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2021-2022 HR Software

Buyers Guide

Technology in an evolving world

The role of HR teams across has undergone a fundamental shift over the past year. In the midst of a global crisis, HR professionals suddenly found themselves placed at the heart of critical business planning, with their experience and insight playing a key role in ensuring business remained not only operational but engaged and productive.Coupled with the challenges posed by Brexit and talent shortages across all sectors, HR professionals and the technology they lean upon are becoming increasingly critical to the success of businesses.

As the world looks toward returning to a sense of normality, it is clear that for many organisations worldwide, the traditional workforce structure is set to undergo a similar evolution. Businesses have taken note of the lessons learned during the pandemic and the agility and flexibility offered by remote working looks to form a key component of organisational structures moving forward.

A long term switch to hybrid working will see employees within organisations more widespread than ever before. HR leaders are set to be the torchbearers of this new age, acting as bedrocks of company culture and most importantly, ensuring that their people remain connected and engaged, wherever they may be working from.

It is clear that every business will be having an eye on making a strong post-pandemic recovery and ensuring their people remain engaged and productive will be crucial in achieving these goals. The needs of a disparate workforce will also see the scope of HR expand beyond the traditional confines of absences, pay and matters of workplace legislation, instead becoming champions of employee wellbeing and engagement.

A long term switch to hybrid working will see employees within organisations more widespread than ever before.

In order to drive success in this new working world, organisations will need to make sure that any systems and processes that they have in place are working in lockstep to enable them to meet these goals. Traditionally, HR systems have been viewed purely as an administrative tool. Modern Core HR solutions are far more sophisticated in scope and contain within them, the power to boost employee engagement, drive productivity and most importantly, give you the oversight you need in order to stay connected with your people, no matter how widespread your workforce is.

At Advanced, we believe in the power of HR systems to allow businesses to achieve more. We also appreciate that as the HR function is threaded throughout so many different elements of your organisation, the search for a new system can bring with it no small amount of anxiety. In this guide, we will be exploring some of the main benefits of Core HR systems and hit upon some of the key points you need to be aware of when searching for a new solution. Sourcing new solutions can often be a daunting task and so we want to cut through to the heart of the matter and help you focus your search around the requirements you need in order to drive success within your organisation.

3

HR is evolving

HR professionals have always been the unsung heroes of their organisation. Acting as champions of company culture and practices as well as dealing with myriad administrative tasks around pay, training and workplace compliance, it's no exaggeration to say that the long term success of organisations relies heavily on their people teams.

Alongside these existing day to day demands, the scope of HR in a modern working world has expanded significantly. In today's organisations, HR professionals are far more than task robots, dealing with day to day administration. HR teams are finding themselves increasingly tasked with taking a proactive approach in delivering insights on employee engagement and wellbeing as well as being expected to drive diversity and inclusion initiatives and staying on top of employee retention and attracting talent.

Many HR professionals have found themselves thrust into executive level planning meetings over the past year, with their experience and insight playing a crucial role in determining the ongoing business strategy of their organisations.

The wider shift to hybrid working will mean that the question of how to keep a disparate workforce engaged and productive will be at the forefront for all organisations. HR professionals will be on the frontlines of this new cultural shift and it will fall to them to ensure that their people remain connected and enjoy as similar an employee experience as possible, regardless of where they choose to divide their working week between.


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As this structural shift comes into force, it will bring with it an acceleration in new legislation and employment laws. It is already a key responsibility of HR teams to stay ahead of any compliance changes and as the modern working world reconciles itself with what the future may look like, HR professionals will find themselves dealing with a number of business critical changes to employment law.

A wider shift to remote working will place an administrative demand on HR teams in order to ensure that all employees are furnished with the proper equipment to allow them to work effectively and efficiently, wherever they may be. An increased reliance on mobile devices and home networks for staying in touch also brings with it heightened concern around compliance and data security and the communication of best practice and company policy will fall on HR professionals.

