

Using Technology to Take HR to the Next Level: Three Powerful Strategies



Technology is everywhere, and evolving rapidly. From business intelligence to integration to social media, it is transforming the way HR functions, and delivering measurable value to organizations. But choosing the right technology can be daunting. Here's a look at three strategies that are working for leading companies.

BY ADRIENNE HEDGER

WHEN MAJOR COSMETICS MANUFACTURER REVLON, Inc. decided to update its Human Capital Management (HCM) system, it wanted a solution that would help it stay ahead of the game in a fast-moving industry.

The technology it selected was:

- **Cloud-based**, so no on-premise system was required.
- **Remotely managed** by the vendor, so no expensive hardware was required.
- **Focused on business intelligence**, with easy-to-navigate report-builders and quick access to reporting and workforce analytics.
- **Flexible**, so the company could make immediate adjustments as needed.
- **Mobile**, so employees could access the system anywhere, anytime.

“The right technology makes everyone in the organization more effective,” says Scott Scherr, president, CEO and founder of Ultimate Software, the company that provided the solution. “For Revlon, the end result is that they have a single HR system of record that is delivering results without responsibility of maintaining expensive-to-maintain on-premise hardware.”

From HCM to learning, recruiting and more, technology is revolutionizing the way HR professionals manage their work. Here are three strategies that companies are using to leverage technology and reach the next level in HR performance.

STRATEGY: Use Technology to Transform Recruiting

New technologies are transforming the way companies approach an age-old question. Namely: *How do we attract the right kind of talent?*

“Companies are using technology to reinforce their employment brand, target their outreach, and build a strong pipeline of talent,” says Derek Bluestone, Vice President of Product Marketing at Kenexa.

For example:

Reinforcing the employment brand

Organizations use many different channels—both online and offline—to reach job candidates. And this makes a unified employment brand all the more essential.

“You want to make sure everyone is communicating the same key messages about what makes the company unique,” says Derek Bluestone, Product Marketing at Kenexa.

In a sense, he notes, recruiters are becoming more like brand managers. They need to represent the brand, identify the people who would be a good fit, and help them understand the company’s value.

Technology is making this easier by allowing recruiters to become more targeted.

Targeting the outreach

“There are so many ways to reach candidates today,” says Bluestone. “Recruiters can identify talent on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other sites, and use these sites to start building relationships with candidates.”

One of the challenges, however, is keeping up with all the different sites and information.

“A lot of companies struggle with this,” says Bluestone. In response, vendors are starting offer services that simplify the process. For example, Kenexa’s SocialSource is a program that centralizes candidate information pulled from LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other sites.

The software also allows a recruiter to create a specific job profile, then conduct a search across multiple sites for candidates that fit that profile. “Recruiters don’t need to go out and visit each site,” says Bluestone. “They just define what they’re looking for and the software spiders out across the web and collects information. You receive focused, targeted results.”

Creating a tunnel, not a funnel

All of this helps build what Bluestone notes is a “tunnel” of targeted candidates, not a “funnel” of people who may or may not be qualified.

In many cases, there may not be an open job that recruiters are trying to fill. Instead, they are building long-term relationships and strategically identifying people who are a good fit for the company’s culture. When a job opens up, those relationships are already in place.

“The time to start is now,” advises Bluestone. “HR leaders are already out there, taking advantage of these tools and strategies. When the company is ready to grow, expand into new markets or introduce a new product, HR needs to quickly deliver the right talent. You don’t want to be starting from square one.”

