

EBOOK

Do HR Differently

How to reimagine core HR processes and use the power of data to drive transformational change



Introduction

Ask any HR professional and they're likely to tell you that they operate in a fast-paced and rapidly evolving space. From ongoing crises to cultural shifts in the workplace and wider markets beyond, the world of people management rarely stands still.

One of the most significant shifts we've seen in recent years has been the evolution from HR into People Experience. This change in approach is one which has taken on an accelerated rate of growth in recent years and organisations who fail to reconcile themselves with these shifts, are in danger of being left behind.

Ultimately, your People Experience is about engaging and inspiring people in their place of work and appealing to them as discerning individuals with specific value sets and goals, who make active choices about what they'll do, when and where they'll do it and for whom.

With a wider focus now being placed on employee engagement, inclusion, and wellbeing, it's clear that existing HR processes need to evolve or at the very least, undergo a period of re-examination to ensure that they reflect these emerging needs and values.

Today's people teams are under enormous amounts of pressure to act as standard bearers of this new era and ideate and introduce strategies that support the transformational growth required of modern organisations.

To further complicate matters, HR professionals are also still contending with the need to hit those core business KPIs and strive for greater output and growth- in many instances, in the face of wider macroeconomic challenges and external crises.

Unfortunately, what this also means is that these transformative, people-experience-led initiatives are often at risk of falling by the wayside and being side-lined for what are perceived as more business-critical measures.

What if we told you that you didn't have to choose between "business-as-usual" and transformation? At Advanced, we don't think you have to accept a compromise between hitting your key business goals and enacting transformative change within your people management space. What if in fact, your core HR processes and often overlooked people data, held within them the perfect framework for driving a meaningful evolution of your working processes and empowering you to make bolder decisions?

We want to help you look at your daily people management processes in a different light and consider how core responsibilities we so often dismiss as dull admin tasks offer you a unique opportunity to completely rethink your approach to people management- To Do HR Differently.

To help you along this journey we've gathered together expert insights from Advanced's own People Experience team. This eBook will showcase a number of inspiring case studies that highlight how our own HR professionals utilised <u>our Advanced HR solution</u> to unlock the hidden potential of our people data in creative ways to help drive meaningful change across the organisation.

"Every business starts and ends with people, therefore how we enable and support their experience is business. Central to how we deliver this experience is our core tech. Accuracy, security, governance and analysis is what we do every day, it's the basics, but so fundamental that without it we simply cannot deliver the experience that our people deserve."



Pay gap reporting



People Experience Insights Manager **Nicole Merriman** As with any UK and Irish organisation of 250 or more employees, Advanced have a legal obligation to produce a gender pay gap report outlining the average gap in earnings between employees of different genders. In recent years, however, we've also taken the decision to go further and embed wider diversity pay gap reporting as part of our regular HR processes to instigate transformational change for our business.

Nicole Merriman, our People Experience Insights
Manager from the Advanced People Experience team is
here to tell us more about why Advanced made the
decision to use our pay gap reporting processes a
vehicle for wider change, and the process behind it:

Challenges

Representation among genders and certain ethnicities has long been a challenge at senior levels-not just at Advanced but across larger organisations throughout the markets. For people teams, knowledge is power- you can't be expected to make meaningful changes without understanding where gaps exist. This is the driving force behind collating data and one of the main reasons why we took the decision to broaden the scope to wider diversity pay gap reporting.

Another key challenge we found was around the pay gap data itself and in particular the accessibility for whoever the particular analyst is at any given time. What we quickly understood was that having data in place is one thing but ensuring it is in an insightful format is another matter entirely.

The overarching goal for any pay gap reporting is obviously going to be to reduce incidences of pay disparity. The overarching ethos we wanted to have to achieve this was through speed and efficiency of reporting- removing the roadblocks preventing us from gaining those meaningful insights.

Something we quickly identified was the need to get the questions we were asking right. Previous iterations of our reporting simply weren't getting us the answers we needed in order to be able to drive ongoing strategy. It's not enough to just ask binary yes or no questions around whether there is a disparity in pay, you need to ask questions which help you determine why gaps occur- are you for example seeing higher incidences of gaps in certain office locations, functions or perhaps in different countries if you are an international business? Advanced HR soon proved itself as a vital tool in our arsenal to reducing our gender pay gap. The fact that our pay gap data is securely held and even just accurate and easy to view and digest is made possible by Advanced HR. Being able to customise

question fields in the system allowed us to identify gaps we didn't even realise we had. A question we think that's important to lead out with is "Do you feel that correcting pay disparity should be a priority?" We don't just want to highlight the importance of identifying these gaps as a legal requirement, we want to discover why they occur and what root causes may be behind them, such as leadership bias.

