubmitting errors or waiting for Section 2 to be reviewed in person—multiplies across dozens of hires. The impact is not just slower onboarding but reduced trust in the HR process.

Audit & Compliance Risk

Employers worry about audits because the stakes are high. Platforms that offer I-9 verification features—such as audit trails, real-time alerts, and secure storage—help organizations manage these risks with greater confidence. Providing these capabilities within the platform ensures that compliance is maintained consistently and reliably.

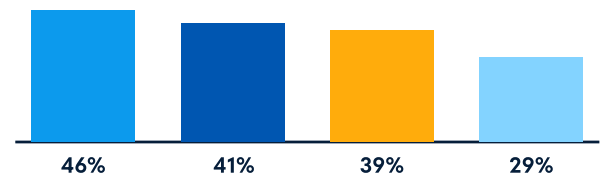
Frequency of Errors

Recurring errors are a drain on HR teams. The need to revisit, correct, and resubmit forms isn't just busywork—it heightens the chance of mistakes slipping through and becoming compliance violations. Picture a monthly cycle where HR spends entire days correcting employee documents, instead of focusing on engagement, retention, or onboarding strategy. These inefficiencies accumulate across the year.

Which steps of I-9 completion take the most time or cause delays?

Findings:

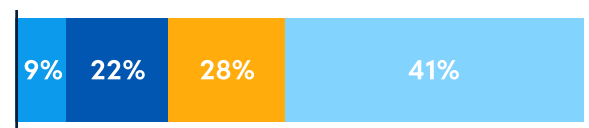
- **46%:** Section 2 in-person review
- **41%:** Error corrections/re-submissions
- **39%:** E-Verify submissions
- **29%:** Section 1 completion



Have you ever experienced an I-9 audit or compliance issue?

Findings:

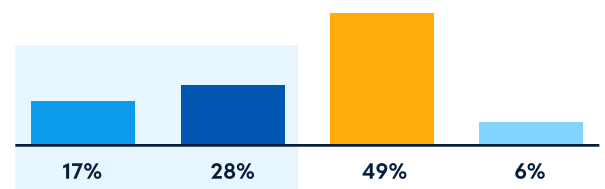
- **9%** Yes – we were fined
- **22%** Yes – we were flagged but not fined
- **28%** No – but we worry about it
- **41%** No, and we're confident in our process



How often do you or your team have to fix I-9 errors after onboarding?

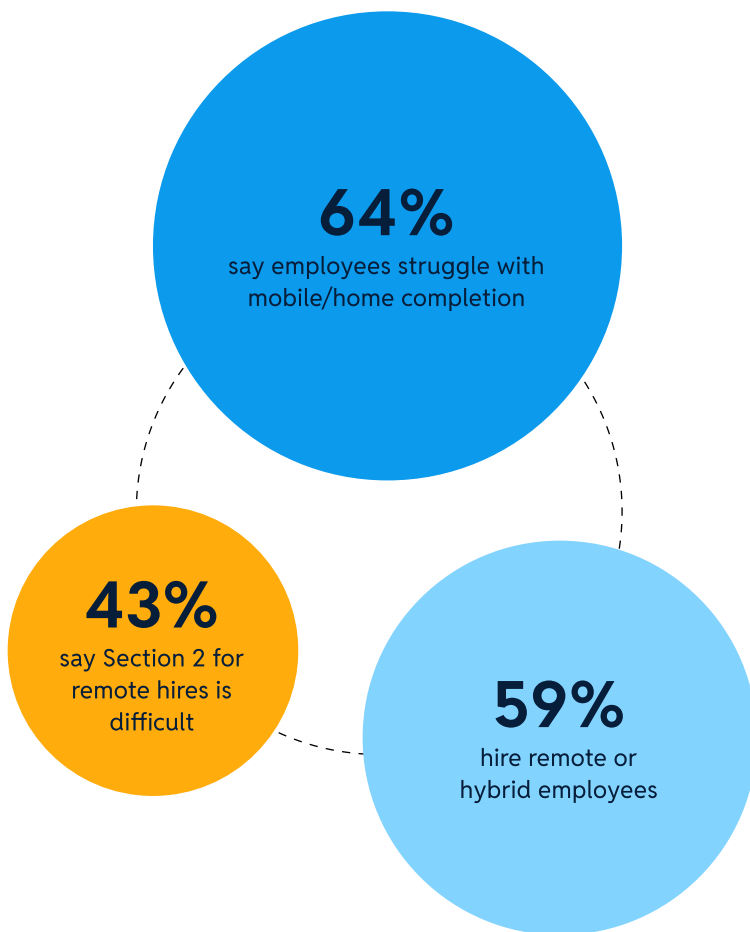
Findings:

- **17%** fix errors weekly
- **28%** monthly
- **49%** rarely
- **6%** never



Remote & Hybrid Workforce Challenges

The rise of remote work has outpaced compliance systems. Employers now face the challenge of verifying documents without face-to-face interactions, while employees expect mobile-friendly onboarding tools. For a remote new hire, delays in completing Section 2 or trouble uploading documents from a phone can sour the first impression of their employer. HR is left scrambling to meet legal deadlines while also trying to deliver a smooth employee experience.

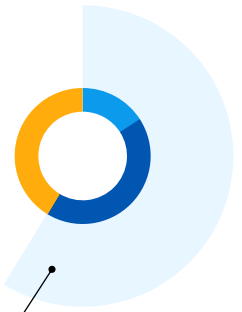


Remote/Hybrid vs. On-Site Hiring

- Yes – mostly remote: **16%**
- Yes – hybrid: **43%**
- No – fully on-site: **41%**

59%

of employers hire remote or hybrid employees

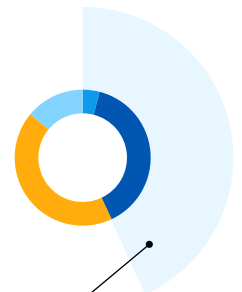


Difficulty Completing Section 2 for Remote Hires

- Very difficult: **4%**
- Somewhat difficult: **39%**
- Not difficult: **43%**
- Not applicable: **14%**

43%

say Section 2 for remote hires is somewhat or very difficult

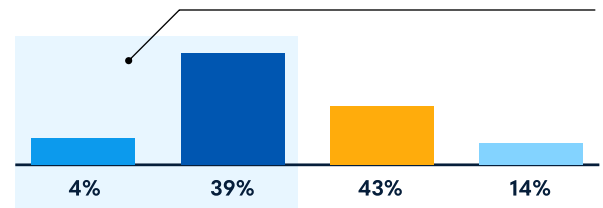


Struggles Completing I-9 on Mobile or at Home

- Frequently: **12%**
- Occasionally: **52%**
- Rarely: **26%**
- Never: **10%**

64%

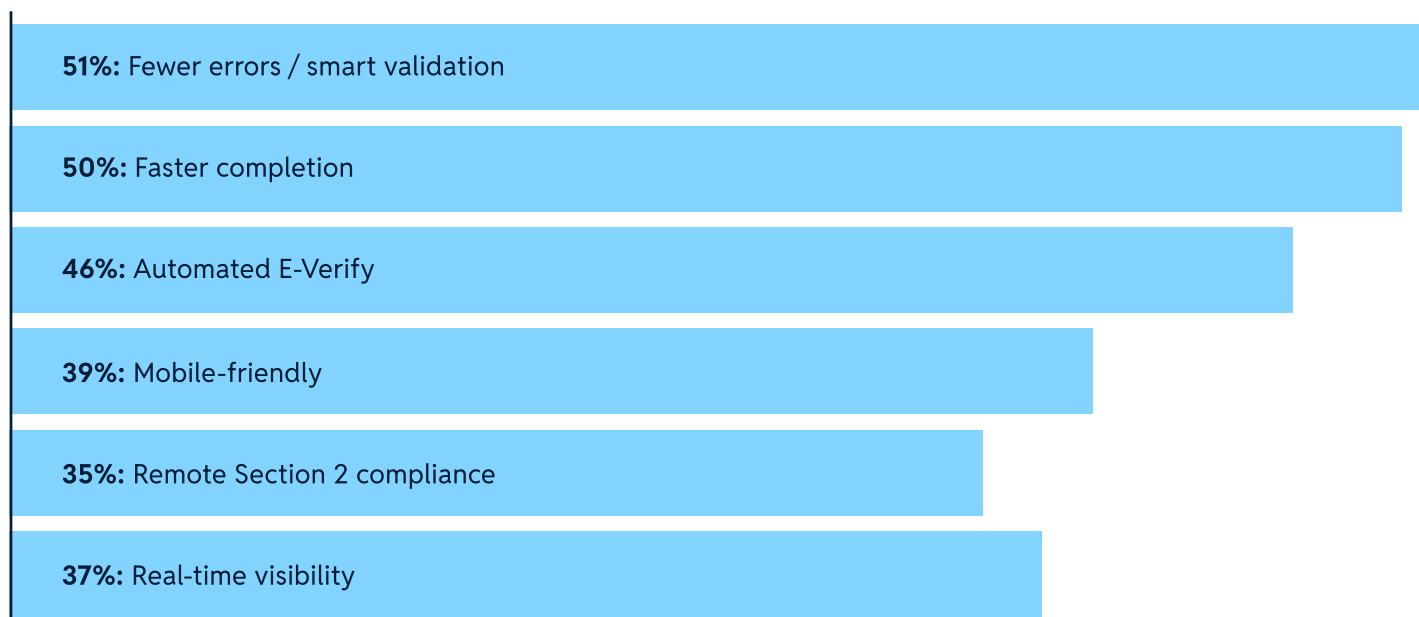
say employees struggle with mobile/home completion



