

HR technology & software

Imagine using Excel as your sole tool for keeping track of performance management, L&D initiatives and recruitment priorities. Not long ago this was the case and, in short, it was an impossible task. Of all areas of

business technology, perhaps the one that has come on in the biggest leaps and bounds is HR technology. From origins in simple payroll solutions, HR technology vendors now provide all-encompassing software suites that cover the employee life cycle, from recruitment to exit interviews.

Ari Kopoulos, national sales and marketing manager at Silver winner EmployeeConnect, believes the technological developments reflect those of HR itself from an administrative or transactional function to strategic decision makers.

“We’re definitely seeing a shift away from those functions traditionally found in employee self-service [ESS] and payroll/hr-type systems,” he says. “Companies are starting to realise that the real value is in the data and its ability to assist with informed decisions. As such, the HR department is looking beyond cost-saving and focusing on the strategic value of human capital.”

With these data-analysis tools, managers across the organisation can track trends, spot weaknesses and take corrective action before situations get out of control. And the use of middleware that can extract and load data from other sources and transform it into HR reports and Dashboards is taking it even further. “This is the real promise of HR technology – the ability to think and act strategically through better decisions in order to improve efficiency and increase productivity,” Kopoulos says.

Nick Southcombe, GM of second-time Gold winner Frontier Software, says organisations are now looking for tools that are going to help them get the most out of their workforce – and technology plays a crucial role. Southcombe cites performance reviews as an example of the way technology can help reduce operating expenses and streamline processes. “In a performance appraisal, you might identify certain training needs with staff. Now you can identify skills gaps, and automatically link training needs to courses that the company supports and offers. The employee can even select the L&D avenue they want to explore. In the past, you would have had to do that manually, leaving a messy paper trail,” he says.

It’s not only paper-based processes that are eliminated, but consolidating HR data into a single database also lessens the chances of data duplication and conflicts, affording easier and more accurate information sharing across departments. In addition, with a workforce that’s dispersed geographically now commonplace in many organisations, Kopoulos adds that HR technology is “location agnostic”. It can connect the workforce by offering online access that allows employees and managers to reach critical data anytime, anywhere.

As always, ROI is crucial to getting technology initiatives off the ground. Although Kopoulos notes that any technology closely tied to the financial

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Frontier Software



EmployeeConnect



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Why are they so good?

- “EmployeeConnect produces an easy-to-use program for HR professionals & employees that encompasses many HR practices”
- “Frontier provides the total package – there’s no need for additional add-ons”
- “SageMicropay has a great, user-friendly system”

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Craig Osborne Managing director Sage MicrOpay

“This award rounds off a year of focusing on the extension of our HR Software and Services perfectly. The launch of our e-HR and Talent Management solution heralds the dawn of a new era for Sage MicrOpay, and we are looking forward to assisting organisations of all sizes in hiring, retaining and engaging their workforce in 2009 and beyond”

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**Nick Southcombe
General manager
Frontier Software**

“We are absolutely thrilled to be voted this Gold award for the second year running. Consistency in everything we do is something we strive for at Frontier Software and to be so recognised by the HR community is very exciting for all our staff – and, I hope, our large client base”

health of a business will be more closely scrutinised, there is a clear value proposition in HR technology that is linked to financial success. “I’m not anticipating a shift away from HR technology spending. In fact, I expect just the opposite. There will be a renewed focus on investment in human capital by developing strategies that retain, measure and develop top performers. That is building a competency framework that’s linked to positions, people, performance, learning and remuneration,” he says.

Despite the economic doom and gloom, Frontier Software and EmployeeConnect are yet to see much downturn. However, Southcombe warns it’s perhaps too early to tell what the future holds. He acknowledges that the upfront costs of implanting new technology can be expensive (despite the financing options available) and says that another option may be outsourcing. There would still be some cost upfront but it operates essentially as ‘pay as you use’. “There could be organisations out there needing to upgrade their technology that can’t afford to, due to economic circumstances,” he says, “so outsourcing would be an attractive option to them.”

Regardless, Southcombe believes the key to vendor/client success is maintaining an ongoing relationship. “Client needs and business objectives change over time, so keeping in touch with them and making sure the tools, services and processes are continually adapted to their changing business requirements is vital,” he concludes. **HC**



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**Craig MacDonald
Managing director
EmployeeConnect**

“EmployeeConnect is proud to be recognised by *Human Capital* readers. By applying emerging technologies like internet and workflow processing to solutions for HR information management, we feel the growing use of these technologies in Australian businesses shows the future of employee-centric communications”