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HR Applications for a Modern Workforce: What Large-Scale, Mobile-Enabled People Technology Applications Improve How People Work?

Abstract

[Excerpt] Technology is playing an ever-increasing, significant role in how work gets done in organizations. Traditionally, technology in the HR space focused inward on how the HR organization functions. Organizations implement HR technologies for various reasons, including reducing administrative HR burdens, reducing manager and employee burdens, and increased compliance. However, the HR technology space is exploding with new applications that can be applied to a variety of organizations for a wider array of purposes, encompassing the whole employee experience (see Appendix A). This had led to a burst of HR technology vendor activity - Between 2015 and 2016, investment in HR technology vendors increased 60% to \$2.4 billion. These vendors are fueled by organizations' interest in digitizing human capital management. 56% of companies in one survey said they are redesigning their HR programs to utilize technology tools. 41% are "actively building mobile apps to deliver HR services." This report will focus on what applications can lead to more seamless and simple improvements to employee and HR productivity, examining how to best utilize these new technologies in a large-scale organizational setting.

Keywords

Human Resources, HR, technology, organizational readiness, mobile access, integration, complexity of the workforce, project management, communication, cross-team collaboration, collaboration, video conferencing, training, digital HR transformation, HR transformation, change management

Comments

Suggested Citation

Monastyrsky, M. (2017). *HR applications for a modern workforce: What large-scale, mobile-enabled people technology applications improve how people work?* Retrieved [insert date] from Cornell University, ILR School site: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/student/177>

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HR APPLICATIONS FOR A MODERN WORKFORCE

What large-scale, mobile-enabled people technology applications improve how people work?

Technology is playing an ever-increasing, significant role in how work gets done in organizations. Traditionally, technology in the HR space focused inward on how the HR organization functions. Organizations implement HR technologies for various reasons, including reducing administrative HR burdens, reducing manager and employee burdens, and increased compliance.ⁱ However, the HR technology space is exploding with new applications that can be applied to a variety of organizations for a wider array of purposes, encompassing the whole employee experience (see Appendix A). This had led to a burst of HR technology vendor activity - Between 2015 and 2016, investment in HR technology vendors increased 60% to \$2.4 billion.ⁱⁱ These vendors are fueled by organizations' interest in digitizing human capital management. 56% of companies in one survey said they are redesigning their HR programs to utilize technology tools.ⁱⁱⁱ 41% are "actively building mobile apps to deliver HR services."^{iv} This report will focus on what applications can lead to more seamless and simple improvements to employee and HR productivity, examining how to best utilize these new technologies in a large-scale organizational setting.

TECHNOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

92% of companies are trying to become a more "digital" organization (a restructuring of company culture around digital technology), yet only 14% are sure they know how to do it.^v When selecting an HR application vendor, it is important to identify requirements and priorities, understand the employee experience, gather vendor candidates (preferably through word-of-mouth recommendations from other HR professionals), test the tool in a demo environment, and check references from current vendor clients.^{vi} There are specific aspects to consider to judge the best application for your organization:

Organizational Readiness: cloud-based technologies have fewer customization capabilities, so HR must be comfortable with these limitations and ready to embrace application features as-is.^{vii}

Mobile Access: A major technology initiative for large organizations (more than 10,000 employees) is mobile enablement (22%).^{viii} Employees may not have the same amount of access, or same type of access, to applications through computers in their work day – in manufacturing environments, for example. Considering applications with an easy-to-use mobile interface may help the workforce adapt and utilize the tools.^{ix}

Integration: For large organizations, top technology initiatives include HR application integrations (27% of initiatives) and global HR management system expansion (22%).^x Large organizations typically use a multitude of applications, so it is important to consider how applications link together to maintain a simple user experience for both employees and HR professionals.

Complexity of Workforce: An organization needs to consider the specific aspects of their workforce, like if some employees do not have regular access to a computer, for example.^{xi}

APPLICATIONS

There is a shift to include employee productivity tools under the HR software sphere, instead of HR-specific enterprise software like Workday, as HR responsibilities are increasingly embedded in the "flow

of work.”^{xii} Below are some technologies (all mobile-enabled) used in a diverse by large organizations in diverse ways to improve employee productivity.