These changes all mean that HR teams find themselves leaning on technology in order to support them. As the scope of the HR function widens, the need for a system of suitable sophistication increases. Modern HR systems need to achieve more than simple administrative box ticking and instead, organisations are looking towards their systems and processes to help them empower their people to achieve more and free their HR teams to devote their focus on the strategic elements of their role.
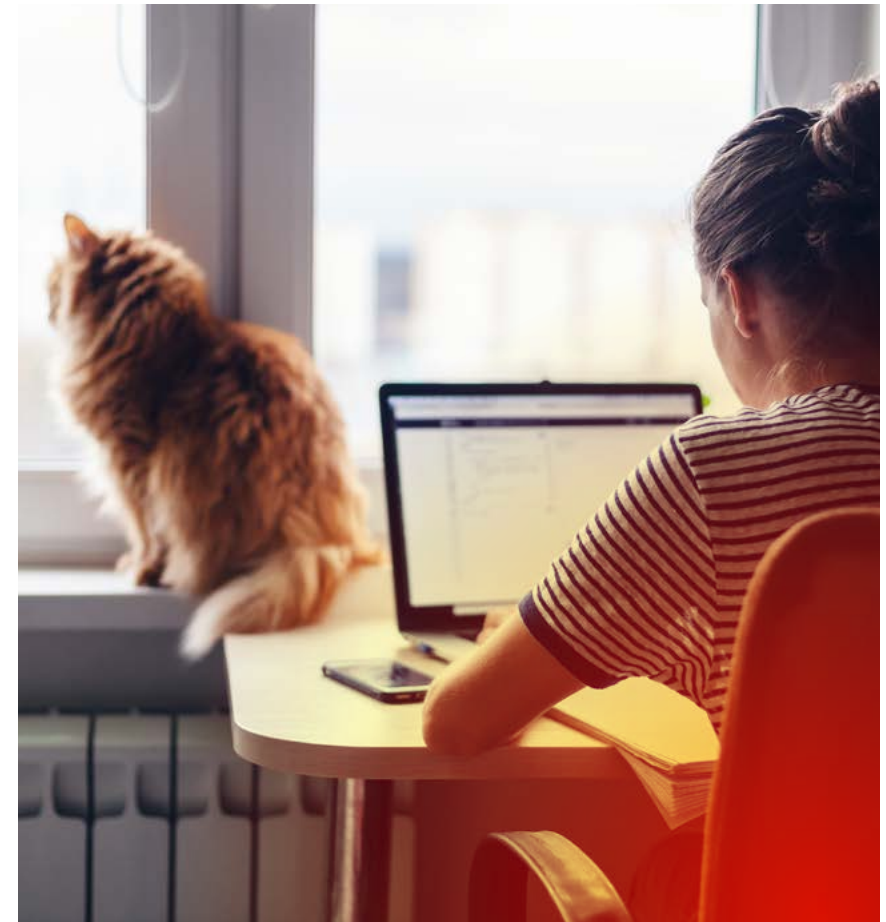

A wider shift to remote working will place an administrative demand on HR teams.

HR software that's ready to meet the future

HR software has been evolving in complexity over the past few years, moving in lockstep with an increased demand from organisations for a greater degree of oversight and granular detail about their people. A shift to remote working has also created a heightened awareness around issues of data security and compliance, with more organisations turning towards cloud-based solutions in order to gain a measure of confidence in the security of their business critical data.

One of the greatest shifts in the wider world of workforce management has been the increased uptake in remote clocking solutions and other similar employee self service functions. These are a freeing element for many HR teams who find that by allowing their people a degree of independence in managing absence requests and scheduling, they are able to focus on the more business critical elements of their role. HR systems have needed to evolve to meet this shift in technology, ensuring that even as responsibility is ceded to employees in many respects, that organisations still have the oversight required.

