

HR in the Gulf Region: HR AND TECHNOLOGY FUNCTIONS

Presented by Dave Millner

MR. MILLNER: Hi, I'm Dave Millner. Today I want to just talk about HR and technology functions. Get collaborating. Now, HR and the IT technology department, they've got a lot in common, you know. Let's be honest, they're not everyone's favorite function. Blaming them for the bad day you're having is the common organizational sport across the world. And yet, put them together, they have a real opportunity to make a real difference to the way organizations operate, in terms of driving forward long-term success and increased effectiveness. For one thing, their roles tend to be quite similar, with the main areas of responsibility that IT and HR handles being predominantly administered, if at all tactical. Now I know HR's trying to change, not only in the gulf, but across the globe to being more strategic. But that's going to take time. Both functions always complain about not having enough resources, not getting the respect they deserve, and yet, they both utilize technology to get their respective jobs done. HR seemingly relying more and more on technology than ever before. Now historically, HR technology implementations followed a fairly common process, whereby HR leadership identified a business process or function it wanted to automate or enhance, and the IT Department was engaged and consulted in the vendor selection process, and once the solution was selected, the technology team would take over and they'd take responsibility for installing and maintaining the new software. Now once it's installed, the software would then become just another part of the corporate systems, but the technology function was called upon to support and manage.

But today, HR talent management-based technology solutions are primarily deployed in the software-as-a-service model. And there's a wide choice of relatively low-cost solutions available for internal application. The organizations and HR functions are increasingly evaluating and implementing. This is even more prevalent in the gulf region where there is a clear desire to raise the capability of HR, so that they can try and keep up with the growth that the region has experienced over the past few years and perceive that technology alone will solve the problem. Sorry to disappoint you, but whilst it will help, a more fundamental change in the way HR behaves, it is needed to deal with growth demands of organizations. But I think that's another story. However, these technology platforms now range from internal communication blogs through to performance management and learning management systems. On the surface, software solutions deployed in this manner do not require significant IT involvement. As the solution can be hosted by the vendor and no integration may be necessarily required with other legacy enterprise systems.

Many organizations like to test these solutions out in a series of pilots, with a small group of departments to prove the concept. Now testing with pilot groups normally avoid significant internal technology involvement and the lack of technical requirements for integrating or interfacing data to these new solutions; it can lead to technology being left out of at least the initial planning and testing phase of the new software. So with the increasing ease and ability of HR functions to select, test and deploy important new functionalities without necessarily significant involvement of the corporate technology experts, does this mean that HR doesn't really need the technology function as much as it did in the past? I don't think so. HR and technology get collaborating...because even solutions that are offered via this model and hosted by the vendor typically need some integration with enterprise systems, and possibly with core HR management systems, to pass important information like organizational structure, job titles, etc. between them. These challenges are the core expertise of the technology team, and HR functions certainly need to continue to rely on them for these important activities.

Now the nature of software licensing and delivery itself is constantly changing the ways that the internal dynamic between the HR and technology functions will operate with each other. The key question for HR will be, "just how early and to what extent do I need to involve the technology experts in the process?" HR and technology must be talking from the same page as an effective, collaborative partnership. As the changing nature of software deployment and the sheer speed that most organizations need to implement these programs to get a return on their investment, is creating an increasing dynamic and interaction that is needed. HR

practitioners must develop stronger partnerships with their technology colleagues to ensure that any misunderstandings are kept to a minimum, that they get crucial projects supported and that they lessen the frustrations that people may have with both functions. This doesn't mean becoming technological experts, but it does mean that you need to understand the technology process, the commercial challenges and any technological implementation issues that the project will bring. So HR and technology get collaborating.

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