What HR Teams Want Most

By automating I-9 verification, providers can deliver what HR leaders say they need most: fewer errors, faster completion, seamless E-Verify, and mobile-friendly onboarding. These capabilities increase platform value and strengthen long-term adoption.

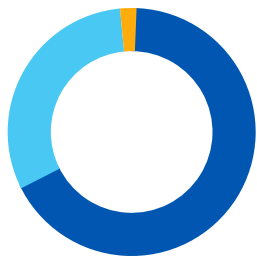
Employers aren't just identifying problems; they are pointing to solutions that align with the benefits of a modern, automated I-9 system—speed, accuracy, integration, and support for remote work. HR teams are ready to move away from spreadsheets and manual checks in favor of embedded workflows that fit naturally into the systems they already use.



Readiness for Better Tools

Nearly every employer we surveyed (99%) is ready to adopt an embedded I-9 solution. For platforms, this means the demand already exists—your customers are waiting. Offering embedded I-9 automation ensures your product stays ahead of competitors and aligned with what buyers expect.

99%
are ready for
automation



Findings:

- **68%:** Would adopt an embedded automated tool
- **31%:** Open to learning more
- **1%:** Not a priority

The survey findings highlight a clear message: HR teams are struggling with partial solutions, recurring errors, and compliance risks, but they are also signaling readiness for change. With 99% of respondents open to embedded automation, the demand is no longer in question—it's about execution. The next challenge for HR Tech, payroll, and onboarding platforms is deciding how to deliver these capabilities: by building an in-house solution, buying a proven platform, or blending both approaches.

Enabling I-9 Verification: Build, Buy, or Blend?

For HR Tech, payroll, and onboarding platforms, the decision around how to deliver I-9 compliance is an important architectural choice. Should you build an in-house system, buy a ready-made solution, or blend the two? Each path has trade-offs in terms of resources, flexibility, and long-term sustainability. The right decision depends on how much your team wants to own compliance updates versus focus on core business priorities.

Building In-House: Full Control, High Commitment

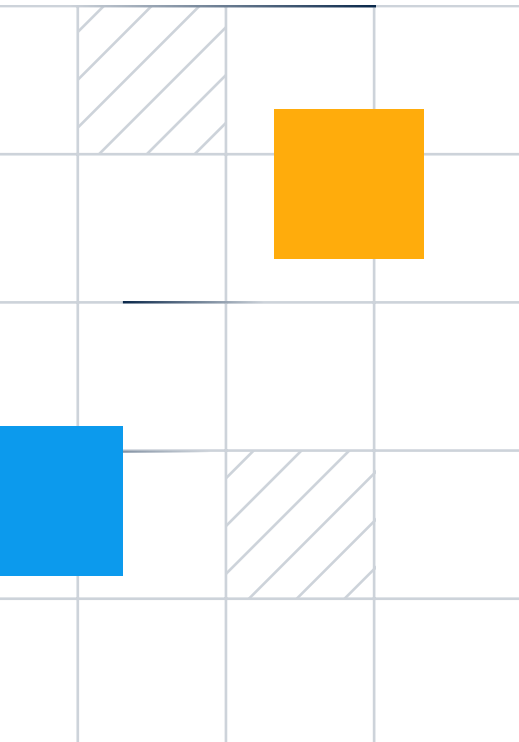
An in-house system offers maximum control—you can design workflows tailored exactly to your processes. But with that control comes a significant cost:

- **Ongoing updates:** I-9 rules and DHS guidance evolve regularly, meaning engineering and compliance teams must track and implement changes.
- **Technical scope:** Secure document storage, audit logs, and role-based access controls need to be built and maintained at scale.
- **Resource investment:** Developing and maintaining an in-house system requires a multi-disciplinary team and a sustained budget that often reaches into the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. For example, the U.S. median salary for a software developer is \$133,080, which translates to approximately \$194,000 in fully loaded costs once employer-paid benefits are included². Even a minimal team—consisting of one software engineer and one DevOps/SRE—represents an annual investment of roughly \$398,000. Expanding that team to include quality assurance and automation roles increases the annual cost to approximately \$546,000. Importantly, these figures reflect staffing alone; research consistently shows that the majority of software's lifetime expense stems from ongoing maintenance—often accounting for 40–80% of total costs—rather than initial development³.

For some large enterprises with robust internal compliance engineering, building may make sense. For most organizations, though, this option diverts time and capital away from strategic initiatives.

Blending: Customization with Reduced Burden

Some organizations take a hybrid approach—leveraging a proven solution for compliance while building custom integrations into their existing tech stack. This can deliver the best of both worlds: lowering compliance risk while maintaining unique workflows or branding.



Buying: Efficiency, Scalability, and Confidence

Off-the-shelf I-9 solutions shift much of the compliance responsibility to a dedicated provider, while giving you immediate access to modern capabilities:

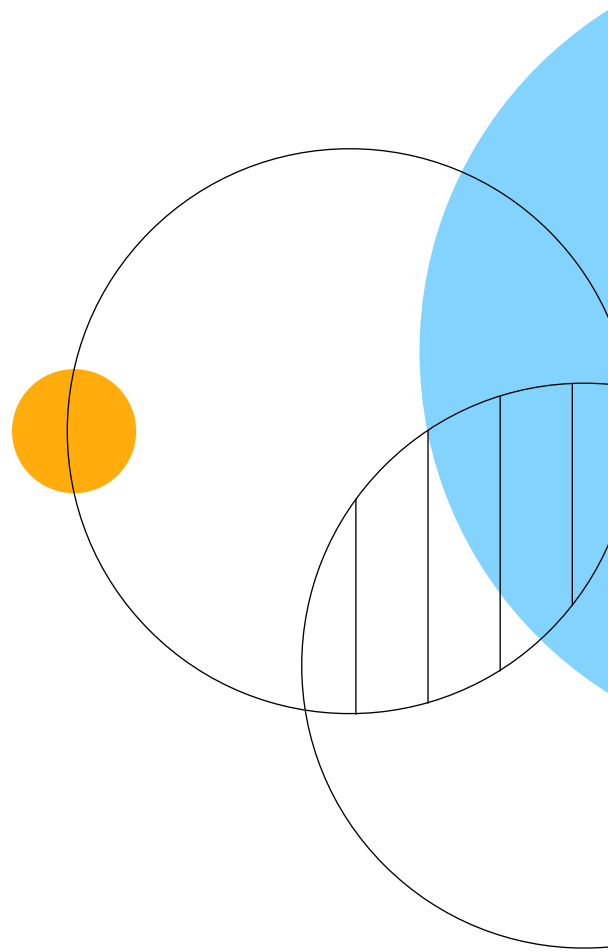
- **Faster onboarding:** Employees can complete Section 1 digitally before day one, with guided workflows and e-signatures eliminating paper bottlenecks.
- **Seamless E-Verify:** Automated submission and status tracking reduce manual effort and minimize errors.
- **Remote and hybrid support:** Many solutions support DHS's alternative remote verification procedures, ensuring distributed teams stay compliant.
- **Mobile-ready experience:** Employees can complete and upload documentation from any device, especially important for certain roles that are not computer-based.
- **Audit readiness:** Centralized, secure storage with detailed logs simplifies responding to audits or internal reviews.
- **API-first integration:** Modern systems embed directly into your HR Tech or payroll platforms, maintaining a unified experience without bolting on extra steps.

Our survey's data shows why these features matter: nearly **46% of HR leaders identified in-person Section 2 reviews as their biggest bottleneck**, and **41% pointed to error corrections as a recurring pain point**. Buying directly addresses those challenges.