We appreciate that the scope of HR is broad and the requirements for a HR system will change in order to suit the needs of each end user. A successful system will not only help empower employees and free HR professionals but will also impact the function of exec level talent, systems and finance teams. All will have different requirements and different expectations of what an effective system might look like, so when searching for a new solution, it is worth taking a consultative approach and bringing onboard the requirements of all parties.
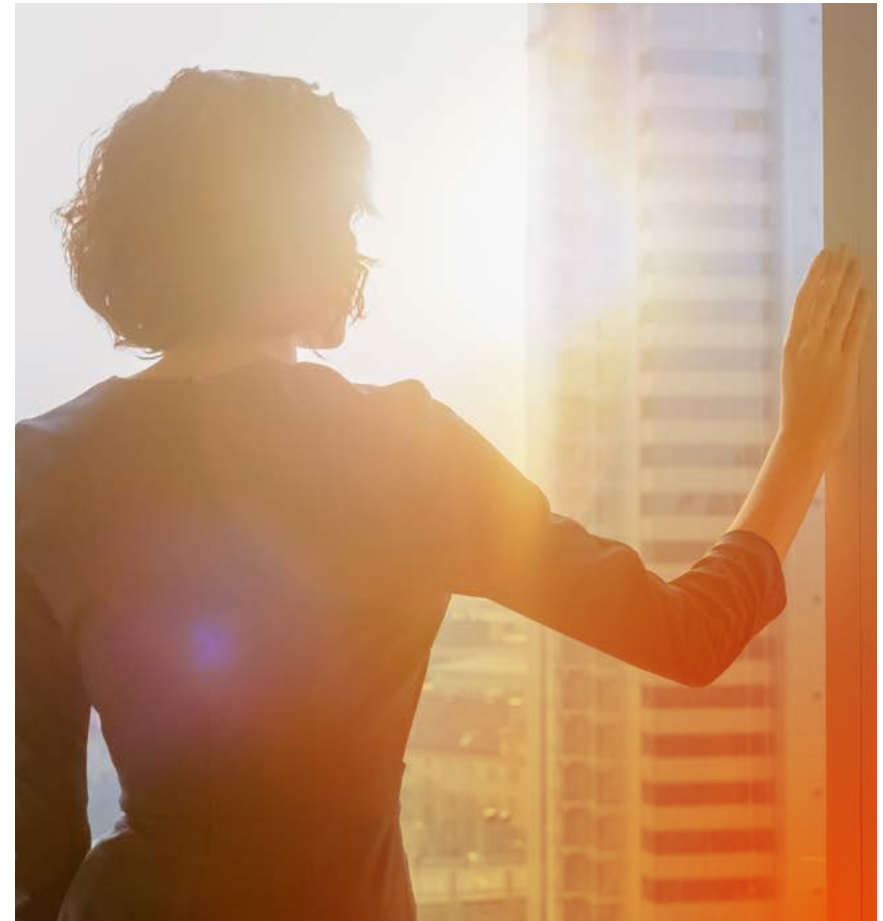
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Key decision makers and HR technology

Chief Executives

Chief Executives were once considered to take a more "helicopter" style approach to management. They were expected to have an oversight of the function of their organisations but always in a rather remote, distant capacity. There is an increasing indication however, that over the past decade, execs are taking a more proactive role in day to day business operations, keen to ensure that they have an influence on the future and direction their organisation is taking.

This shift has brought with it a heightened appreciation of the importance of employee engagement in achieving business goals. With the main focus of chief executives currently understandably focused on enabling a strong post pandemic recovery, the issue of employee engagement will be at the forefront for many and will undoubtedly determine the success of any business strategies moving forwards.