For more on technology trends and HR strategies, visit Kenexa’s blog at: <http://blog.kenexa.com/>

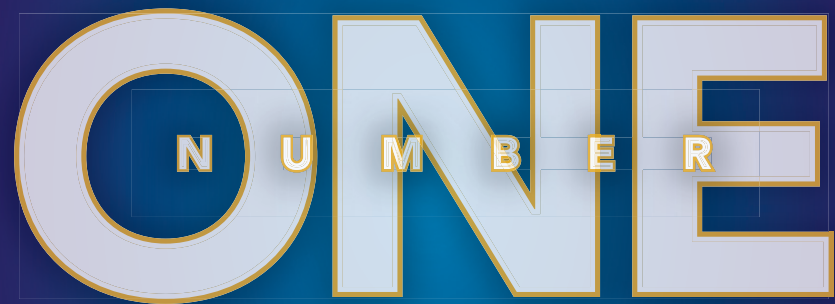
STRATEGY: Use Social Learning to Improve Results

The concept of “social learning” is starting to gain attention in companies, but many see it as a daunting endeavor. They wonder what platform to use. They worry that it will require significant time and energy. They question the value.

“It’s difficult to separate the hype from reality and focus on the elements that are really important,” says Pam Boiros, Vice President of Product Management for SkillSoft’s Books24x7 product line.

Boiros has been in a unique position to study this growing trend, after rolling out a social learning layer for Books24x7 about a year ago. Books24x7 is an on-demand platform that companies use to deliver books, book summaries, research reports and best practices to employees.

“Our clients using Books24x7 already had solid content in place,” says Boiros. “What we did was add a new layer of functionality so employees could ‘recommend’ resources and add their own comments.”



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Allowing this new level interaction—whether it's tied to Books24x7 or other learning platforms—delivers a number of compelling benefits. For example, it:

- **Cuts down on information overload:** When employees can rate and comment on resources, this shines a spotlight on the most relevant content. It makes it easy for people to quickly zero in on the best information.

- **Helps identify internal experts:** Social learning allows employees who have deep knowledge about a topic to share their insight across the entire organization. It also connects employees who have never met, but share similar jobs and challenges.

- **Captures organizational knowledge:** Of course, some of the most important organizational information exists in people's heads—including information about processes, people and systems unique to the company. With social learning platforms, this information is easily captured and shared, instead of “walking out the door” with the employee.

For companies who want to take advantage of social learning, Boiros has this advice: Focus on the content.

“People may visit your new social platform once or twice out of curiosity, but if there isn't interesting content to engage them, they won't be back,” she says. “If you seed your platform with great content, it makes it easy for employees to jump in, make comments, give ratings and more.”

Good content acts as a magnet for comments, and this leads to a flourishing community engaged in active discussion.

“It's been interesting to see that companies of all sizes, across all industries are embracing social learning and seeing results,” says Boiros. “People are used to interacting this way, and they appreciate the value it delivers. It's safe to say that social learning is not going away; it's a trend that will only gain momentum.”

STRATEGY: Introduce Smarter, Better, Faster Labor Management

As CEO of UniFocus, Mark Heymann focuses on delivering HR technologies to the hospitality industry. But the insights he's gained during his career apply across many other industries as well.

“A lot of companies are still wrestling with manual processes, or separate systems for time and attendance, labor scheduling, budgeting and more,” he notes. “As a result, there are plenty of hidden costs and managers spend a lot of time fixing errors and performing rework.”

Often these companies know they need new technology to manage their labor force, but the thought of introducing the technology can be daunting. What's important, says Heymann, is to focus on the benefits that can be realized. And they are powerful.

For example, the ability to:

- **Make Better, Informed Decisions:** With an integrated labor-management system, companies can see the labor performance for their entire portfolio at-a-glance.

- **Quickly Drill Down:** Managers can get instant detail and analyze root-causes in real time, instead of waiting on static paper reports.

- **Save Time, Free Management:** Companies can eliminate manual processes and redundant work, unlocking opportunities for managers to handle more strategic activities.

- **Drive Increased Profitability:** Managers can pinpoint labor trends that impact profitability, then take steps to proactively address those trends.

- **Reduce Costs:** HR can easily identify ways to save money and quantify the savings.

“Technology delivers three important things: visibility, simplicity and accountability,” says Heymann. “It gives you the information you need to run your business effectively and profitably.”