Making the Choice

Each option—build, buy, or blend—can be valid depending on your organization's size, resources, and priorities. But survey responses point to a clear trend: **68% of respondents said they would adopt an embedded, automated I-9 solution**, with another **31% open to learning more**. In practice, most HR and product teams find that buying accelerates time-to-value, ensures consistent compliance, and frees resources to focus on growth rather than maintaining regulatory systems.

Whether you decide to build, buy, or blend, the success of your I-9 verification strategy ultimately comes down to execution. The features you enable—or fail to enable—directly impact compliance confidence, HR efficiency, and the employee experience. To help guide that decision, here's a checklist of the capabilities employers consistently ranked as most critical when adopting an embedded I-9 solution.



Checklist

Preferred Features in Embedded I-9 Solution

When you're evaluating an I-9 verification solution for your platform—whether you're an HR Tech provider, payroll or onboarding platform, or benefits administrator—your goal is twofold: simplify compliance for the employers you serve and create a smooth, frustration-free experience for their HR teams and new hires. Here's a quick cheat-sheet of the essential features every vendor you're considering should deliver:

1. Full Automation of Sections 1 & 2

Why it matters for your customers:

Manual completion of Form I-9 is time-consuming and error-prone. The employers you serve need a system that guides new hires through Section 1 with inline help and smart data validation, then empowers authorized representatives to complete Section 2 via a simple document-scanning workflow.

What to look for:

- ☐ Step-by-step guidance with autofill from existing employee records
- ☐ Integrated OCR scanning that captures both images and text
- ☐ Support for all verification methods: in-person, remote via video, or hybrid
- ☐ Built-in guidance to help employees select the appropriate identity documents based on their situation

2. Seamless E-Verify Integration

Why it matters for your customers:

Many organizations rely on E-Verify to confirm work authorization. A tightly coupled E-Verify flow reduces administrative touchpoints, accelerates case resolution, and lowers the risk of non-compliance.

What to look for:

- ☐ Automatic case creation at I-9 completion
- ☐ Real-time status updates and dashboards for tentative non-confirmations (TNCs) and other case scenarios
- ☐ Configurable alerts and exception workflows to keep HR teams informed
- ☐ Programmatic account management features (API)

3. Mobile-First, Remote-Ready Experience

Why it matters for your customers' end users:

In today's distributed workforce, new hires expect to complete paperwork from any device, anywhere. Employers want confidence that remote verification meets federal requirements.

What to look for:

- ☐ Responsive UI on smartphones and tablets
 - ☐ Live video-based document review for Section 2, with guided walkthroughs
 - ☐ Zero friction: no downloads or plug-ins required
-

4. Geofencing to Full Remote Compliance Obligations

Why it matters for your customers' audit readiness:

Federal regulations require physical co-presence for Section 2 unless you follow an alternative procedure. Geofencing for remote Section 2 verification adds an extra layer of proof—capturing location metadata to confirm the employee and representative were in the same place at the same time.

What to look for:

- ☐ Boundary setup and GPS timestamp capture
 - ☐ Audit logs that flag out-of-bounds events automatically
 - ☐ Easy export of compliance reports for internal or governmental review
-

5. Embeddable APIs & White-Label Components

Why it matters for your platform roadmap:

You don't want your customers bouncing between systems. Embeddable employee and administrator experiences, plus a robust RESTful API, let you keep the I-9 flow inside your own app or portal—preserving your brand and user experience.

What to look for:

- ☐ Comprehensive, well-documented API endpoints for initiation, status checks, and data retrieval
 - ☐ Webhooks or callbacks to notify your system of completed I-9s and E-Verify outcomes
 - ☐ Customizable CSS and theming to match your UI
-

6. Enterprise-Grade Security & Compliance

Why it matters for your customers' risk profile:

Handling PII and identity documents demands the highest security standards. Your platform's reputation depends on partnering with a vendor that meets or exceeds industry-standard controls.

What to look for:

- ☐ SOC 2 Type II certification, AES-256 encryption in transit and at rest
- ☐ Multi-factor authentication for admin access
- ☐ Data-residency options and clear data-retention policies

7. Scalable Coverage for Any Geography

Why it matters for your customers' growth plans:

Whether they're a small staffing firm or a global enterprise, your customers need a solution that supports every U.S. state (and, ideally, future-proofs for any new jurisdictional requirements).