HR systems will also play a vital role in bridging the gap between remote and office based employees, ensuring a seamless, sympathetic experience for all and allowing clear communication of company policy and expectations. An effective HR platform will offer a centralised hub for employees, allowing clear and effective communication of company updates as well as offering a single, easy to use platform for access to relevant resources.
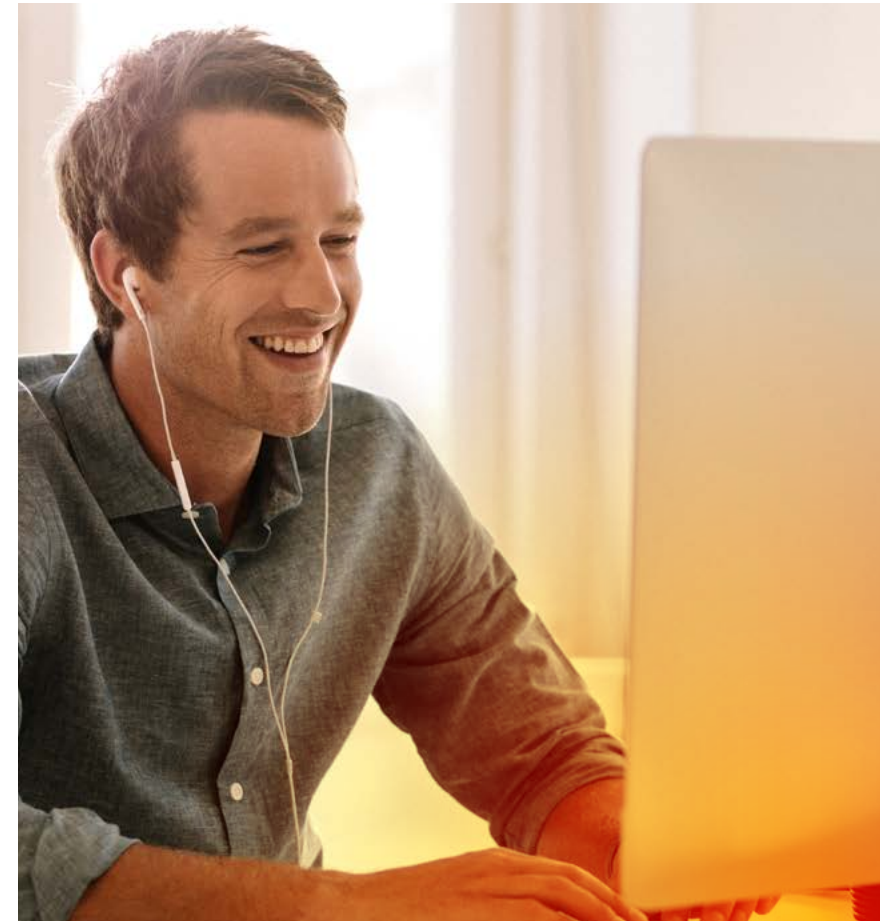

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Chief Financial Officers

One of the key factors determining the success of any business strategies moving forward, will be the ability of organisations to identify areas of unnecessary expenditure. CFOs will find the effectiveness of their role will hinge on having accurate and flexible reporting, offering them up to the meet information around metrics such as the cost efficiency of any new initiatives, employee performance reviews or salary increases.

The main responsibility of CFOs is the safeguarding of an organisation's financial wellbeing. The ability to identify patterns of needless expenditure or prolonged periods of absence will be crucial in ensuring that organisations don't find themselves haemorrhaging money needlessly. Effective HR solutions work seamlessly with other workforce management elements such as payroll and time and attendance solutions, offering Chief financial officers a clear understanding of expenditure and the impact that any habits of lateness or absence might be having.