To read more about how to make social learning work for your company, check out the SkillSoft blog at <http://blogs.skillssoft.com/>

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In addition, new technology is making it easier than ever to manage labor in real time. For example, clients of UniFocus take advantage of technology for:

- **Shift changes.** Employees can quickly connect online to switch shifts. A notice is automatically sent to the right manager.
- **Schedule updates.** Employees can also send their schedules to their phone, view open shifts, and claim a shift if they are able.
- **Late employees.** If an employee is late, the scheduling system can send a message to the manager's mobile phone. Then the manager can access all the information they need on their mobile device, so they can contact the employee or work on finding a replacement.
- **Timecard punching.** Touch screens and biometric devices enable management to eliminate the perennial 'buddy punching' headache.

"It's complicated to manage a large staff," says Heymann. "There's no question about it. But technology makes it vastly easier and more efficient. The right system can improve financials and satisfy all the stakeholders—including your associates. Ultimately, this leads to a better customer experience."

STRATEGY: Implement Unified Human Capital Management to Reach the Next Level

Sudi Korba recognized the irony. As vice president of human resources for PSAV, she works at a company that provides event technology for corporate, association and tradeshow meetings.

"The range of technology we offer customers is unparalleled," she says. "Yet internally, many of our HR processes were manual and out-dated. It was time for a change."

PSAV is a global company, with more than 700 locations worldwide and thousands of employees who are decentralized and often on the road, traveling to events. It's a mobile, fast-paced environment. And HR was struggling to provide the right strategic support.

"We were managing a lot of paper," says Korba. "It wasn't an efficient way to work." Payroll was one area of concern. The

company was sending check stubs every week and had no way to display payroll information electronically. In addition, PSAV wanted to improve its performance management, and create a more flexible salary planning process.

To achieve these goals and more, the company turned to Ultimate Software. "We needed an end-to-end solution," Korba explains. "We wanted one unified technology platform that would touch all different areas of the employee life cycle."

The HR department began deploying UltiPro® last year. First the team streamlined its back-end processes, then rolled out something new to employees and managers: enhanced goal setting and online performance management.

In the past, employees and managers would sit down for the performance review and look at a Word document that outlined the employee's job description. This would serve as the foundation for a performance-review discussion. Then, based on the score the employee received, salary increases would be applied.

Technology transformed this process. Using UltiPro, employees create individual goals that tie to the company's objectives. Performance is no longer measured against job descriptions; instead, it is aligned with organizational strategy.

In addition, managers gained far more flexibility with salary planning. Job performance was one factor that they considered, but they could weigh other factors as well. Then they could decide exactly how they wanted to allocate their merit budget among their team members, instead of being locked into an automatic formula.

"The salary planning change was a huge success," says Korba. "It's simple, quick and efficient. It provides a simple way for our managers to 'pay for performance' and also helps them manage their teams more strategically."

Payroll is electronic now as well, and a vast amount of employee information is captured in one central location. Reports are easy to run, and managers can gain critical insight that paper-based processes never allowed.

"The amount of information managers

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can access is almost surreal to them,” says Korba. “They can see what’s happening with their staff, make strategic decisions, and take action without calling HR. They love having the ability to access their employee data, run reports and analyze data.”

Deploying this level of technology requires change; and change is never easy. But PSAV’s employees and managers fundamentally understood the value of moving away from manual, paper-based processes.

“We did a soft launch of some of UltiPro’s features,” says Korba. “In a few instances our people even found these features and started using them before we even did a communication about them! All of us at PSAV are used to technology and the way that it improves our lives. We want information online. We want it immediately. We expect to see that in our personal lives, as well as at work.”

Over the next year, PSAV will be introducing more functionality into its human

capital management (HCM) solution, including an onboarding process and Canadian payroll. Korba is excited about the opportunities ahead.

“We are a technology company, and now we have the advanced technology we need to optimize HR,” she says. “It has brought our function to a new level and allowed us to make a much stronger strategic impact on the organization. It’s amazing to look at how far we’ve come.”

Whether it’s creating a better customer experience, helping employees learn, or building a strong talent pipeline, technology is changing the face of HR—and this is a trend that will only continue.