What to look for:

- Pre-built compliance logic for all state and local variants
- No hidden “per-state” fees or development surcharges
- SLAs guaranteeing uptime and performance, even at peak hiring volumes

8. Intuitive Admin Dashboard & Reporting

Why it matters:

Give HR and compliance teams a “mission control” view of every I-9 and E-Verify case—so nothing slips through the cracks.

What to look for:

- **At-a-glance status:** Urgent alerts for past-due I-9s, plus summary widgets for in-progress, completed, and exception cases, all filterable by department or hire date.
- **Deep links & webhooks:** One-click access to specific queues with real-time updates pushed via webhooks.
- **Embedded resolution & audit trails:** In-app E-Verify case actions, click-through audit events, and downloadable PDFs—all within your platform's UI.

9. Dedicated Support & Continuous Innovation

Why it matters for your customers' long-term success:

Even the best technology needs skilled hands on deck. Your customers value a partner who provides thorough onboarding, responsive SLA-backed support, and a clear roadmap for future enhancements.

What to look for:

- Named customer success managers and 24/7 helpdesk access
- Regular product updates that incorporate user feedback
- Transparent public roadmap showcasing upcoming features (e.g., advanced analytics, international support)

The checklist lays out what modern I-9 providers must deliver—automation, integration, mobile-readiness, and enterprise-grade compliance. The question then becomes: *who can deliver all of this in practice?* That's where Symmetry I-9 stands out. Purpose-built for embedded compliance, it combines proven reliability with API-first flexibility to give HR platforms exactly the capabilities employers said they need most.



Symmetry
I-9



Built for Embedded Compliance

Symmetry I-9 is a software solution designed to help employers comply with I-9 employment verification requirements, particularly for remote hires. The software's goal is to streamline the complete Form I-9 process, decrease errors, and maintain compliance with federal regulations.

Symmetry I-9 is powered by WorkBright, a company with expertise in I-9 verification and a track record of processing millions of successful I-9s with zero fines. Proven results include:

8x

faster completion of
Form I-9 verification

80%

reduction in manual
errors

2x

faster overall new hire
onboarding



FREE WEBINAR | ON-DEMAND

Fast, Compliant I-9 Verification for Onboarding and Payroll Providers

[WATCH NOW](#)

Symmetry I-9 Core Workflow

Symmetry I-9's API-first approach lets you go from zero to full compliance in minutes—no heavy lifting required. Here's how it all fits together:



Employer Onboarding & API Setup

Register your organization via the Symmetry I-9 REST API to receive your API credentials, configuration options (including geofencing and E-Verify), and a unique employer ID.



Administrator & Employee Provisioning

With the same API, designate one or more HR administrators and generate secure admin-session tokens. Provision new hires by sending basic employee details (name, email, hire date, etc.)—all via simple API calls.



Automated E-Verify Integration

Enable E-Verify in your account settings. Once a new hire completes Section 2, Symmetry I-9 auto-submits the case—95% close without any manual work, accelerating compliance and reducing administrative overhead.



Embeddable Employee I-9 Experience

Embed a mobile-optimized I-9 iFrame or redirect link in your own platform. New hires complete Section 1 on any device, select an Authorized Representative, then finish Section 2 with geo-validated document scanning and a full audit trail—whether remote or in-person.



Administrator Dashboard & Ongoing Compliance

Embed the Symmetry I-9 admin portal to monitor real-time I-9 statuses, review audit logs (including geofence metadata), manage E-Verify cases, and pull completed form data via API. Maintain continuous compliance with built-in notifications, reporting, and document retention for audits.

From Months to Days

The Case for Embedded I-9

Choosing Symmetry I-9 over a custom build delivers immediate ROI across speed, cost, and risk:



Rapid Time-to-Market

Go live in days—with turnkey API docs, embeddable components, and expert support—rather than months of engineering, testing, and security reviews.



Proven Compliance & Reliability

Power over 2.3 million I-9 verifications with zero fines. Enjoy 8× faster verification, 80% fewer manual errors, and a perfect audit record—all backed by patent-protected geofencing and smart OCR scanning



Cost Predictability

Eliminate upfront development, ongoing maintenance, and dedicated security/compliance staffing. Our pay-as-you-grow pricing keeps your budget on track.