The built-in diversity workflow has also offered us the ability to push questions out to employees at any point in time as opposed to sticking to a rigid timescale. This means we can gain insights and an overview of sentiment as and when we need it, not when schedules dictate.

Transformation

Our overall pay gap in 2017 was 22.8% and since the introduction of our pay gap reporting we've reduced it to 6.8%. Of course, whilst this is something to be celebrated, it's only the beginning of the process-the transformation we wanted was to be able to demonstrate a commitment to our people to always be improving upon our processes and make sure that even when we are championing successes, we are already looking ahead to where we can make further strides.

We feel that our reporting methods now afford us a greater degree of transparency and the ability to communicate intent clearly to everyone within the business, which has the benefit of helping pull together management teams and motivating them to provide us with actionable data.

We've been beyond happy to see large-scale drops in pay gaps across the business, with in depth reporting enabling us to close the gap by 16%. In the long run, we want to continue to build upon these improvements and continue to champion strides made in eliminating pay disparity. We believe the continued adoption of Advanced HR alongside this process will offer us the perfect mix of complexity of data through a simple view we need to always have an up-to-date and accurate view of pay gaps within the organisation.



Nicole's advice:

"Bring together a team of people who are passionate about reaching your goals and tackling pay gaps. It's not enough to just treat it as an administrative duty, you need people on your side who care about making a difference."

Improving employee engagement through data



Head of Culture Administration HR Claire Ross Employee engagement is closely linked with levels of output and productivity- Research by Gallup found that engaged teams are up to 21% more profitable than their counterparts. Against a backdrop of wider economic challenges, all organisations will be feeling under pressure to deliver positive results- goals that may necessitate asking their people to go the extra mile.

How can you effectively manage employee engagement levels in the face of broader business challenges? We believe that the answers lie in your existing systems.

Consider your HR systems and the wealth of people data at your fingertips- what picture can this provide of employee engagement and how do you action these insights to make effective change across the business as well as engage your people on a daily basis?

Claire Ross, Head of Culture and Engagement from the Advanced People Experience team is here to tell us more about how Advanced harnesses the power of people data to drive engagement:

Challenges

When I first joined the organisation in 2018 I found that Advanced, like many organisations, had an old-school view of employee engagement- one which kept engagement and reviews restricted to a very narrow, annual process. This isn't uncommon to see, particularly among larger organisations as the wider demands of people management can sometimes see these processes relegated to a box-ticking exercise.

The older, more rigid processes meant that I found I had inherited problems such as hotspots of attrition-incidences where there were pronounced cases of employees leaving us around the six-month mark,

or attrition centered around areas of the business such as within our business development team. We also had an awareness of heightened cases of employee absence which needed to be addressed.

The major challenge for us was that despite having access to information, we were lacking the context which we needed to use that data to create actionable strategies. We could see where people were taking more time off or where they were choosing to leave their employee journey with us early- we just didn't understand the root causes.

What good looks like has evolved, particularly post-pandemic but also broadly speaking, we want to measure levels of engagement. When we say engagement, your first instinct is to look at productivity and while that's absolutely part of the equation, we were more interested in gaining a more comprehensive view of engagement - how people are participating in wider business culture such as engagement with internal emails or town hall/companywide meeting attendances.

We wanted to give regular insights to business leaders not just on data points such as attrition but on wider metrics like engagement and recognition-Where top performers are occurring throughout the business or where hotbeds of discontent and disengagement exist. What we needed was a framework that allowed us to take that abundance of people data and turn it into tangible measures to improve the organisation.

Advanced HR has played a huge role in helping us achieve this. The ability to really drill down into specific data sets and pull out the detailed context you need is really second to none when you're looking to build ongoing strategies. Being able to focus sentiment surveys in particular areas of the business has been particularly useful as it means when troubling hotspots arise, we're able to get to that root cause immediately.



A major transformation we've seen has been that the People Experience team has now garnered a reputation as being a team who provides actionable employee data with integrity. What this means for the organisation as a whole is that our focus is now less on reactive firefighting measures but on long-term holistic changes to procedure.

We can feel safe in the knowledge that the metrics we are drawing upon such as those around employee sentiment, mental health and physical wellbeing for example, have an actionable end goal in mind and not just serving as admin responsibilities for us to fulfil.

