

From Digital Workplace to Ideal Employee Experience: The Journey Starts



Issue 5

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Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of the NGA newsletter featuring research from Gartner.

In this issue, we explore the demands and opportunities the digital workplace creates for delivering HR services and how both can be leveraged to build an optimal employee experience. It's not news that technology has transformed business in ways we couldn't have imagined. HR is no exception. In fact, we believe HR perhaps holds even more potential for digital transformation because this "people function" delivers services to employees at the same time their expectations and demands are driving its evolution more than ever.

The Gartner research, *Digital Workplaces Create New Demands for HR Service Delivery*, published 21 August 2014, discusses the many impacts of digital technology on the **user experience** and recommends ways to improve it. Among them: Understanding the whys of employee expectations; getting user input; and responding to **employee expectations** for seamless work and non-work technology tools and experiences. Gartner also discusses the benefits of outsourcing HR functions to a specialized provider, adopting integrated technology solutions and moving to a "**hybrid HR**" delivery model.

In our second article, *Leveraging the Digital Workplace to Create a Total Employee Experience*, we dive more deeply into the distinctions between the user experience and a total employee experience that encompasses all the employee-HR interactions, or **touchpoints**. Why shouldn't the employee experience be **defined and designed** in ways similar to marketing's CRM practices? We think it should, and **digital technology** is the key. HR managers can and should lead the way forward by applying **design thinking** to the employee experience and embracing **three big ideas**.

At NGAHR, we understand the dynamics of the digital workplace and help organizations across the globe realize the full potential of digital technology for creating an employee experience that drives engagement, performance and productivity.

We hope you'll find this enjoyable – and valuable – reading.



Michael Custers
SVP Strategy & Marketing - NGA Human Resources

FROM THE GARTNER FILES:

Digital Workplaces Create New Demands for HR Service Delivery

Increased focus on workforce engagement and user experience within business applications will lead HR leaders to leverage HR service delivery technology investments to not only improve process efficiency, but also to improve employee experience in their interactions with HR.

Impacts

- Continued trends in HR cost containment through process and service efficiencies lead many organizations to invest in shared-service delivery.
- High employee expectations driven by the consumerization of IT will place renewed focus on the user experience of employee-facing HR service delivery tools.
- HR leaders looking to increase employee engagement through an improved employee work experience will also look to HR service delivery, HR portal and HR self-service tools that touch all employees in an organization.

Recommendations

- HR leaders must evaluate their HR delivery model and HR shared delivery technology implementations through the lens of employee experience.
- HR IT leaders should evaluate the road maps of vendor HR service delivery solutions to meet increased user experience expectations, including multichannel support, mobile device capabilities and robust search capabilities.
- HR leaders should include workforce engagement and the employee perception of the entire HR organization in the evaluation of HR shared-service centers and shared-delivery technologies.

Analysis

HR organizations have shrunk in size over the last decade, moving from an average HR to FTE (full-time-equivalent) ratio of 1:94 in 2005¹ to 1:114 in 2013². They have also faced the challenge of transformation efforts to move from a primarily administrative function to one that also acts as a strategic business partner. This has frequently

led to the setup of shared-service centers and a focus on the standardization and automation of administrative HR processes. It has also led to the increased leverage of employee self-service and manager self-service technologies.

HR shared delivery technologies generally include an HR portal (Tier 0), where information is stored and can be consulted by employees, and an HR ticketing tool (Tier 1), where employees can enter requests and receive answers. Questions that cannot be answered by the HR contact center team (Tier 1 support) are often forwarded through the HR service delivery tool to specialists in Tier 2 or Tier 3 support teams. The primary differentiator between HR service delivery tools and other contact center or support tools is the ability to meet stringent requirements around the protection of highly sensitive personal information. HR service delivery tools generally complement functionality in core HR management systems (HRMSs) as well as employee and manager self-service scenarios delivered in core HRMS, talent management suites, payroll applications and workforce management solutions.

