



IMPROVING HR THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

In the Information Age, why is it that human resources management at so many organizations is still stuck in the Industrial Age or worse? Few things scream for automation more than the repetitive processes involved in HR administration, yet a majority of employers handle hiring, onboarding, employee information file management, employee benefits enrollments, training, and professional development in much the same way as their ancestors did. That observation is not universally applicable, of course. Very large employers have, by and large, embraced technology in HR management as eagerly as in manufacturing processes and research and development, but that is probably due to their ability to afford enterprise HR systems that have historically been out of reach for smaller employers and the necessities of dealing with thousands of employees. Today, however, with

the advent of cloud computing and shared systems, virtually every size employer can realize very significant benefits from the use of modern technology in HR administration without having to invest huge sums of money in hardware, software and training. Modern HR Information systems, especially those that are integrated with payroll, time and attendance, benefits and general ledger applications, offer tremendous improvements and efficiencies in HR management. Rather than increasing expenses or cash outlays, HR technology actually produces real, measurable cost savings. It also enables HR managers to focus on strategic, rather than clerical, responsibilities, improves employee morale, reduces administrative and clerical errors, and helps to ensure compliance with employment laws and regulations.

Today's HR managers in organizations of all sizes believe that their value to the organization is greatest in strategic applications rather than in administration.

"Nothing demonstrates HR's value more than helping the organization accomplish its strategic and operational objectives," Kate Barker, executive director of talent and leadership at The Hackett Group, told HCA Magazine. "So much of the focus for HR professionals in 2016 will be on simplifying and optimizing processes, systems and technology to deliver a more efficient and effective HR service. This comes down to unifying streamlined processes and a good automation strategy."

It is hard to argue with that prediction. HR managers know very well that they cannot be effective members of the strategic

management team if they are bogged down in the management of essentially unproductive activities. To the extent that they can delegate management of routine and repetitive functions to machines, or to lower level personnel using machines, they can increase their strategic value to the organizations they serve. That delegation starts with the identification and automation of the most prevalent processes comprising the HR administration function. It also requires that all employee information be digitized, stored and be made readily available to managers and employees whenever, and however, they need it.

Let's take a look at how technology can improve the HR function in the areas of Process Automation and Information Management.



PROCESS AUTOMATION

The field of process automation has been a principal focus of technological development in HR. This is due to the fact that processes, which are by nature repetitious, present obvious opportunities for streamlining through automation.

“Existing processes to support recruitment, employee lifecycle management, payroll, learning management and performance management have received the attention of automation, reporting and data management,” Uma Ganesh, CEO of Global Talent Track, wrote in Financial Express, a corporate training solutions company. “The purpose of technology interventions in all of these HR functions has largely been to enable the enterprise in compliance management with respect to statutory requirements, reduction in costs and increased efficiency with HR processes and has had less to do with the developmental needs or engagement with and between employees.”

Through automation, HR has experienced dramatic improvements related to:

- Reduction in repetition.
- Reduction in paperwork.
- Overall streamlining.

Automation enables the gathering and organizing of data very early in the employee life cycle. Once collected and intelligently stored, employee data can be retrieved and used whenever needed during the course of employment. Here are just a few examples of the uses of technology in HR management.

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TALENT ACQUISITION AND ONBOARDING

APPLICATION PROCESS

Technology allows employers to collect all applicant data with interactive electronic forms. Once hired, this data can be imported directly into an employee profile and used throughout the employee's tenure with the company.

APPLICANT TRACKING

Automatically record every step in the process with full internal and external records, notes of interviews and communications. Interactions can be logged and date/time stamped so you can know the exact minute a conversation took place.

HIRING

Speed up onboarding and reduce redundancy by automatically populating electronic forms with data collected during the application process. The integration of electronic signatures can also expedite the process by allowing the employee to simply grant authorization instead of having to sign over and over again.

DOCUMENTATION

Provide all company policies, handbooks, instructions, etc. in an electronic library via a simple link. This can be set with a proof of reading and understanding required and will be available to be referred back to as needed.



BENEFITS ENROLLMENT

As with documentation, automation can electronically provide all benefits explanation and enrollment forms, with integrated videos or self-paced educational materials occurring at natural intervals. No more needing to sit an employee down in front of a DVD; cue it up to the right spot.