Project Management

Project management tools are growing beyond assigning tasks to include communication functionality, enhanced cross-team collaboration functionality, and more, while maintaining an easy-to-use and elegant user interface.

- ***Asana*** is a highly malleable and user-friendly project management application with features like a “smart” inbox, task customization, security protections, and customer service.^{xiii} The tools are used by a wide variety of organizations. Lyft, for example, manages new city launches using Asana to track every task that needs completion.^{xiv}
- ***Wrike***, a cloud-based collaboration and project management software, enables users to track a wide variety of project management needs including budgets and Gantt-charts.^{xv} It also integrates with other popular applications, like Microsoft Outlook, and has strong authentication protocols like two-factor authentication.^{xvi}

Communication

Communication tools in the modern workplace seek to streamline and improve on slow or highly specific functionality, attempting to make information seamlessly accessible without frustrating the user.

- ***Slack***, a messaging application, has many unique features such as video conferencing and a robust search functionality which indexes messages as well as files shared within conversations.^{xvii} Customers include large organizations like IBM – an IBM engineering team, for example used Slack’s messaging “channels” to receive input across multiple teams.^{xviii}
- ***Zoom*** is a popular videoconferencing tool competing with established tools like Skype and WebEx by providing a frictionless environment.^{xix} One Fortune 100 technology company saw lower costs and more collaboration after replacing a hodgepodge of web-conferencing tools with Zoom in its 25,000+ person product organization.^{xx}

Training and Development

This sphere has significantly pivoted from traditionally structured, in-person to online, just-in-time content, both as a cost savings and to reach broader employee audiences.

- ***Jhana*** provides “bite-sized”, professionally researched training content for people managers, mainly as email newsletters, articles, and check-lists.^{xxi} Users, like Orbitz, praise Jhana’s relevant content that is easily adaptable to everyday work.^{xxii}

Enterprise Data Analytics

The downside of incorporating new, diverse HR technologies is the confusion around managing data and pulling usable insights that influence employee decisions.

- ***Qualtrics Employee Experience*** provides high-level, clear data presentations throughout the whole employee lifecycle, with the ability to populate employee data from an organization’s HR information system or applicant tracking system.^{xxiii}

CONCLUSION

Improving productivity is only part of the digital HR transformation (see Appendix B).^{xxiv} The important outcome of any new technology is how it ultimately benefits business outcomes.^{xxv} As these new applications change the HR landscape, organizations will need to continue evaluating what works best for them.