During this movement to a shared-service model, employee experiences and expectations have been changing dramatically. As more employees make smartphones, apps and other digital technology part of their lifestyles, their expectations of business applications have evolved. Employees increasingly expect business applications to be easy-to-use (via user experience design mechanisms), mobile and social. Gartner calls this movement toward a more consumerized work environment “the digital workplace”.

HR and HR IT professionals are not immune to this trend. In fact, employee expectations may be higher for HR applications, given their focus on people. But many HR shared-delivery technologies do not meet those expectations. HR and HR IT professionals have an opportunity to increase workforce engagement by refocusing HR shared-delivery efforts from cost-efficiency gains to workforce experience and employee engagement improvements, as well as to an improved perception of the HR function as a whole.

FIGURE 1 Impacts and Top Recommendations for HR and HR IT Leaders

Impacts	Top Recommendations
Continued trends in HR cost containment through process and service efficiencies lead many organizations to invest in shared service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR leaders should evaluate their HR delivery model and maturity of HR shared service centers. • HR IT leaders should evaluate current HR shared delivery technology implementations.
High employee expectations driven by the consumerization of IT will place renewed focus on the user experience of employee facing HR Service delivery tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR IT leaders should evaluate vendor roadmaps for user experience redesign and ability to deliver support on mobile devices • HR IT leaders should scope and plan for usability improvements of HR service delivery technologies.
HR leaders looking to increase employee engagement through an improved employee work experience will look to HR service delivery technologies which touch all employees in an organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR should measure success of service delivery by measures of workforce engagement and employee perception of HR. • HR and HR IT leaders need to test drive their tools and processes in order to evaluate employee experience.

Source: Gartner (August 2014)

Impacts and Recommendations

Continued trends in HR cost containment through process and service efficiencies lead many organizations to invest in shared-service delivery

HR departments in organizations of all shapes and sizes are under continuing pressure to deliver services to employees, managers and executives with multiple — sometimes conflicting — objectives, such as:

- Contain or reduce cost of service delivery.
- Improve service quality.
- Reduce cost and time spent on administrative activities to enable more program development and strategic partnering by existing HR staff.

Over the past ten years, the best way to resolve these conflicting goals has been to implement a shared-service delivery model, where administrative tasks are consolidated at a corporate or regional level with the goal of freeing the organization's HR generalists to partner with senior management on strategic activities, including:

- Developing plans for future workforce change (organic growth, acquisition, divestiture, etc.)

- Identifying high potential workers for development
- Building robust succession plans
- Identifying critical performance, skill set and engagement gaps in the current organization, and developing specific HR programs to remediate them
- Understanding the specific metrics that are most important for driving organizational performance, and implementing processes to enable a closed-loop "analytics to action" methodology

To free up the HR generalist to focus on those strategic activities, HR shared-service centers need to assume a large number of administrative processes, often including the following:

- "Life cycle" HR transactions (new hires, job changes, transfers, promotions, salary increases, leaves, terminations).
- Onboarding of new-hire information from the recruiting application; verification and coordination with multiple internal departments (such as IT, facilities, security, and compliance).
- Benefits administration, including open enrollment, eligibility and life event changes.

- Retiree program management and administration.
- Payroll processing, including the incorporation of time and labor data from ancillary workforce management applications.
- Depending on the deployment, the shared-service center may manage the administrative aspects of certain talent management processes, such as performance appraisal, compliance-related learning or salary administration.
- HR reporting, with a focus on operational reporting or standard report delivery.

