

The HRIS that ate HR

Is there another life for HR?

In five years time when fully automated, cloud-based HRIS systems conduct ninety per cent of routine tasks, Human Resources may well be left with not a lot to do.



Or HR may find that there are new and radical demands from the business environment that traditional IT vendors on whom they have depended have little to offer!

Over decades, the HR function has been at the whim of external forces (e.g. "the need to cut costs") and IT products. Much of what passes for "HR technology" is in fact merely extensions of existing transactional technologies developed for finance, logistics, and customer management.

HRIS "architecture" has been pushed through at least four discernible periods:

1990s Cost Reduction and Centralisation

Encouraged by the popularity of Enterprise Resource Management (ERP), HR information technology evolved from simple record keeping to integrate information such as payroll and headcount with their financial system.

2000s Integration and Client server

HR software grew to include recruitment, benefits management, time management, payroll, compensation management, learning management, expense reporting, and performance management. Online employee portals subsequently consolidated information and empowered employees to manage their own data.

2010s Downsizing /Outsourcing/Cloud Computing.

Software as a Service has found eager adopters in a downsizing economy. Companies can now have access to HRIS functions that fit their specific needs without the cost of managing hardware /software.

Time for an agile HeRo?

The 2020s: Agility and Strategic Analytics

Following the combined impact of the global financial crisis and digital disruption, companies are speculating on the need to embrace adaptable *differentiation or agility*. Is this an opportunity for HR to define its own information requirements or will HR simply make do again with “second hand” tools?

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Agility depends on the primary ability to shift resources and knowhow - **Responsive Allocation** - to respond to shifts and disruption in the marketplace while ensuring that the core capability or competitive advantage of the enterprise is not compromised - Stability.

Clearly the challenge of managing agility will not be met by the current HRIS platforms - often a “hodgepodge” of non-standard staff data sources – positions statements/hires/fires; performance management data; and the results from an array of staff surveys (e.g. engagement, wellness etc.).

vizforce project: agility lessons learned¹

2020 is an opportunity for the first time in over twenty years for the HR community to take a lead in the design of this next phase – as the solution is about HR knowledge and not information processing.

TABLE 1 A MODEL FOR AN AGILE WORKFORCE BANK

AGILE TOOLS	TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	PERSON/ATTRIBUTES SEARCH	SYSTEMS RISK – INTERNAL CAPABILITY & EXPERTISE SUPPLY	MODELLING TOOLS CAPABILITY & STRUCTURE
THE AGILE EXPERTISE BANK:	BUSINESS UNIT KNOWLEDGE DIVISIONAL BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE FOUNDATION BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE			

The project offers the following “principles “for an agile workforce platform:

1. **A commitment to design a fully comprehensive and integrated view of the workforce – the Expertise Bank :**
 - The tension between responsive allocation and stability will have to be met initially within the existing workforce “pool” (without constant recourse to expensive recruitment), and this in turn will require a **more common (standardised in both language and in quantitative form) view** of the staff, enabling easy comparisons and judgements about staff;

¹ The viz force project is a collaborative undertaking between [Human Capital Realisation is the Asia-Pacific agent for PeopleFluent USA and Galbraith and Co Australia](#)

- To guarantee both supply and flexibility, every staff member will need to have combinations of business knowledge, expertise and capability starting with “foundations expertise” that is required for all staff (e.g. in financial management this would be “*detailed knowledge of the financial regulations*”); then additional levels of expertise moving from common to quite specialist knowledge.
 - With constant demands on the “workforce pool”, HR will need to make training and development (and succession) both more targeted and now able to meet short term business demands as they arise.
 - As this workforce is in constant motion so the enterprise will need a “systems check” or diagnostic to test for impacts on core stability e.g. on emerging weaknesses or shortages in internal expertise supply.
2. **Rich search facility** Agile resource allocation will focus our attention on the breadth of contribution an individual can make and so will depend on the capacity to find a range of qualified individuals quickly.
 3. **Capacity to model for deployment risks** Given the real danger to the core of the enterprise by these demands, HR will need to take a lead role in testing of ideas, using modelling techniques for best fit in terms of capability and organizational structure

The agility view

Finally agility will strengthen the need to value staff as people, and so our “principles” will ensure that the organisation never loses track of the “human” in Human Resources.