Ensuring that a widespread workforce is aware of expectations around compliance and data security will also be of the utmost importance to CFOs. The costs incurred from any breaches as well as the legal implications can have a long term impact on organisations and therefore a clear understanding of where and how critical data is stored will be vital. It's for this reason that many organisations are looking at cloud based HR solutions as many of these are hosted in tier 3 data centres, representing greater levels of security than offered by organisations hosting a solution on premise.
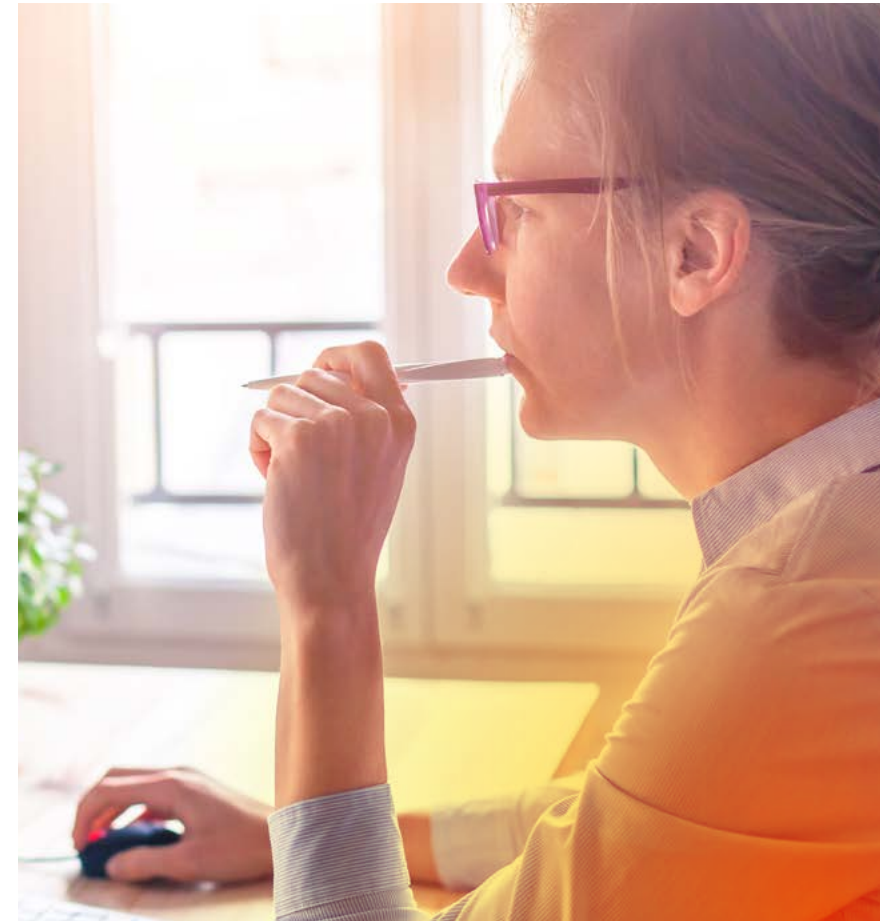
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Operations

The function of operations teams has similarly expanded in scope over the past year. Traditionally finding themselves concerned primarily with the smooth, day to day running of an office space or central working location, the shift to remote workforces has seen their responsibilities become far more widespread.

As hybrid workforces look set to become embedded within the culture of modern working, it presents an interesting challenge to operations teams. The responsibility of ensuring that employees are provided with the correct equipment to work effectively and efficiently from home will fall to them. Issues around maintenance and replacement equipment become compounded when taking into account a largely remote workforce, as it presents an additional logistical challenge. HR systems will be a boon to operations teams as they can offer a comprehensive, easily up-datable inventory of equipment issued to staff, as well as provide a roadmap of any maintenance being performed.

As people leave the business, having a clear understanding of what equipment has been issued will help supplement the function of operations teams in not only retrieving said equipment but also having an understanding of what accounts an employee may have had access to which will now need to be revoked.

With the office space set to change moving forward, operations teams will need a clear understanding of who will be on site on any given day. The prevailing trend is that teams will book collaborative meeting spaces on specific days, taking advantage of hot desking set ups. HR systems will be an asset in providing a central platform for the booking of space and also offering the function for teams to request specific requirements such as additional desk space or additional equipment ahead of time.

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IT

With the workplace becoming increasingly disparate and widespread, IT teams will need to know that the systems they have in place are able to support them in keeping their remote teams operational and effective. Support tasks and the ability to run effective diagnostics of issues will be increasingly difficult when accounting for a widespread team. HR systems can help ease the burden by offering a centralised platform for employees to log IT support tickets as well as allowing IT teams to provide updates on the progress of any queries.