“Technology creates faster, smarter, better ways to manage the employee life cycle, from recruitment to retirement,” says Scherr at Ultimate Software. “Leading HR departments understand this, and are leveraging technology to transform the way they work, deliver increased value to the organization and drive bottom-line results.” ■

Seven Ways Day-to-Day Work Improves with HCM

How can an end-to-end HCM solution simplify and speed daily tasks? Here are seven ways:

1. Instead of manually filling out forms, HR employees can capture data during recruitment so necessary forms are pre-populated in the solution.
2. Similarly, HR can instantly “hire” a candidate from the applicant pool, without re-entering any data.
3. The risk of errors, confusion and rework is dramatically reduced. An individual’s information is entered only once—in the single system of record.
4. HR employees can easily change an employee’s salary, job, organization level, employment status and more—with just a few clicks of a mouse.
5. The company’s employees can access commonly needed documents, such as expense forms. They can also make paperless changes, such as adding a dependent, requesting time off, or updating direct deposit choices.
6. Employees across the company also gain the ability to see their pay, benefits, and HR details—anywhere, anytime, without HR’s help.
7. Leaders can easily analyze team metrics using business intelligence tools. Reports are visual, insightful and delivered in seconds.

“The list goes on,” says Scott Scherr, president, CEO and founder of Ultimate Software. “In every area of HR, you gain the agility to consolidate, manage and analyze information. As a result, you can access critical information quickly and perform routine business activities more efficiently. Clients are amazed to see the difference this makes.”

SPOTLIGHT ON: TIME AND ATTENDANCE**Red Lion Hotels Sees Benefits from Time & Attendance System**

By Mark Fielding, Senior Accountant for Red Lion Hotels

Historically, many hospitality organizations have utilized an antiquated time and attendance system of polling, where there is no real-time mechanism to force daily punch corrections. Alternatives have been few, so for many hotels it became a stopgap process of creating interfaces for forecasting, planning, budgeting and scheduling.

At Red Lion Hotels, these components have been seamlessly brought together to create real knowledge in each property, with a standardized view at the corporate level.

The Challenge: Lack of Standardization for Time & Attendance

Nearly two years ago, like so many other hospitality organizations, Red Lion Hotels was utilizing a disparate array of time and attendance tracking systems across its portfolio. They began to realize that a standardized time and attendance system was required for their 2500+ employees that could give management the visibility, ease of use, accountability and cost control that they needed in today's competitive market.

A project team was assembled to evaluate a variety of time and attendance methodologies, which ranged from manual to spreadsheet and a few out of the box hardware solutions. In total, six different vendors were assessed, including the major players—and even a few providers that nobody had ever heard of. Their top priority was to choose a partner and technology that could provide the most value.

After performing the necessary due diligence, Red Lion Hotels selected the Watson, R.M., Time & Attendance from UniFocus. Their decision was based upon several major factors, such as its interactive smart clock hardware, overall ease of use and the fact that it's designed to be more hospitality-oriented. One of most attractive benefits is that the touch screens and biometric devices enable management to eliminate the perennial "buddy punching" headache.

Off the Ground and Running

The kind of company-wide transition that Red Lion Hotels was about to go through is often not easy for associates or management. It required the collaborative efforts of everyone involved in the project and a carefully thought out timeline. As a result, the implementation process went very smoothly.

Red Lion Hotels installed their time and attendance system at the first property in October 2009. Over the course of the next 18 weeks, the project team then oversaw the large-scale roll-out. The time clocks were shipped in advance to each property so that they could establish

connectivity and make certain everything was working properly and according to specifications.

For training, one full day was set aside to familiarize the property administrator with the system and all of the various workforce scenarios, as well as the different applications and reporting capabilities.

A Fully Centralized and Hosted Solution

The fact that Red Lion Hotels' time and attendance system from UniFocus is now centralized and hosted means that there is greater visibility at the corporate level. This gives them the ability to see and process all data from a higher level and have more time to review the information. Best of all, they now have a standardized system for time and attendance tracking across their entire portfolio, rather than having each property on something different, or worse, still using an outdated manual process.

