

THREE QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO CONSIDER BEFORE INITIATING AN HR TECHNOLOGY SEARCH

HR organizations that support a Culture of Change Management are four times more likely to be delivering noticeable strategic value to their organization versus organizations that practice minimal to no Change Management.

HR systems have been procured and successfully implemented for decades — but sometimes, neither the organization nor the products being implemented are totally ready. This can result in rollouts needing to be revisited or halted mid-stream ... which usually results in watching money pour down the drain.

Avoid derailments and false starts when you're considering new HR technology solutions by practicing organizational readiness. Organizational readiness involves:

- Knowing your priorities so you can allocate resources properly
- Making sure you have the skills and competencies you need, especially in areas such as HR analytics, software release management and HR process optimization
- Making sure your automated processes are sound and useful; optimize what you have before creating and deploying new systems

Organizational readiness is one aspect of a broader “best fit” change management program that should accompany all strategic initiatives, including HR technology deployments. The correlations between strong, skillful incorporation of effective change management into these projects and their eventual success – measured by user adoption, cost savings, efficiency gains and/or better talent management outcomes – has been well chronicled. And, more broadly, industry research firms like Sierra Cedar **have consistently found that** “HR organizations that support a Culture of Change Management are four times more likely to be delivering noticeable strategic value to their organization versus organizations that practice minimal to no Change Management.”

So how do you know if you're ready? Here are three questions to consider before you start the process of searching for new HR technology:

1. WHAT'S THE VALUE-ADD FOR EACH CATEGORY OF USER?

New technology of all kinds is often over-sold by solution vendors, who may exaggerate the quality of the end-user experience, key capabilities, how they work with other tools, etc. Unfortunately, this can cause these initiatives to get over-hyped by project sponsors, and many decision-makers may become cynical. That's why it's important to determine the actual value technology may add to an organization.

It helps to communicate this argument in a clear and compelling way — one that empowers all stakeholders and affected parties, including employees, applicants, HR specialists and business partners, line managers, executives, relevant external partners and others, to readily map the new enterprise technology asset to benefits they'll personally experience. Some of these are universal benefits like “saving time,” but others are more stakeholder-specific, such as helping to progress one's career or perform better in their role.

2. ARE YOU EMPOWERING YOUR END USERS TO TAKE CONTROL OF AND BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR DATA QUALITY.

SaaS is clearly not the only driver of market expansion. HR/HCM platforms and tools have evolved dramatically in areas such as analytics – including predictive analytics – offering much more intuitive and engaging (“consumer-like”) user experiences. These tools are adopting mobile as the predominant access and usage device, leveraging social capabilities and data in recruiting, development and employee engagement. More recently, they’re adding early-stage capabilities around AI, chatbots, cognitive computing and more.

Notwithstanding these significant advances driving the market, the biggest “Achilles’ heel” that continues to limit the range of business benefits from these investments in many customer organizations is inadequate attention to data quality. Therefore, a data ownership, accountability and integrity assurance plan must be a central part of every HR technology rollout; and ownership should ideally be in the hands of the person who has the biggest vested interest in the data being correct!

Internal service-level agreements (SLAs) can also help to ensure data quality and, frankly, prevent a lack of confidence in the system when bad data is really the culprit. For example, line managers and employees should be formally expected to update certain data elements that they own when particular events occur – like a department transfer or address change – and the SLA metrics should specify a quick window for updating or initiating the transaction. Better data means better business.

3. IS YOUR FOCUS CORRECT? WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS OF YOUR BUSINESS, HOW MIGHT THOSE DRIVERS CHANGE AND HOW WILL THE NEW HR SYSTEM WILL STAY ALIGNED WITH THE CHANGES?

Successful organizations are flexible organizations. They understand that the only constant is change. When planning an HR technology rollout, both planned and potential changes must be considered and factored into the enterprise solutions being brought in. For example, how scalable and adaptable is the software to a broad range of events and/or business decisions that might occur? Whether the change driver is a decision to expand into new markets, a choice to pursue a growth-through-M&A strategy, a move to outsource non-core functions, or simply a plan to invest more heavily in talent management programs, the software vendor’s current offerings and planned product roadmap must be evaluated against these possible scenarios to ensure ongoing “functionality and capability fit.” Fail to think strategically and plan ahead and the shelf life of your new technology will probably be short-changed.

MEET THE EXPERT



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Mark joined NFP in January 2010 to launch the company’s national benefits administration practice, which supports more than 100 brokering and consulting offices throughout the U.S. Since then He has expanded the practice area to provide HRIS consulting services through its newly formed HR Services division. Most recently Mark has played an integral role in the development the NFP Marketplace, NFP’s exchange solution. Before joining NFP, Mark spent the previous nine of 17 years in the employee benefits industry as CEO of a leading employee benefit consulting firm based in the Philadelphia area. Mark has a bachelor’s in finance with an emphasis in economics from The Pennsylvania State University.