Issues around data security across a hybrid workforce will also be of the utmost concern for IT teams. Any HR system looking to be implemented by an organisation will no doubt be examined through this lens by IT teams and it is for this reason that cloud based systems appear to be the wave of the future. Offering as they do, more comprehensive security in hosting than on premise solutions, it's no small wonder that cloud based solutions are increasing in popularity.

Functionality will also be crucial to the success of any new system and must take into account the technological literacy of any employees. In the decision making process, IT teams are ideally placed to make these determinations, identifying solutions which offer a user friendly portal and interface.
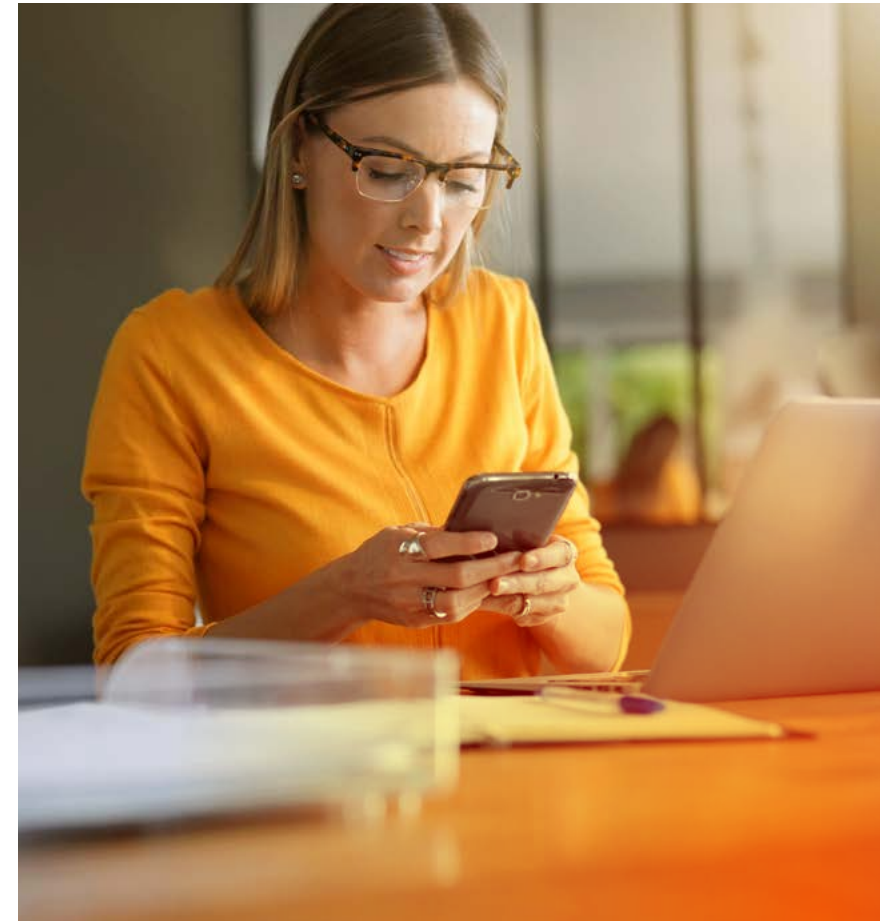
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Employees

The success of modern HR is determined by the ability to create an engaging and sympathetic employee experience. As organisations move towards a hybrid working model, the ability to stay connected and engaged with a widespread team will be crucial for HR teams in not only driving efficiency but also reducing levels of employee burnout and turnover.

A recent article by CIO identified ongoing employee training and development to be one of the most crucial factors in ensuring high levels of employee retention. Any new HR system being considered must have the sophistication to meet these needs, providing a single platform to effectively chart an employee's journey throughout an organisation and staying up to date with any development or training schemes.

HR platforms also allow HR professionals to take a proactive approach in driving conversations around employee wellbeing, allowing them to gain an understanding of each person's requirements and what steps might be taken in order to support them. Teams should be encouraged to drive forward discussions around development and get a sense of what the employee's goals are for movement within the organisation.