Historically, it has been mostly large, complex organizations (over 10,000 employees) that have had the bandwidth, scale and resources to implement shared-service models that combine contextual employee and manager self-service with the ability to speak with a service center representative to resolve complex issues. These deployments have usually been supported by HR shared-service tools, such as custom applications, expansions of the IT organization's help desk tools, core HRMS ancillary modules and software from specialist vendors. As shared-service concepts and tools mature, we are seeing an increasing focus on tools and processes to bring tighter process control and measurement to running the HR shared-service center; the best HR shared-service centers are now achieving sophistication (and SLA conformance) comparable to leading CRM call centers. The HR shared-service tools market continues to develop, with new entrants and strong investment from incumbent vendors. We are also seeing a dual expansion of shared services over the next three to five years in two major areas:

- Complex global organizations (more than 5,000 employees) that have begun a significant HR transformation (often aided by a major consulting firm's HR transformation practice) resulting in the deployment of a shared-service model and supporting technologies. This is often paired with the rollout of a new core HRMS (e.g., Workday, SAP SuccessFactors, Oracle Cloud HCM) to serve as the global central repository of critical employee data, life cycle processes and reporting.
- Regional organizations of between 5,000 and 10,000 employees, driven by the increasing maturity of HR shared-service center tools and greater availability of standardized implementation templates from leading providers.

A poorly run shared-service center can derail the entire mission of the HR function in an organization, as flawless performance of administrative activities is usually a prerequisite for HR to gain and maintain credibility for more strategic functions. On the flip side, deploying an HR shared-service center and tools can build a stable foundation for improved HR administration, can significantly cut HR costs, and will usually lead to better employee service. The effective deployment of these tools will help reduce HR administrative costs (in some cases, up to 30%) while also delivering additional business value and risk mitigation through consistently applied policies, improved employee satisfaction and engagement, and redeployment of scarce internal HR head count to more strategic tasks.

Recommendations:

- HR leaders should evaluate their HR delivery model and the maturity of their HR shared-service center in terms of breadth of offering, SLA achievements, utilization and customer satisfaction levels.
- HR IT leaders should evaluate HR shared delivery technology based on efficiency gains and level of standardization achieved, ability to protect sensitive employee information with robust security models, and overall usability.
- Use the move to a shared-service model as an opportunity to deploy a more consumerized employee application experience.

High employee expectations driven by the consumerization of IT will place renewed focus on the user experience of employee-facing HR service delivery tools

Enterprise adoption of HR service delivery (HRSD) technologies and employee and manager self-service have grown in large part due to the proven results of reduced costs and more efficient service delivery. Today, employee self-service is leveraged in roughly 80% or more of organizations, with manager self-service approaching 70% in 2014.³ Surveys reveal that the utilization of employee and manager self-service improves the number of employees that can be served by HR staff by 10%. Adding HR call center technologies further improves that ratio four-fold, as HR staff is able to serve 41% or more employees than organizations with only minimal support technologies in place.⁴

Increasing HR-to-employee staffing ratios and improving efficiencies helps lower organizational costs and staffing needs. However, organizations must do more than just focus on cost efficiencies. Higher levels of employee engagement are proven to correlate with higher levels of business performance. HR leaders offering shared services through a service center have the opportunity to not only improve HR service delivery, but also to improve business outcomes with a focus on improving employee engagement.

As shared-service center adoption increases, so too comes a scrutiny of the tools in place to support employee interactions and employee engagement. The newest generation of workers prefers online access to information, increasingly via mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones. These users have expectations for information and access to knowledge and experts any time, any place. They want a consumer-grade user experience where tool interaction is made simple and where employees are guided to the right information. Likewise, managers seek decision support and help with transactions that are more complex. With a focus on improving HR service delivery while improving employee adoption, engagement and experience, HR and HR IT will gain from embracing consumerized approaches in their HR call center technologies:

- **Search:** The ability of employees to find the information they need is fundamental to the delivery of HR services. Today's leading solution providers enable context-sensitive search and recommendations. These solutions optimally provide search results that are relevant and personalized to the individual based upon the profile and other data available in the organization's integrated HRMS solution.
- **Multichannel access:** Best-in-class solutions will ensure that employees have access to consistent information across multiple channels, including PC, mobile device, telephone, SMS chat, email and interactive voice response, or via a portal. Employees are able to both initiate and receive support in these channels, initiating requests in one mode and completing the process in another as needed.
- **Mobile applications:** More and more employees expect to use their mobile devices in their daily work, as they do in their personal lives. Beyond browser-based access from tablets or smartphones, employee HR help desk applications should provide optimized content and interactivity that leverage the capabilities of these devices. For example, mobile-based apps should seamlessly manage a flow of interactions, including review of documentation, entering a short question for further clarification or going directly to a phone call to speak with an expert on the specific topic.
- **Social collaboration:** HR service delivery applications that incorporate social collaboration capabilities can leverage the wisdom of the crowd, gleaning the knowledge of a peer-to-peer network, optimizing content and providing answers to typical questions on the fly. In the context of sensitive HR policies, however, it would be essential to have HR service delivery personnel constantly monitoring the social channels. They should watch for emerging topics and make sure that employees are pointed to the correct answers. They should also be able to hide any potentially disruptive content that should be managed through a more appropriate channel, such as face-to-face or direct phone interaction.
- **Video:** People look more and more to video to get short and quick answers to particular questions. This medium is increasingly used by leading organizations to explain policies, demonstrate processes and otherwise connect people to information. Leading video tools provide annotation options that enable viewers to rate and/or comment on specific video segments, which can provide valuable feedback to content developers to help sharpen the accuracy and clarity of video content.
- **Personalization and context:** Call centers routinely support form completion, but today's systems should ensure these forms are fully online and prepopulated with user information for faster and more accurate completion. Manager routing should be automated where appropriate, recognizing both direct and indirect hierarchies of the organization and further contextualizing the experience for the individual. Workflows themselves should be easily integrated with HRMS workflows or deliver the capabilities to directly manage flexible workflows within the call center tool.
- **Communications:** Rather than focusing solely on the inbound inquiries from employees, today's call centers can improve service and engagement by providing a communication platform — including outbound communications — across the enterprise. For example, new product launches, employee

recognition awards, new levels of customer retention and other events and milestones can be proactively communicated through the shared-service portal and mobile applications, elevating the HR call center to an employee communications command post.

Recommendations:

- Evaluate HR service delivery technologies on their abilities to provide more consumerized functionalities such as search, multichannel access, delivery on mobile devices, social collaboration, video, personalization and context, and communication.
- Analyze how employees are currently using HR service delivery technologies, if these are already in place. Identify which processes could be improved with a more engaging user experience.
- Survey users about the usability of HR service-delivery technologies to gauge opportunities for driving wider acceptance. Use this analysis to justify potential upgrades or even re-evaluations of HR service delivery technologies.

HR leaders looking to increase employee engagement through an improved employee work experience will also look to HR service delivery, HR portal and HR self-service tools that touch all employees in an organization

HR service delivery technologies and HR self-service tools are typically implemented with efficiency gains in mind. ROI calculations are generally focused on the number of clicks, process steps and length of time spent within a given HR administrative process, as well as on the increased efficiency achieved through the implementation of an automated process or tool. To measure effectiveness of the HR shared delivery model and supporting technologies, organizations generally rely on customer satisfaction ratings and the percentage of queries resolved through Tier 0 support — or in other words, through the consultation of content on the HR portal.

While all of these measures are essential for measuring the performance of HR service delivery, HR leaders should look to add measures of workforce engagement and employee perception of HR overall to their performance measurement. As HR strives to provide more strategic HR services to the business by implementing an HR shared-service delivery model, HR must not forget that the large majority of an organization's managers and employees will only encounter HR at their point of hire, through emails during their annual appraisal to ensure compliance to process timelines and through their interactions with the HR shared-service center.

Many HR organizations focus on communications and marketing approaches to attempt to improve their image. A generic photo of people on an employee portal or regular email newsletters, however, does not generally lead employees to feel that their interactions with HR are any more human. With the growing shift toward digital business and the digital workplace, HR leaders should rethink their communications strategy to focus less on messaging and more on experience.

In the context of HR shared-delivery technology, a number of important factors around employee experience come into play:

- Accuracy and completeness of information stored about an employee conveys the message that HR knows the employee and cares enough to have the right information.
- Smart technology, which matches profile information with anticipated questions, gives employees the impression that they are getting personalized support, although it's through technology rather than human interaction.
- Contextualized experiences, in which questions related to a particular document or topic stored on the HR portal are directly routed to those within the shared-service center who have the right expertise to answer questions, will leave employees feeling that it is easier for them to get their questions answered.

