



CONNECTING HR ACROSS THE GLOBE

Question: We currently have operations in a number of countries across the globe and are looking to consolidate all of our HR data into one solution. What should we be looking for in such a solution?

Answer: For many, globalisation is a reality, and today many HR practitioners find themselves working for global organisations with international corporate structures and workforces. This represents an enormous opportunity for HR practitioners to collaborate in order to harness the benefits the workforce provides. Such a global perspective of HR management will reduce costs, maximise workforce potential and deliver competitive advantage.

Your organisation has made a wise decision in selecting one central HR repository – it will provide the global HR team with a platform to work collaboratively in delivering global HR excellence. When implementing a new system, it may be a good time to introduce global HR best practice within your organisation.

Evaluating your needs upfront is an excellent place to start. It is important to understand the HR processes in each location and any local compliance issues that need to be catered for.

Performing a needs analysis and documenting your needs on a global basis will be time consuming and will require a project manager to collate and document all requirements. If you don't have the resources to dedicate to this important step, you may consider utilising an independent third party consultant who has experience implementing global systems.

Depending on the size of your organisation, the needs gathering phase may take weeks or even months, but it's worthwhile to understand the needs of all countries. This phase will ensure the system you select is able to meet your needs today and into the future. Selecting a new system can be a costly exercise and your organisation will not be ready to change systems for many years, so it is imperative to get it right. A system that can meet your needs now and grow with you will ensure you are able to maximise your return on investment and reduce the cost of ownership.

Once your requirements are documented you will have a blueprint for your new system and a checklist to utilise when evaluating the different systems. These will streamline the selection process.

Reporting on a global basis is one of the key benefits you will achieve by consolidating your HR information. In order to effectively harness the benefits a central system provides, a solution with one database is vital. An easy-to-use reporting tool that all stakeholders can learn and utilise quickly will support project success. The system benefits will be harder to identify if you are unable to utilise all of the information that is stored.

While it is important to be able to easily access the information through a user-friendly reporting tool, it is also essential that users are only able to access information that is pertinent to their country or region. A system with a rich security layer that provides multi-level and flexible security should be in your requirements – access to sensitive payroll information should be restricted to only those employees and managers requiring this data. If not inbuilt, the reporting tool being utilised should recognise the security layer and only report on the data the user has access to.

If required, multi-language capabilities should be a consideration. The system will be adopted faster and effectively utilised if end users can input and report on data in their own language. In addition, useability will be increased if documentation and help are provided in the user's selected language.

Localisation is another consideration – a system that allows changes to windows/forms for each country will further enhance useability. Users should be able to update the field labels/names with their terminology or create new fields to store information required. A system that can store multiple windows/forms and display the correct form based on the user country will significantly reduce ongoing system maintenance. This approach will ensure global adherence to corporate HR best practice.

Technology and the internet have changed the workforce landscape, and many employees today telecommute and work remotely. When managed effectively, this can provide considerable cost savings. A global HR system that provides a corporate skills framework will allow the business to utilise the skills of employees in other locations that understand your product and business when needed. This provides many opportunities for both the enterprise and your workforce – allowing employees to share their skills and knowledge with counterparts in other countries may introduce efficiencies not considered. Furthermore, employee resources can be shared when one location is experiencing quiet times and another is busy.

Local support is critical, and a vendor who can provide local support and training as well as an understanding of local compliance issues will ensure every office is able to maximise their use of the system.

A central HR system is an excellent opportunity for your HR team to maximise workforce effectiveness on a global scale and promote business agility.

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