HR platforms also allow HR professionals to take a proactive approach in driving conversations around employee wellbeing.

Inclusion is another key element which has been placed at the forefront for HR teams in recent years. With the wider shift to hybrid working, organisations find themselves faced with a unique situation where they are recruiting and onboarding people into the organisation who will have never had an in person interaction with members of the business. Remote onboarding has continued to be a challenge for HR professionals across all industries who understand that a smooth and sympathetic onboarding process can factor heavily into an employee's decision to remain with the organisation long term.

Although there is no true substitution for a face to face interaction, HR systems can help bridge the gap between HR teams and candidates, offering as seamless an experience as possible. HR systems offer a platform to allow HR professionals to remain engaged with candidates along every step of their journey. HR systems can also be leveraged with other virtual platforms to offer elements such as virtual office tours and team building introductions, in order to as best approximate the face to face process as possible.

The increased trend towards self service functionality will also be a boon for organisations moving forward. By allowing employees to take charge of elements of their working life such as schedules or absences, organisations demonstrate an element of trust in their people and a commitment to the new way of working. Organisations who choose to cling to more draconian measures will find their employees far less engaged and overall more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere.
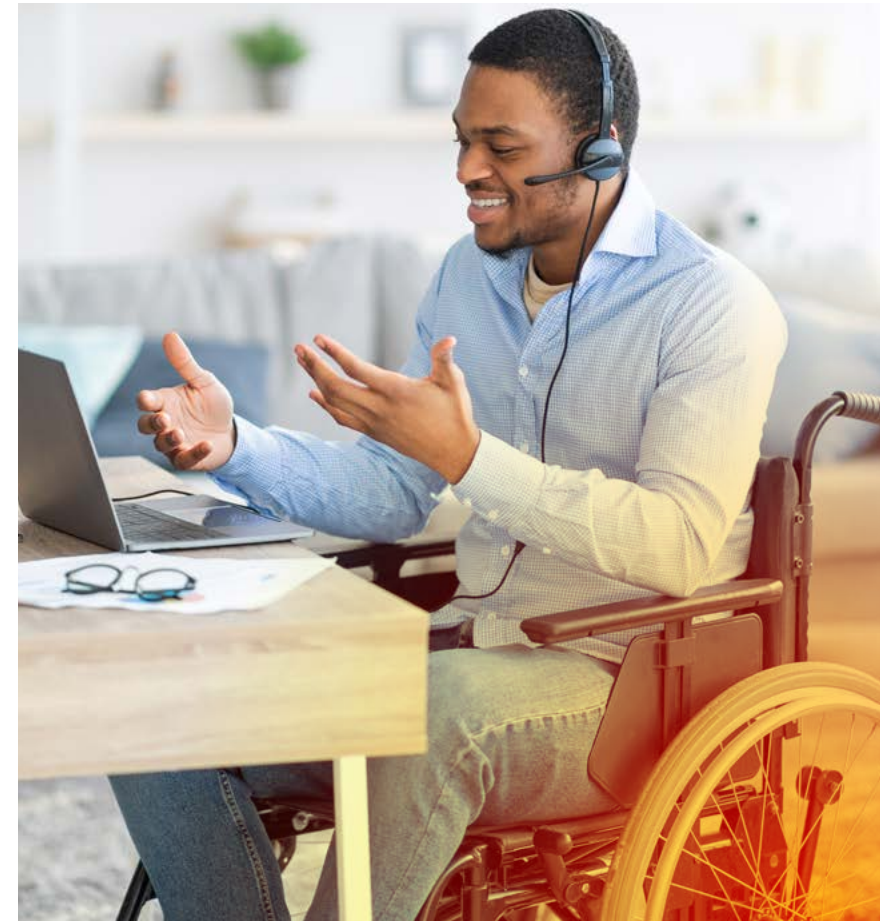
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The Key elements of your new HR system

With the function of HR fulfilling a broad range of requirements across your business, it's probably a good idea to have a clear understanding of how it all relates in terms of functionality. We've gathered together a few of the key points you should be looking for your new HR system to achieve in order to support people across all aspects of your business:

Comprehensive

It sounds simplistic but HR systems exist to make your life easier. In an operational sense this means ensuring that any new systems integrate and work sympathetically alongside any existing processes. Effective solutions should be providing organisations with a complete overview of an employee's journey from onboarding to exiting.