- Simple HR administrative processes that are easy-to-follow and complete will reinforce employees' perception that they do not have to waste time on nonproductive tasks or task completion follow-up.
- The quick and accurate identification of exceptions and the appropriate handling of them by more experienced HR service delivery staff greatly enhance the experience of employees in dealing with HR.

Recommendations

- Evaluate HR shared-delivery technology for its capability to store complete and sensitive information, with a very robust permissions model.
- Re-evaluate what information is accessible to Tier 1 HR service delivery staff to enable a better user experience through a better understanding of the employee's individual situation.
- Evaluate HR shared-service delivery performance measurement models to ensure that they include measures of both overall perception of HR and employee engagement.
- Regularly test and evaluate the setup of processes and the accessibility of information through the lens of employee experience.

Evidence

¹PricewaterhouseCoopers, [The Saratoga Review](#), February 2009.

²XPertHR, ["HR Staffing, Cost and Structure Benchmarking 2013,"](#) 2013.

³Society for Human Resource Management, ["2013 HR Benchmarks Trendbook,"](#) 2013.

⁴"Cedar Crestone 2013-2014 HR Systems Survey White Paper, 16th Annual Edition," Sierra-Cedar, 2014.

Source: Gartner Research, G00264810, Helen Poitevin, Ron Hanscome, Yvette Cameron, 21 August 2014

Leveraging the Digital Workplace to Create a Total Employee Experience

Early on, when organizations were migrating from largely manual HR functions to new HR technologies and automated HR service delivery, they focused mainly on gaining efficiencies, improving processes and cutting costs to improve business outcomes. In particular, moving “transactional” work to low-wage countries was a key driver of, and contributor to, these cost efficiencies. The implementation of shared-service delivery models also enabled companies to shift transactional HR functions to automated, self-service systems, which resulted in improved HR process standardization and measurement.

Employee (vs. ‘user’) experience

But as the transformation to a digital workplace has unfolded over the last decade or more, additional priorities have emerged. Initially, the emphasis was on the “user experience,” which focused on things like screen configuration and mobile technology applications. The user experience became a key measure for the success of HR service delivery.

But more recently, an important distinction between the more narrow “user experience” and the much broader – and all-encompassing – “employee experience” has emerged. Although it includes the user experience, or self-service technology, the employee experience comprises *every touchpoint* between employee and employer – interaction with a contact center, the speed of issue resolution, easy access and integration workflows across business applications, direct interaction with HR and other lines of business and readily accessible knowledge and information.

Creating a rich, total employee experience is rapidly ascending the list of organizational priorities. That’s because to an even greater degree than the more narrow user experience, it drives engagement with the organization, and engagement raises performance and productivity.

Designing experience

One certainly can’t help but draw parallels between CRM, or Customer Relationship Management, and how employee experiences are created and managed – or aren’t. Marketers the world over focus endlessly on how to design and manage every touchpoint between their organizations and customers, with the goal of

enhancing the customer’s total experience with their brands.

At the heart of CRM is “design thinking,” the discipline of making the end user front and center in process development and problem-solving. In this case, CRM yields better results by meeting customers’ needs in technologically and strategically viable ways.

The employee experience, on the other hand, has traditionally been viewed, not holistically but in terms of individual touchpoints that have been developed largely on an ad hoc basis. Even so, the same opportunities exist when design thinking is applied to the employee experience. Every employer-employee touchpoint can be mapped out and actively managed, with the end goal of designing and delivering the best possible experience and outcomes to employees. (Further discussion appears later on in this piece.)

Digital technology is the key

The digital workplace itself presents both new demands and opportunities for the deployment of HR technologies and delivery of HR services. There is demand for an enhanced employee experience; for employee involvement in the design of the experience; and for more parity between employees’ experiences with technology in the workplace and as consumers. Likewise, there are new opportunities for building loyalty and increasing engagement, satisfaction and productivity.