The Watson, R.M. Time & Attendance system utilizes a user-friendly interface that functions as a smart clock and/or integrated staff communication device. An easy-to-use touch screen enables associates to make requests and check their schedules, as well as allow paperless employee authorizations to their timecard; a biometric reader is also included for optimal security.

As a result of the many benefits that the Red Lion Hotels organization gets from their Time & Attendance system, they continue to hear a lot of positive comments from both administrators and associates.

Conclusion

It is very important to go through a careful process of evaluation and research before selecting a time and attendance system. Beyond the usual considerations about technological capabilities and standardization, there are also compliance issues and labor laws applicable to each state. These were all taken into consideration prior to making the final decision.

Red Lion Hotels' time and attendance system and time recording communication clock enables punch control based on integrated schedules, without the need for managers' overrides. The result is a paperless solution that incorporates punch corrections and measurement to standards, eliminating unauthorized overtime or early punches.

Putting best-of-breed time & attendance technology into the hands of management and associates is the one of the most revolutionary approaches for managing the workforce. The right system will enable an organization to skip much of the guesswork management is usually involved with, actually improve financials and satisfy all the stakeholders—including your associates!

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SPOTLIGHT ON: SOCIAL LEARNING

The Eight Truths of Social Learning

By Pam Boiros, Vice President of Product Management, Books 24x7

A little less than a year ago I wrote the original "Eight Truths of Social Learning" as a blog post on the SkillSoft corporate site. It was one of the posts that generated a surprising amount of traffic and discussion.

I thought I would revisit my Eight Truths now, given that we have about a year under our belts with our own social learning platform—inGenius®. (There's nothing like having your own horse in the race to really make the topic more meaningful!) In the year since the introduction we've learned a lot—not only about social learning, but about the organizational dynamics that surround it. Most of what we initially believed has held up pretty well, but we've also expanded our thinking in some unexpected ways.

The Eight Truths—One Year Later

The idea behind the Eight Truths blog post was to try to uncover the fundamental requirements for successful social learning—the things that would hold true for organizations of all sizes and types. This is a tall order, but in a world where there are new buzzwords, fads and products popping up all the time, we need to be able to cut through the hype to the bedrock principles that can form the foundation for social learning programs.

Like all topics social, this one would not be complete without your voice. So please go to the SkillSoft Facebook page (www.facebook.com/skillsoft) if you would like to contribute your own truths!

1. Social learning is a three-legged stool

In the original blog post this observation was tucked into the introduction, but it deserves its place among the Truths because we have found this to be the most important concept for those who are venturing into social learning. To be successful, three elements are needed: a technology platform, a vibrant community and great content. If one of these legs is missing, it can spell an early and disappointing end to your social learning initiative.

The platform is pretty obvious—you need a place to capture the interactions of your organization. Hopefully it's a place that's easy to find and use in the course of everyday work. But with just a platform you risk having what John Ambrose (our vice president of strategy and business development) refers to as the dreaded "empty drum syndrome." People may come to visit your new social platform once or twice out of curiosity, but if there isn't anything there to engage them (interesting content) they won't be back. If they don't come back, you will never develop a vibrant community.

However, if you seed your platform with great content, it is much easier for employees to jump in and offer their first comments. Nuggets of content act like magnets for comments, and these comments attract other comments and before you know it you have a flourishing community that's engaged in active discussion. But it all starts with the seed of content.

Starting with the right content is also important. It should be something that is not only interesting to your audience, but also provides business value. And as learning professionals, we have trusted information and learning content that can form the basis of these discussions. So building your social learning program around your existing base of learning content makes eminent sense. With valuable business or technical content as the seed, you are much more likely to surface conversations that add unique business value (as opposed to gabfests about the weekend social scene).

Truth #2: Use social learning to address the problem of information overload. To continue reading the whitepaper, visit www.skillsoft.com/truths