Adaptability

The best HR systems are flexible and adaptable enough to suit your organisation's needs. When going to market, assess the customisation scope of any solutions and ensure they are able to put the information and resources you need at the forefront. Make sure the system fits the way you work, for instance, the ability to tailor workflows to suit your needs.

The work-life balance differs for each employee

When building your future strategy, take into account the needs of the individual and encourage discussions around what sort of working model will work for each employee.

Employee self-service capability

Introducing an element of self service functionality into your organisation will be critical in freeing your HR teams to focus on the more strategic elements of their role. Allowing employees to take charge of their schedules also demonstrates your trust in their commitment to the organisation and any effective HR solutions should offer you the oversight needed to lean into this way of working without damaging course corrections.

On demand reporting

Allow your people to gain access to up to date, management level information in order to enable them to drive forward productivity. Ensure that the system you are looking for offers the bespoke reporting you need in order to enact your business strategy.

Security

Every organisation will have different requirements regarding their security. We have seen an increasing trend towards cloud based solutions as they offer more comprehensively secure hosting when compared with most on premise solutions.

Questions for suppliers

Do they provide Integration?

It's all too easy to become wowed by the complexity and functionality of a system. The integration and set up of any new system will ultimately determine how effective it will be for your organisation. When looking for a new solution, make sure you are asking questions around the installation and integration of the solution, determine what the supplier is able to provide you in terms of training and what they can do to help you hit the ground running with a new system.

Is the product future proofed?

We've probably all experienced the pain of discovering an existing system or piece of hardware has become end of life and no longer supported by the supplier. When engaging with suppliers, make sure to ask them how supported the system is, what advancements or plans they have in mind to continue to hone and develop the software.

How will you be supported?

Purchasing a solution is merely the first step in a user's journey. People want to feel supported along every step of the way and therefore it's important to understand how effective a supplier will be in terms of the customer support they can offer.

Can you see existing customers feedback?

Your organisation isn't cookie cutter and neither are your requirements, however, it is still useful to understand which organisations of a similar size or set up already use the same system. Encourage suppliers to share customer testimonials, particularly from equivalent organisations.

Is it a scalable solution?

The working world has evolved fundamentally over the past year, any systems you bring into your organisation need to demonstrate the ability to be agile and to scale along with your requirements. Put these questions to a supplier in order to avoid heading down a technological cul de sac.

Conclusion

As the role of HR has expanded in scope, it is clear that the systems and processes which organisations have in place have to be able to meet the challenge of supporting their HR people and moving in lockstep with the evolution of the workforce. The function of HR is integral to so many different elements of an organisation's day to day operation that the benefits of any new system must be heavily weighed against any disruption which may be caused from a rushed or sloppy integration.

Organisations should be encouraged to take a proactive approach in driving conversations around the suitability of solutions and ensuring that any functionality Is specifically relevant to helping them achieve their business goals. Complexity in a vacuum is less impressive than ensuring that a system is able to help you tackle specific challenges being faced by your organisation.

HR as a role is evolving. The more traditionally held view of it as a largely admin based role is falling by the wayside in favour of acknowledging HR professionals as champions of employee engagement and wellbeing. As businesses look to make a strong post-pandemic recovery, ensuring their people are happy, engaged and productive, will be the key to success and any HR systems you introduce have to achieve the goal of supporting you in this.

Our Advice

At Advanced, we believe in the power of technology to help your people achieve more

If you feel this guide was useful and you'd like to discover more about how HR systems can help empower your organisation and people to drive forward your future strategy, Get in touch with one of our friendly team members today.

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We would love to hear from you

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