We finally have the context within our people data that we need to drive meaningful change and make truly data-led decisions.



Claire's advice:

"It's too easy to fall into a pattern of accepting that things are done in a certain way. My advice is to question the processes you take for granted- if you collate data, ask for what purpose? What is it telling you? How is it being used?"



Talent Snapshots. Paying for performance.



Head of Talent
Experience
Marianne West

We all like to be rewarded for a job well done. An issue organisations tend to face however is being able to gain a clear understanding of where those key performers who go above and beyond exist within the business.

Pay-based reward benefits are always going to be a welcome gain for employees but large-scale pay boosts may be unsustainable for organisations, particularly against the backdrop of increasing business costs. What this will perhaps necessitate then is a more focused approach that rewards key individuals on an individual

performance basis. But while this seems like a utopian ideal for employees that sit outside of standard metric-based functions such as sales, how can organisations make that a reality?

In her own words, Marianne West, Head of Talent Experience, from our People Experience team explains how Advanced HR enabled her to overcome the challenges around performance-based pay and helped her build a picture of the top talent in the organisation:

Challenges

The core challenge facing us with paying for performance was the ability to build a comprehensive picture of performance across the organisation.

The specific challenge facing Advanced was being able to identify those key performers, particularly those who have gone above and beyond consistently with little acknowledgement previously. Understanding the importance of rewarding people for a job well done is all well and good but without the data to action a proper strategy, you run the risk of letting certain key performers fall by the wayside.

It's often overlooked how heavily rewards schemes factor into an employee's decision to stay with a business long-term. A lot of focus tends to fall on competitive salaries and impressive office spaces with little consideration as to the correlation between reward and engagement.

If you fail to adequately reward the top talent in your business, all you're doing is demonstrating to them that their efforts aren't valued and in the worst instances, this can mean you're effectively ushering them out of the door.

With Advanced HR you can action pay reviews which has afforded us the ability to create a distribution curve based on what employees are being given for performance- these could be broader benefits such as positive colleague feedback, rewards or certificates. We can then use that information to extrapolate the top performers for pay purposes.

What Advanced HR represents for us is timesaving and efficiency across all levels of our pay and rewards schemes. Instead of taking stabs in the dark at getting it right and hoping we're acknowledging the efforts of the right people, we can now focus our

efforts appropriately. Advanced HR has allowed us to pull information from a variety of data points such as KPIs, commission figures and engagement on feedback platforms such as Clear Review, all of which empower us to build a more accurate picture of performance.

This has been one of the greatest strengths of the solution- using the data you already have access to as part of your day-to-day processes, to build a proactive and fair system of rewards.



What this journey has enabled us to do is achieve a cultural shift whereby we are able to demonstrate a fair and consistent track record of employee rewards. Removing that fear of getting it wrong also knocks down the barriers which often makes organisations hesitant to put rewards at the forefront of what they do.

We are now in a place where we are confident that we have built a strong culture of reward and trust. What this means, in the long run, is that as an organisation, we will continue to have a framework in place that allows us to continue to fairly reward our people for their hard work. The long-term benefit of this is that our employees will always understand that whenever they are expected to go above and beyond, that Advanced will prioritise acknowledging and rewarding those efforts.



Marianne's advice:

"When looking to build a clear picture of a specific process or area of your business, the key is always maintaining a sense of objectivity- don't be drawn into conclusions, allow the data you already have to create the picture you need."

Removing probation periods.



Head of Talent
Experience
Marianne West

If you asked most organisations if they had probationary periods in place for new hires, the chances are they're going to say yes. Having a three-month, six-month or perhaps longer period whereby we judge the performance of new starters has been a long-embedded part of the recruitment and onboarding process.

Is there an inherent wisdom in probation periods or are organisations simply sticking to what they know? In a survey from employment lawyers Morton Fraser, they found that 22% of employees admitted to working temporarily harder during a probation period. This is a particularly worrying statistic as it suggests organisations

aren't currently gaining an accurate view of employee engagement and output.

What if employee performance was something you prioritised along every stage of a person's journey with you? What if organisations across all sectors took a bold leap and explored the possibilities that came from removing probation periods entirely from their recruitment cycle? Marianne West, Head of Talent Experience, from our People Experience team explains how Advanced HR enabled the wider business to build a more effective system of recruitment and onboarding-one less reliant on probation periods, and initiate a change that has impacted the whole business:

Challenges

If I'm to be honest, probationary periods are something that we at Advanced and other organisations have had in place purely out of habit. What we found was the idea of setting an arbitrary time frame for employees- having six months or so where they were in limbo and denied access to wider benefits, wasn't sympathetic with our desire to think about HR differently and create processes which break out of the traditional moulds.