But these outcomes are all predicated on optimizing the employee experience; embracing the larger context of the seamless and ubiquitous use of technology generally; and by being flexible and adaptable to evolving HR technologies and service delivery models.

One of the biggest drivers of this workplace evolution and the new focus on employee experience is employees themselves. Younger workers have grown up with technology and use it in all aspects of their lives, so they can easily distinguish between “good” and “bad” interactions with technology. Coupled with the growing trend of a remote and geographically dispersed workforce, employees’ experience with technology becomes a critical component of their productivity.

Digital technology is the key to creating an employee experience that is at once well organized and integrated and at the same time, unique and personal to the individual employee. Digital technology has ushered in nearly limitless opportunities to deliver an employee experience that includes personalized communication, customized services and multichannel access. In other words, what employees now expect.

Additionally, demographic trends reflect that for many companies, the workforce consists of various groups, with not only permanent and temporary employees, but also with freelance staff and contingent workers, as well. In many cases their primary source of interactions and communications with a company is virtual. Here, getting the employee experience right becomes even more of an imperative and arguably a mandate rather than a nice to have. Providing accurate communication and the right touchpoints for members of each group becomes a matter not just of providing an acceptable experience but also one that mitigates risk and ensures compliance for the organization. The HR and business processes supporting these workgroups must be agile and transparent, which the digital workplace will facilitate.

Putting it all together

What should HR managers and senior management be aware of – and doing – now, to realize the maximum benefit for employees, as well as for the organization as a whole? Simply, they must begin to marry the idea of an employee experience based on “design thinking,” or creating experiences with employees central to the process, with that of “digitalization,” or putting digital technology at the heart of the business. When these two concepts are combined, the path is cleared for mapping out the most effective and most advanced HR delivery model for your organization.

Three big ideas for HR

Within this scenario, we see three big ideas that every CHRO (Chief HR Officer) and HR manager should be exploring:

- How can a better employee experience be proactively defined and designed?
- What does it mean to become truly digital in HR service delivery?
- How can key stakeholders – the CHRO and the CDO (Chief Digital Officer) – be brought together to deliver the best possible (digital) employee experience?

We mentioned earlier that the user experience has tended to be defined in fairly narrow terms, limited to the employee’s interaction with HR staff or the HR service delivery system itself – an HR portal, self-service and a call center. We would suggest to HR managers that, to significantly improve satisfaction, engagement and ultimately, productivity, the employee experience must be approached more holistically. It must be expanded to include every touchpoint and viewed as the collective effect of every interaction between the HR function and employees.

Of course, organizations all “touch” their employees in a variety of ways now. But how many of these touchpoints are processes or systems or interactions that were created by and for the benefit of the organization, first and foremost? That’s the story of where we’ve been.

In contrast, a holistic approach to employee experience would mean taking a fresh, new look at its many touchpoints. It would mean taking a big step back from the status quo and yes, even discarding it. It would mean proactively “defining and designing” those touchpoint experiences from an entirely different perspective – that of employees and managers. Creating an integrated, holistic experience requires not only a new perspective, but empathy and recognition of optimal outcomes, as well.

Changing perspective in this way allows for “design thinking” to be applied to everything from the smallest interaction to the most impactful – from onboarding to pay slips to performance reviews to all forms of communication. HR managers should be continually asking the fundamental question: *What is the total employee experience we want all of these touchpoints to create together? And further: How do we reimagine – and redesign-- these touchpoints into an employee experience that is integrated, seamless and satisfying?*

The employee experience: Think CRM

This brings us back to the notion of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), or the ways marketing creates and manages a total customer experience through its many customer interactions, or touchpoints. It is important to note that in a highly-developed CRM environment, very little is left to chance. Even in after-sales service and digital marketing, every touchpoint is orchestrated, evaluated and measured to optimize the customer experience and maximize return to the company.

