



## GENERATING HR REPORTS

### Question:

We are about to go to market for a new HR Information System. We have identified reporting as a key requirement. What should we expect from a new system?

### Answer:

You have correctly identified the importance of reporting. It's one thing to process the payslips and manage HR data for an organisation. It is quite another matter to be able to report on that data in a meaningful manner as determined by the user in order to understand and manage the business.

Often the reporting capability within the HR Information System will be the defining factor in determining the selection of a vendor. In the final analysis, it will be the information provided by the system which will form the basis of considered decision-making by management.

Reporting typically covers standard reports and ad hoc reports which tend to be specific to HR and payroll. There are also 'business intelligence' reports which may combine and compare HR and payroll data with data from other business systems. Users should take a critical look at the full reporting suite of each HRIS under review, to determine which offering best suits their specific business needs.

Firstly, it is reasonable to expect your system to include a wide variety of standard management reports to meet the majority of any organisation's reporting requirements. Your research should highlight those HRIS vendors laying claim to 200+ inbuilt, pre-designed standard reports within the basic system. These standard reports should also satisfy your statutory reporting requirements.

Users should be able to schedule reports to run at a pre-determined time and to be automatically e-mailed to nominated staff. Alternatively, users may locate reports by selection through the HRIS system itself or from an Employee/Managers Self-Service kiosk.

Typically, the kiosk will hold reports for managers in a designated folder where, subject to security, they can access reports relating to their functional area and detailing information restricted to their particular field of operation.

Secondly, an ad hoc report writer should be available. Ideally, the system will have its own inbuilt report writer rather than

relying on third party reporting tools. The key attribute of the report writer should be ease-of-use. Users should be able to design reports tailored to meet their exact requirements, in the required format, using data/information selected from the database and with a minimum of effort.

The employment of drag and drop (point and click) of data fields into the report layout and the creation of bespoke menus to suit reporting objectives is perhaps the simplest method of compiling the report. There ought to be no boundaries to the scope or number of reports one can create.

Reports should be able to include complex computations with users able to perform mathematical and logical operations on data fields and embed results in reports.

In addition to printing, it is also common practice to be able to view reports on the screen. A good reporting tool will allow reports to be exported to and published in any word processing and spreadsheeting software. An advantage of publishing reports in Word and Excel is that a user can further manipulate them and add additional comments and information.

A third level of reporting may be available through the use of .XML reports that give users the opportunity to export the report output into a predefined spreadsheet template. This way, data can be presented as plain spreadsheet data, a formatted report or even as a pivot table and pivot chart.

Of course, the ability to further manipulate reports may be seen as a risk by raising concerns about security and the integrity of the report. To get around this legitimate concern, it should also be possible to publish your reports in an indelible format such as Adobe™ Acrobat's PDF format.

In this instance the predefined template can also be in a format appealing to those seeking 'board' or 'executive' standard presentation through the use of colour, charts, logos and special fonts. Once again, this option should be available within the basic system.

Finally, for those seeking to enter the world of business intelligence, the availability of reports presented in spreadsheets or .XML will allow external business intelligence software such as WebFOCUS, Crystal, Impromptu and Business Objects to be utilised allowing drill down and slice and dice analysis. Many vendors will also offer integration tools to enable direct access to HRIS data.

Reporting is perhaps the single most important criteria when sourcing a Human Resources Information System.

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