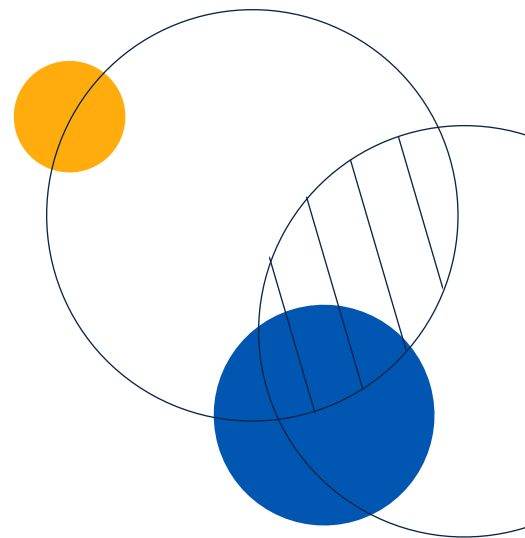
Reduced Administrative Burden

Automate E-Verify case creation (95% auto-close), geofence enforcement, error-proof data capture, and compliance notifications—freeing HR teams to focus on people, not paperwork.



Scalable, Audit-Ready Platform

Seamlessly handle from hundreds to hundreds of thousands of new hires with full audit trails, dashboard analytics, and API-driven exports—no additional dev effort required.



On-Demand Webinar: Embedded I-9 Verification in Action

See how HR Tech and payroll platforms embed I-9 compliance into their systems—and learn how you can, too. Explore real workflows, results, and best practices in our on-demand webinar here:

[Watch now >](#)

The Solution for HR Tech Platforms

Form I-9 compliance isn't just an HR headache—it's a critical intersection of regulatory risk, employee experience, and operational efficiency. Yet most employers remain stuck with partial automation: 87% lack fully automated workflows, and nearly half say in-person Section 2 reviews are their biggest bottleneck. This gap between compliance requirements and current practices is where platforms can step in.

For HR Tech, payroll, and onboarding providers, the opportunity is clear. Employers are asking for tools that simplify compliance and integrate directly into the systems they already use to run their workforce. In fact, 99% of employers we surveyed are ready—or open—to adopting automated, embedded I-9 technology. That's not abstract interest, it's immediate market demand.

By enabling automated I-9 verification, your platform evolves from a transactional system into a true compliance partner. The benefits extend across every stakeholder:

- **Employers** get faster onboarding, fewer errors, and audit-ready records.
- **HR teams** gain streamlined workflows and relief from repetitive corrections.
- **Employees** experience a mobile-first, modern onboarding journey.
- **Your platform** achieves deeper adoption, stronger retention, and clear differentiation in a crowded market.

Whether you build, buy, or blend, the direction is the same: automation is the standard employers expect. HR Tech platforms that deliver it will not only reduce customer risk but also position themselves as indispensable in a compliance-driven world. In an era of rising fines, remote work, and increasing customer expectations, automated I-9 verification is no longer optional—it's a core capability that strengthens trust, accelerates growth, and cements long-term value.



Symmetry
I-9

See how Symmetry I-9 helps platforms embed compliance, reduce risk, and ensure compliance every step of the way.

[Learn More](#)

References

¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; U.S. Coast Guard; Transportation Security Administration. (2025, January 2). Civil monetary penalty adjustments for inflation (Rule No. 2024-31204; 90 Fed. Reg. 1). Federal Register. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/02/2024-31204/civil-monetary-penalty-adjustments-for-inflation>

Dougherty, T. (2025, February 27). Form I-9 penalties increase. J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. https://www.jjkeller.com/news/article/Form-I-9-penalties-increase_id-6f149aaf-1019-46fd-dae1-4591c4adc033

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024a). Occupational employment and wages, May 2023: Software developers. U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes151256.htm>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024b). Employer costs for employee compensation—March 2024. U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024c). Occupational employment and wages, May 2023: Information security analysts and related roles (DevOps/SRE comparable). U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes151299.htm>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024d). Occupational employment and wages, May 2023: Software quality assurance analysts and testers.

U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes151259.htm>

³ Pigoski, T. M. (1996). Practical software maintenance: Best practices for managing your software investment. Wiley-IEEE Computer Society Press.

Pressman, R. S., & Maxim, B. R. (2020). Software engineering: A practitioner's approach (9th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

