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Web Savvy HR

HR has moved to the center stage and is increasingly adopting newer ways to ascertain its strategic partnerships. At the core are efforts to improve operating efficiencies through methods that would enable speedy and timely delivery of HR services. The traditional delivery model for HR services has been through spools of paper and files laden with layers of dust. However, since the awakening of HR, the need for better and more efficient delivery models has been the focus of most HR specialists. The use of web through technologies like the Intranet and Internet has therefore become the preferred delivery model. The web has been here for sometime now. Its use in different organizational functions has been extensive. However, there has been some concern over the way it's been put to use.

Web is an excellent delivery alternative keeping in view the value proposition it offers. It is by far the speediest and most convenient mode of service delivery. The time factor apart, the web has a definite advantage of accessibility. It is one medium that can enable information availability at all times to every employee by the click of a mouse. Web also offers the facility of online modification of data. Further, it offers customized data to employees and managers, making it easier for them to complete the administrative facilities without wasting much time. For instance, traditionally an employee proceeding on leave would be required to visit the HR department and fill out an application form. The application would then be forwarded to the signing authority for approval. However, with online HR administration, application forms are easily accessible, thereby obviating most HR formalities.

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, the web offers a host of other benefits such as:

- A transparent, fast, accessible and efficient mode of services delivery
- Easing the burden on HR specialists. This is possible since the online data administration takes care of the administrative functions to a great extent. Consequently, HR executives have enough time to tackle issues of strategic concern
- Meeting global requirements through knowledge and data exchange
- Transparency and easy accessibility of knowledge has increased employee empowerment
- Making the concept of a shared services model seem more real
- Providing cost-effective solutions to HR services delivery

Back on track

Despite these advantages, the use of web has been rather limited. Most organizations began the "web" move with a bang, but the vigor and enthusiasm died down with time. Organizations attribute lack of IT support, CEO involvement and inclination for change

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for reverting back to the hackneyed and traditional approach to HR services delivery. The result therefore has been less than satisfactory. The portals once designed to cater to the HR needs of employees have been reduced to “shovelware”. HR policies and procedures that were earlier printed on spools of paper are now dumped on Intranet. The disorganized pool of information barely serves the purpose of imparting “knowledge and information” since it only redirects employees and managers to links that host information.

Further, lack of updated information, effective search capabilities, customer focus, faulty applicant tracking systems and psychological barriers have contributed to the failure of web-based delivery model. A survey revealed that though the career section of corporate portals attracted large crowds, a mere five percent returned to the website for follow up.

However, there is still hope. Technology has become an integrated part of organizational working. Organizations are thus left with little choice but to embrace it whole-heartedly lest they should get left behind in the race. It is now imperative that HR take a stock of its initiatives and put the web-based delivery model back on track. Following are a few suggestions that would help organizations leverage web-based technologies for improving operating efficiencies of their HR function.

- For any business initiative to be successful, it’s important to align it with the overall business objectives, corporate culture and guiding philosophy. For instance, the business requirements of the hotel industry are different from that of a consultancy. Therefore, web-based delivery models should be well aligned with the overall business models of the organization.
- The delivery model should be flexible enough to accommodate different customer requirements. For instance, HR policies are usually region-specific. Hence having a standardized approach can hamper the entire exercise.
- Top management involvement is critical to the success of HR initiatives. HR is a recent star. Support and involvement of the CEO and other management officials could give the initiative the necessary drive and help it stay on track.

Organizations that have been successful in the web-based delivery model are increasingly seeking ways to maximize its potential. Consequently, e -resourcing and e-learning are two areas that are gaining significance. Organizations are beginning to post updated subject related material on their websites for employees to learn and keep abreast of the developments in their functional areas. Online libraries, case studies that reflect benchmark practices and online journals are tools being used to facilitate online learning.

Web technology is here to stay. The value proposition that the web offers to a function like HR that has been burdened by administrative workload is supreme. Thus, organizations desirous of strategic partnerships with their HR function need to adopt the web as an integral part of their growth strategy.