If you want to create a culture of trust with your business, then you can't accept probationary periods as a standard practice. If you insist on people earning their place after an arbitrary time frame, all it really does is highlight weaknesses within your recruitment cycle- if you've hired someone, why the reluctance to bring them into the fold?

Previously, we were dependent on a probation workflow through our HR systems. What we quickly realised was that if you're looking at doing away with probation periods and creating a new way of working, then your focus has to be on communication of intent both internally and externally.

We wanted to create a positive vision around scrapping probation periods and this meant prioritising communicating our goals to management teams initially- to help ensure they are comfortable and on board with the vision.

Doing away with probationary periods doesn't mean you lose sight of a lot of the metrics you rely upon-Advanced HR gives us an easy view of a variety of key data points that we still measure in place of probations, such as performance, attrition, absence etc. The focus instead however is now on agile growth goals and ensuring management teams engage with employees on day one of their journey with us and set clear expectations around performance.



The main goal we wanted to achieve with removing probation periods was to demonstrate a commitment to doing things in a bold and different fashion and prove that we weren't beholden to rigid and archaic people management methodology. From a branding and talent attraction perspective, it's a unique feature that we are able to shout about- not sticking to old methods of doing things.

The lesson was that we never really needed to do things in that way in the first place. This has helped guide messaging and explain the vision of our culture to employees during recruitment and onboarding. This has been fundamental in building a strong foundation for a culture of trust within the business and demonstrating to new hires that we want to bring them into the fold properly from day one. Most importantly, the lessons we have learned from uprooting probation periods within Advanced is that there are real merits in challenging perceived norms- something which is now empowering us to drive further transformation within the people experience space.



Marianne's advice:

"The major lesson to take on board when scrapping probation periods is to simply start from a position of trust- have faith in new hires and engage with them open and honestly from day one about expectations. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your cultural values as an organisation and why you are distinct from other employers.

Building talent pipelines



Head of Talent
Experience
Marianne West

Recruitment and onboarding represent a huge part of the daily demands on people teams and the search for viable talent is a huge investment of time and money from an organisation with specific focus needing to be placed on KPIs around time to hire, internal mobility targets and the cost of hiring. When candidates don't work out in the long run, these costs can quickly become inflated as businesses find themselves returning time and time again to the recruitment cycle.

Challenges

In the past, Advanced like many organisations were guilty of entering into the recruitment cycle without the clearest understanding of what we needed from a candidate for a specific role. It's easy to focus on filling a position but what determines the success of a candidate goes beyond basic competency- how will they fit in with your culture? Does their personality gel well with that of prospective colleagues, what are they bringing to the table which will help the role thrive?

Without a clear understanding essentially of what good looked like to us from an organisational perspective, we were effectively hamstringing our recruitment efforts by entering the jobs market with too broad of a base of requirements.

Organisations are posting a record number of positions at a time when unemployment is at an all-time low. In short, this means that every candidate comes at a premium, with organisations all vying desperately to secure key talent.

Marianne West, Head of Talent Experience, from our People Experience team explains the importance of a clearly defined talent pipeline to our organisation and how Advanced HR helped us transform our recruitment drives and focus on finding people with the specific qualities we needed to succeed.

This was largely a result of having a very restricted overview of our organisation. Previous reporting methodology lacked the granularity required to get down to a departmental or team-based level and understand the existing challenges. 6 years ago, it will have been about how to scale hiring, so there will have been a need to have a system that can help simplify a lot of processes like wrapping job boards to the ATS, driving as many applications as possible, simplified system to process candidates and making sure that they had a good experience.

At a certain level of roles where you're hiring 400 – 500 a year, having the ability to pull data and create insights helps to understand progress, pain points and efficiency improvements.

The complexity and granularity of data such as performance metrics and length of service offered to us through Advanced HR has really empowered us to take a deeper dive into talent gaps and reconcile what the organisation needs from new hires to succeed. Advanced HR has given us exactly what we needed- a system that stores candidate profiles to be easily sourced for different roles. Being able to do everything in one system creates a simplified candidate journey throughout.

By being able to pull reports and send focused surveys at a team level, you are able to draw a much clearer picture of the needs of your people, all of which is a huge asset when preparing to enter the recruitment cycle. Advanced HR has allowed us to build a more complete overview of time to hire, cost to hire, number of applications and the conversation rates of those as well as organic applications and candidate experience.