Automation can also enable electronic self-enrollment in all benefits programs. If open enrollment season is coming, you can set an automated prompt to notify employees of the deadline to enroll or waive their enrollment in benefits.

SCHEDULING, TIME & ATTENDANCE

Using the same technological processes and data obtained during the application, schedules can be automatically generated and maintained via HCM software. As flexibility of work hours becomes an increasing priority for workers, the use of electronic timeclocks and work scheduling software can ensure that an employee is given a schedule that complies with his or her request, and other worker gaps are filled.

In addition to crafting an availability calendar, HCM software can maintain a skills inventory and work schedules of all employees, allowing for rapid substitution of personnel as needed. One can manage individual work schedules simply through drag and drop, while controlling and approving overtime and paid time off requests.



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INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Hand-in-hand with the rise of automation comes the need for better systems to manage and analyze data. Through process optimization, an employee/applicant will be generating large amounts of personal data that can hold valuable insights—if you know where to look.

“With automation, the huge HR data—having details like employment policies, job records, employees’ personal data, training programs, individual performance—can be made easily accessible and simpler,” Richa Tripathi, CHRO of Tata Teleservices Ltd., wrote in Financial Express. “The advent of web-based applications supporting database management, storage and automation has enabled a rich pool of information which can be accessed any time within the organization. These applications can also be applied to HR tasks and help improve HR service delivery.”

Managers have a rich pool of employee data to draw from, including personal information, benefits participation, work history, compensation history, promotions, achievements and awards, performance evaluations, and more, all of which can be stored in a single repository to which individual managers have role-based access. Employees can have electronic access to their own information, with the ability to edit personal information.

While not fully dispensing with the human touch, automating certain processes and interactions may assist managers in dealing with employees more personally. A simple app can prompt a manager with employee birthdays, family milestones and successfully completed projects, pushing notifications to congratulate an employee on a specific day or issue thanks for a job well done.

The greatest boon of full-scale information management is the ability to integrate Time and Attendance, Work Scheduling, Benefits Administration and Payroll Administration systems and databases to eliminate transposition errors and redundancy. The vast quantity of HCM data can be simply and effectively managed via technology, giving HR leaders the tools to streamline operations and add value.

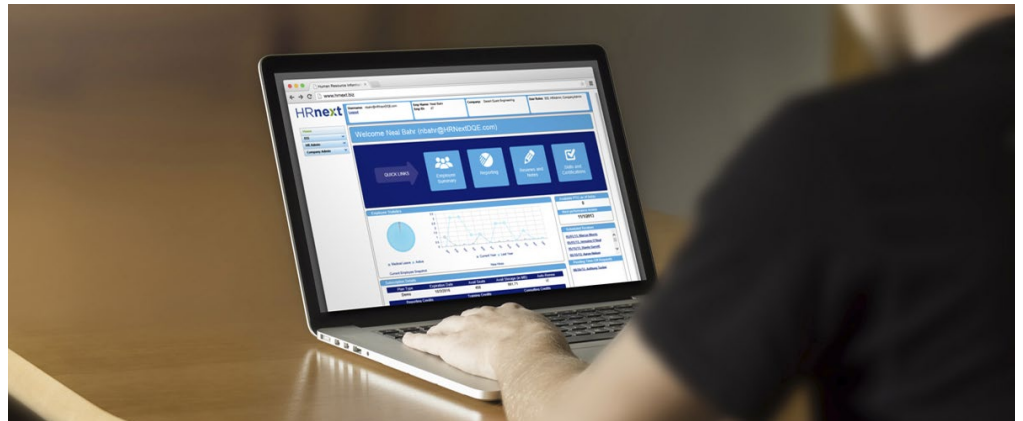
IMPLEMENTATION

Reasons frequently cited by employers for failure to embrace modern technology and implement integrated HR/Payroll/Benefits systems include cost and difficulty of implementation. Today, those excuses simply don't fly. Cloud-based comprehensive HCM systems are affordable to, and easily used by, employers of every size and type. Some very sophisticated systems are available by subscription for as little as a few dollars per employee per month, and many of them can be used by employees with rudimentary computer skills with just a few hours of training. The cost savings produced by these systems invariably pay for them, and the improvements afforded by them in compliance with employment laws and regulations can literally save a business from ruin. Bottom line – there is no good excuse for not embracing technology in HR management.

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Discover how you can simplify HR administration from hire to retire with an all-in-one solution.

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