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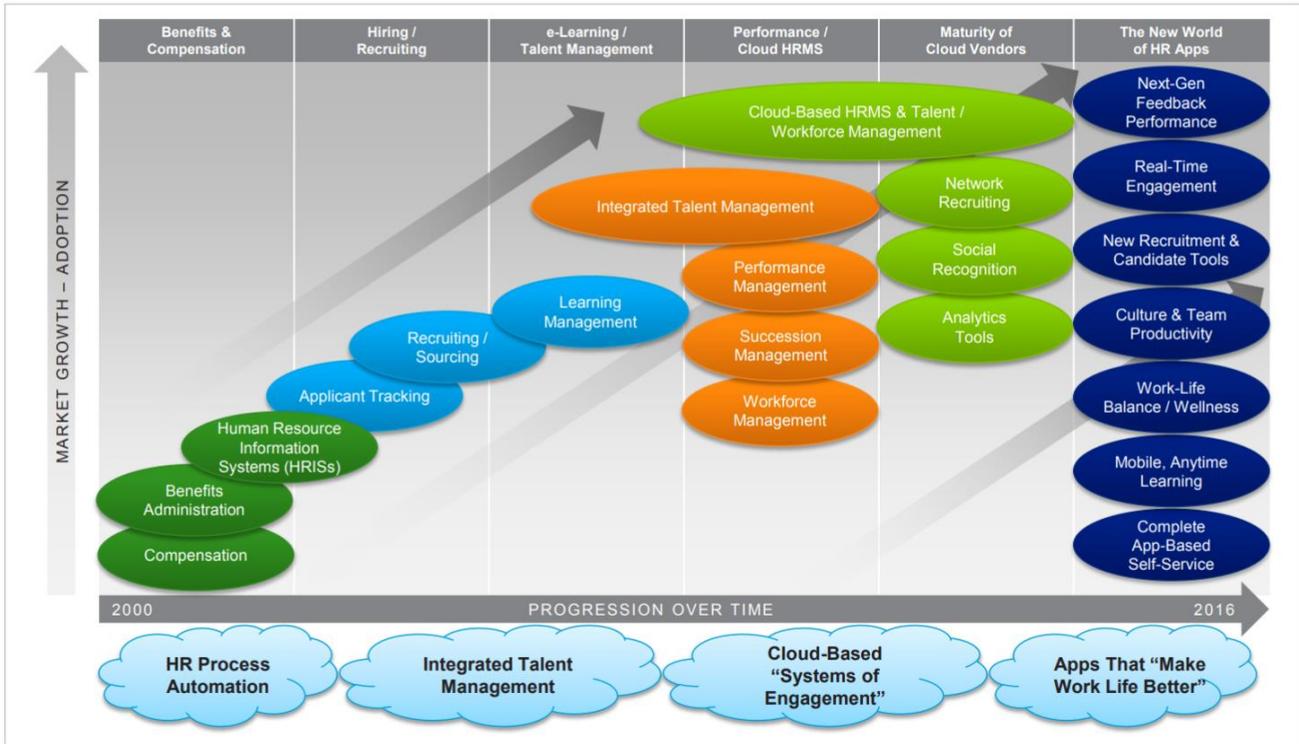
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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Figure 2: The Evolution of HR Systems



Source: Bersin by Deloitte, 2016.

Appendix B

Figure 2. Digital HR: Old rules vs. new rules

Old rules	New rules
HR departments focus on process design and harmonization to create standard HR practices	HR departments focus on optimizing employee productivity, engagement, teamwork, and career growth
HR selects a cloud vendor and implements out-of-the-box practices to create scale	HR builds innovative, company-specific programs, develops apps, and leverages the platform for scale
HR technology teams focus on ERP implementation and integrated analytics, with a focus on “ease of use”	HR technology team moves beyond ERP to develop digital capabilities and mobile apps with a focus on “productivity at work”
HR centers of excellence focus on process design and process excellence	HR centers of excellence leverage AI, chat, apps, and other advanced technologies to scale and empower employees
HR programs are designed for scale and consistency around the world	HR programs target employee segments, personae, and specific groups, providing them with journey maps relevant to their jobs and careers
HR focuses on “self-service” as a way to scale services and support	HR focuses on “enablement” to help people get work done in more effective and productive ways
HR builds an employee “self-service portal” as a technology platform that makes it easy to find transactional needs and programs	HR builds an integrated “employee experience platform” using digital apps, case management, AI, and bots to support ongoing employee needs

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- ⁱ (Eubanks)
 - ⁱⁱ (Bersin)
 - ⁱⁱⁱ (Bersin, Pelster and Schwartz)
 - ^{iv} (Bersin, Pelster and Schwartz)
 - ^v (Bersin)
 - ^{vi} (Arnold)
 - ^{vii} (Moving HR to the Cloud? Navigate key barriers to boost success)
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 - ^{xi} (Arnold)
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 - ^{xiii} (Asana)
 - ^{xiv} (Asana)
 - ^{xv} (Wrike)
 - ^{xvi} (Wrike)
 - ^{xvii} (Slack)
 - ^{xviii} (Slack)
 - ^{xix} (Zoom)
 - ^{xx} (Zoom)

xxi (Jhana)

xxii (Jhana)

xxiii (Qualtrics)

xxiv (Bersin, Pelster and Schwartz)

xxv (Eubanks)