Team leaders and managers at all levels also feel more empowered to have their say and now have a platform to provide input and actively influence recruitment strategies based on the unique insights they can provide into their teams, as well as create a profile of the ideal candidate.



Transformation

What we've found as a result of the process is that Advanced undertakes far more measured and confident talent searches than previously. By drawing on internal expertise and harnessing Advanced HR data to give us proper insight into ongoing requirements, we are able to focus on building a talent pipeline which is truly representative of our organisational goals.

Another marked transformation has been the way that this has given us the confidence to fully articulate to candidates our expectations for a role. Having an understanding of what we want to see from a potential new hire has given us the ability to inform the recruitment process and tailor interview questions to get to the heart of matters.

Previously, we hadn't particularly appreciated how having a mixed understanding of priorities when hiring can muddy the process. I'm happy to say that this is now a thing of the past. We've seen a 20% increase in applications compared to this time last year, reduced time to offer (we previously did offers outside of system), more steady time to hire and a more effective ability to measure candidate experience.

Marianne's advice:

"Take the time to rethink your hiring processes.

If recruitment seems time consuming and painful, chances are you aren't adequately prepared.

Before even entering the market, take the time to assess your existing structure and understand what good looks like to your organisation."

Employer Branding & building Advanced's brand



Talent Brand & Enablement Manager Jordan Cooper

Today's people teams are consistently finding themselves contending with the challenges presented by a working world which is undergoing near constant accelerated growth and change. This has most significantly been seen in a shift from employee values away from traditional metrics such as pay and office benefits, to broader concepts such as a focus on worklife balance and a commitment from their employers to act as responsible champions of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues.

What was once considered as a "nice to have" or vague, blue-sky concept is now forming a core component of

Challenges

The challenge we had was that ultimately, we didn't have a defined Employer Brand. At a basic level every organisation has a brand or ethos, just as they all have an Employer Brand, it's just to what extent they are defined and positioned internally and externally.

We were starting from a very disparate position where we had loads of different touchpoints with potential candidates, but we did not have a clearly defined message or way to position this. This meant that it was both more difficult to hire and attract talent, as well as retain them.

The vision was that we wanted to: align our Employer Brand with our corporate brand, deliver a careers

how successful businesses not only think about how they distinguish themselves above their competitors when it comes to securing new talent, but also how they are able to retain the services of their most skilled and key people. Organisations and their HR teams cannot afford to wait around and find out passively what their people and the wider market think of them as an entity.

Our Employer Brand manager, Jordan Cooper, is here to discuss the challenges Advanced faced in not only defining our employer brand but how we reconciled that with the wider market:

website so we could attract more organic applications and people who hear about us naturally, and help to engage and retain our current employees by helping to illuminate the different options that everyone has available here and what makes Advanced a great place to work.

Our primary metrics of success from a recruitment perspective were around: Measuring organic applications, total applications, and retention rates, as well as starting to look at more social media metrics around the people-focussed content we were producing and how much engagement we were getting, and the knock-on impact that had on our applications.

The solution was to create an Employer Brand and then all of the Talent Marketing collateral that we needed to support this brand. We used data provided through Advanced HR to identify populations of our employees at different levels in the organisation and then scheduled interviews and focus groups to understand what our Employee Value Proposition was, and how we should market it.

We then led a cross-functional project with Marketing and People Experience, as well leaning on expertise in UX and Design, to create a brand and experience which helps to set us apart. Drawing upon different levels of the business allowed us to bring in a variety of different perspectives and ensure this was an organic and honest overview of our organisation.

Transformation

We saw a huge rise in applications and organic applications following our Employer Brand launch in January 2021. We saw a 264% increase in total applications for the calendar year, whereas year-on-year previously the average growth was between 5-10%. We also saw our organic applications and applications through the website more than double. Our engagement across social channels massively increased and saw our follower growth develop across LinkedIn and Instagram as our main platforms. This in turn has seen boosts to our job filling rate, job conversion rate and vacancy rate.

We were coming from a place of having very little, ad-hoc messaging from a Talent/ People perspective. By focusing time, attention, and resources into guiding our strategy, we managed to ensure we were able to grow our awareness, audience and applications in one fell swoop- all of which was only made possible through the data granted to us by Advanced HR.



Jordan's advice:

"HR cannot be isolated to just HR. It has to be cross-functional and tell the stories of the people in the business. Everyone has to buy-in in order to make sure you're telling an authentic story, but you're also doing it by using the expertise you have within your business."