Ideally, this same kind of thinking should be applied by organizations to employee touchpoints. But the reality is, this happens too little, or not at all, in HR.

Of course, businesses are built on customers. Although employees are valued resources for any organization, realistically the dollars invested internally just aren't going to match those spent externally. But there's no reason that CRM principles cannot be applied to the employee experience. The rationale behind them applies just as much to employees as to customers.

Consequently, we encourage HR managers to borrow from their marketing counterparts. Learnings from external, customer-facing activities should inform and be applied to the delivery of HR services. As CRM is to customers, adopting an "ERM," or Employee Relationship Management, mindset would mean actively defining, designing, organizing, managing and measuring a total employee experience. Even bridging the gap between externally and internally focused thinking would in and of itself be productive. And it would further the process of satisfying employee demand for having technology and experiences in the workplace that are consistent with those outside work.

Becoming truly digital

As the phrase "digital workplace" becomes increasingly common, some misconceptions persist in terms of what it means to be truly "digital." What digital isn't is just automating paper or adding technology to the ways things have always done. Instead, digital tools are the keys to actually *reimagining* how to more effectively organize and manage a holistic employee experience across many different touchpoints.

For instance, advanced business applications can now integrate employee data and trigger workflow processes once it is collected to build a holistic employee profile. This allows pay information, reports, and key work processes to be created, updated and accessed all in one place. For employees, this means a single sign-on and a rich user experience.

If the pay slip, another touchpoint, were reimagined digitally, the data included on them could be presented in ways that are more visual, interesting and useful to employees. Charts and graphs might show trending in deductions, employee benefits or salary and tax related information year-over-year for comparison purposes.

Obviously, there are scores of employee-employer interactions, or touchpoints, to be digitally reimagined. But these two examples offer a glimpse into the potential that digital technology holds for enriching the employee experience.

The CHRO-CDO partnership

It may seem obvious but is so critical it bears emphasizing nonetheless. A working partnership between the Chief HR Officer and the Chief Digital Officer is an absolute must to effectively delivering digital HR services – and foundational to successfully creating a total employee experience. How are these two brought together and their individual perspectives harnessed in optimal ways? We believe that CHROs and CDOs who share a vision and philosophy for what the employee experience can and should be are more likely to function as true partners and ultimately, to bring that vision to fruition. The days of siloed functions are (or should be) gone, replaced by integrated disciplines focused on achieving the same goals. Nowhere is this more true than in creating an employee experience that crosses all touchpoints.

Understanding – and meeting – expectations

Employees are letting organizations know, loud and clear, why they should be moving more quickly in this direction. With the "consumerization" of technology and HR, employees (and managers, too) expect to use the same technology and functionality in the workplace that they use everywhere else – user-friendly, accessible, multichannel, mobile and social. But at work, their expectations for the delivery of HR services as a "people function" are even higher than for other kinds of services.

There are generational and cultural factors, too. Millennials and GenXers have known only digital environments and expect access, speed and efficiency. And they especially have very little use for paper-based transactions. (This is becoming increasingly true more broadly.) Additionally, these younger workers are accustomed to (and prefer) self-service and expect 24/7 access to information. In the workplace, too, they are more open to and expect accurate information for more complex issues to be available from shared-service centers that are as professional and sophisticated as today's commercial contact centers.

Inviting user involvement early

In large part because they're more familiar with recurrent changes and upgrades to technology and are accustomed to providing input and feedback that actually impact the direction of technology, employees expect to have a voice in the development of digital HR delivery. Historically, HR service delivery was designed by HR and built by IT, then introduced to users later on. The missing link in this process has been getting employees and managers at the very beginning and in fact, making them front and center.

Because current technology incorporates design thinking (discussed above), the user experience is central to the development process. This makes it easier and faster to run successive iterations and make adjustments as necessary. For digital HR delivery, involving users – managers, as well as employees – in the planning, design, testing and feedback loop pays dividends not only in terms of being able to optimize HR service delivery systems more quickly and from a more informed position, but also in the long term, in user engagement and productivity.

Getting from here to there

Reimagining and creating a total, integrated employee experience by fully exploiting the many digital tools available is a tall order for HR managers. For many, the solution will involve outsourcing HR administrative functions – time, benefits, payroll – to a specialized provider, to be able to refocus their own efforts on more strategic tasks. Increasingly, organizations are adopting integrated technology solutions and delivery models that allow HR process standardization with configurable digital options.

There are various ways to get there. Companies may have invested for years in customization that includes localized solutions for core HR tasks. Others migrated from ERP, with considerable customization, to cloud applications, which offer much less customization and more standardization. Either way, "hybrid HR" solutions from an experienced vendor allow organizations to avoid forfeiting their investments while still incorporating the right amount of customization with standardization to meet their needs.

In the piece referenced earlier, Gartner also points out the importance of evaluating potential vendors' HR service delivery solutions road maps. We would add to this the importance of a vendor's capability for providing sustained

change management along the way. Road maps are critical because the more limited choices offered by traditional HR models have now been replaced by "hybrid HR" that allows combining OnPremise technology with cloud solutions. In this way, the past (e.g., ERP, OnPremise systems) meets the future (cloud, SaaS systems), providing the best of all worlds for the organization. From an employee experience perspective, it now becomes feasible to offer every available delivery option for HR services in real time and with maximum flexibility – anytime, anywhere, from any device. Change management is a critical component of this evolutionary process, to avoid "breaking" HR functions and the overarching employee experience.

For most organizations, managing vast stores of data and understanding changing statutes and requirements across the globe is not only outside the scope of their core business, but is also exceedingly costly and high-risk. Monitoring and responding to evolving legal and compliance requirements is becoming more and more complex and for many, next to impossible to manage.

In an increasingly digital world, privacy is also a growing issue that presents serious risk, as more and more countries – Russia, India, China among them – implement stringent laws and serious penalties for violations. In outsourcing to specialist providers that have a proven, global track record, the required knowledge, expertise and capacity for understanding and managing constantly changing country-by-country differences already exists.

A vision for the future

For HR, creating and leveraging the benefits of a digitized workplace means fully embracing three big ideas. First, HR needs to be proactive in defining and designing a better employee experience that crosses and incorporates all touchpoints with the organization. This means beginning with desired outcomes in mind and borrowing from marketing's CRM best practices for managing customer relationships. It also means applying "design thinking" by making employees and their perspective front and center to every aspect of the experience.

Second, HR managers need to understand what becoming "truly digital" looks like by being aware of the boundless possibilities digital technology affords. With digital technology, virtually anything is possible in terms of creating a rich and satisfying employee experience that includes personalization, customization and

multichannel access. HR needs to ask the tough questions: Despite the ready availability of digital technology and all its potential, why do we get stuck in the ways we've always done things?

Finally, as key stakeholders, CHROs and CDOs need to work in tandem to design and deliver the best possible (digital) employee experience. It is our belief that the best CHRO-CDO partnership are based on a shared vision of a total, integrated employee experience; a thorough understanding of the inherent and dynamic demands and opportunities of the digital workplace; and a deep commitment to unlocking the incredible possibilities that digital technology offers for realizing the vision.

HR stands at the threshold of nothing less than transformation. Stellar results – in engagement, performance and productivity – are within the grasp of every organization. We see the rapidly evolving HR landscape as an opportunity for CHROs and HR managers to lead the way forward by injecting new thinking into old processes and by reimagining a holistic employee experience in which all touchpoints are actively organized and managed.

Source: NGA HR

About NGA Human Resources (NGA)

NGA Human Resources is a global leader in helping organizations transform their business-critical HR operations to deliver more effective and efficient people-critical services.

We help our clients become better employers through smarter, more streamlined business processes – to save money, manage employee life cycles, and support globally connected, agile organizations. This is how NGA makes HR work.

What sets us apart is The NGA Advantage. It's a combination of deep HR experience and insight, advanced technology platforms and applications and a global portfolio of flexible service delivery options.

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