Conclusion

We hope that you found this to be a helpful and informative deep dive into the powerful possibilities offered through transformation of your HR processes.

At Advanced, we believe firmly in the power of HR to act as a force for change and to help organisations unlock hitherto untapped potential within their working structures. HR teams deal with a staggering amount of people data each and every day and all too often, organisations are ignoring the wealth of knowledge that these commonly gathered metrics can provide.

Our People Experience team has hopefully shed some light on our internal processes for you and the dividends that we have been able to reap as a result of actioning meaningful change.

If there is one lesson we want you to take away from this eBook, it would be that organisations-particularly from a people management perspective have always had a tendency to cling to older, more outmoded ways of thinking. Even the largest and most successful business will at some point, have been guilty of sticking to a process simply because that's the way it's always been done.

The transformations we have seen at Advanced and the successes described by the People Experience team didn't happen overnight. They were result of a long process which required hard work and an investment of time from all levels of the organisation. Most importantly however, these visions were only made a reality once we made the crucial decision to be bold and take that first step.

This is the heart of the philosophy which drives the idea of doing HR differently. Breaking out of the mould and shedding older, less efficient ways of working requires passion and dedication and a specific focus to achieve meaningful transformation. It also necessitates asking tough questions about existing processes- why do you do things in that way? What value is it offering us?

Most crucially, we want to help businesses understand that meaningful transformation of your people management processes doesn't have to come at the cost of hitting your core HR goals and KPIs. Too often, projects of transformation find themselves parked because of a preconceived notion that it represents an upheaval or a distraction from day-to-day responsibilities.

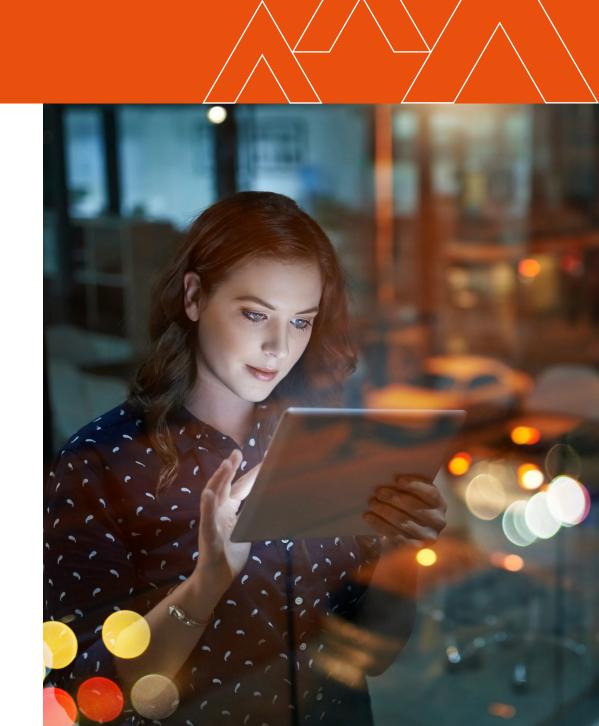
What we want to make clear is that we believe that these core HR goals and wider transformative strategies go hand in hand and that the systems and technology which your people teams rely upon daily aren't just administrative tools- they contain within them, the wealth of data and insight you need to make your vision a reality. HR technology really is the most important technology your organisation has.

How Advanced can help?

Your People Management Software such as HR, Payroll, Time and Attendance and Performance Management, all have huge roles to play in offering you unique insights into the makeup of your organisation and the performance of broader strategy, and HR technology is the most important technology a business has. Our Advanced People Management range of solutions have been designed to help HR teams and business leaders overcome inefficiencies plaguing their core HR processes and grant them the insight they need to drive meaningful change.

We created <u>Advanced HR</u> to help organisations achieve their goals of doing HR differently. We don't believe that you must compromise between hitting your core goals and KPIs and enacting meaningful long-lasting change. We believe that the tools you need to succeed are already at your fingertips and present in the wealth of people data your HR teams rely upon daily.

Advanced HR makes your core HR processes simpler to get done, and easier to get right, freeing your HR team and employees from complexity and enabling them to do their best work and drive change. Access to focused and detailed reporting metrics and the ability to engage across all levels of your business with focused sentiment surveys and other tools, allows you to build a more honest and organic overview of your organisation to help inform your ongoing transformation goals.





Powering the world of work

If you'd like to discover more about how Advanced HR can help you say yes to doing HR differently, book a demo with our team today.

Book a Demo







