

LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

Human Resources Essentials for the New Administrator

Three key technology tools can help law firm HR professionals succeed in 2015

According to the American Bar Association's magazine *Law Practice*, human resources (HR) costs are frequently a firm's biggest single expense. Therefore, maximizing the return on HR investment often seems like one of the best ways to boost a firm's bottom line.



ERIN BRERETON

Owner, Chicago Journalist Media

At some organizations, HR departments are under increased pressure to prove their efforts are producing the desired effect; however, identifying results for initiatives that involve human capital isn't always easy. For HR professionals who may need to prove the effectiveness of their efforts, here are several cutting-edge tech practices and tools that can help to illustrate how programs are benefiting the firm.

ANALYZING DATA TO ESTIMATE WHICH INITIATIVES ARE WORKING

Eighty-five percent of C-suite executives said they felt their HR team didn't excel at providing insightful and predictive analytics, according to a survey from audit, tax and advisory firm *KPMG*, which can create distrust.

Increasingly, HR professionals across industries have to back up training and other programs with solid proof that their efforts are paying off — either through productivity, retention or another result. Some are turning to business intelligence analytics software to help them assess operational trends and improvements.

Daniel Houston, Director of HR Technology and Analytics with the global retail company Luxottica North America, says reviewing employee-related data has helped his department gain a new understanding of the employee life cycle. "We've had a couple of initiatives that start with reporting, then [look] at trends and forecasting," Houston says. "We've really built up a foundation that we took on in the last couple of years, using more advanced tools to really look at our analysis and tell the complete story."

Research and analysis can provide a significant pay-off: Data-driven HR professionals are four times more likely to be respected by colleagues, according to *Forbes*. Backing suggestions up with

numbers can also prove beneficial for HR departments when their firms are asking them to give greater input into strategic decisions.

“It’s really just being able to speak with numbers when you talk about strategy,” Houston says. “It’s aiding you in storytelling [regarding] finance and really justifying where HR [spending] should be.”

DID YOU KNOW?

Data-driven HR professionals are four times more likely to be respected by colleagues, according to *Forbes*.

“The career page is becoming a hot zone where HR and marketing collaborate to create really powerful, persuasive messages about the benefit and value proposition of working for a particular employer.”

DR. KEN LAHTI

Vice President of Product
Development and
Innovation, CEB



USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES TO MARKET OPEN POSITIONS

An increasing number of employers use social media to determine if a candidate will be a good fit — currently 40 percent, compared to 29 percent in 2013, according to data from member-based business advisory company *CEB*. The number of organizations that feel social media can be a good format to recruit and reach quality candidates has also increased in the past year by 14 percent.

Social media’s success in the recruiting process can be enhanced by staff buy-in, according to Jeff Gibbard, President and Chief Strategist at Philadelphia-based social media marketing consulting firm True Voice Media. “Promoting things isn’t just about putting out a tweet about a job fair,” Gibbard says. “It’s about people in the organization taking ownership over content and promoting it on their networks.”

Encouraging employees to help promote openings and new positions can expand your reach. “If you have 10 employees, those are probably one of the best pathways to find new employees to fit your culture,” Gibbard says. “The aggregate reach of your employees almost always exceeds the reach of company-branded channels.”

Additionally, law firms can use their websites to help candidates determine if the firm is somewhere they’d like to work. A company or firm’s career section, in particular, can provide an in-depth look at what a position will entail; a firm can then send links and updates out about the website-based content via social media. Dr. Ken Lahti, Vice President of product development and innovation at CEB, says, “The career page is becoming a hot zone where HR and marketing collaborate to create really powerful, persuasive messages about the benefit and value proposition of working for a particular employer.”

Innovative companies have utilized nontraditional techniques, including a multimedia approach, to show candidates what a job really looks like. Efforts can include employees’ autobiographical accounts of working for a company, 3-D animation and interactive recruitment video games — “something that really changes, in a highly attractive way, how candidates explore what the job looks like,” Lahti says.

Source: Member-based business advisory company CEB's 2014 Global Assessment Trends report

QUICK STAT

The number of organizations that feel social media can be a good format to recruit and reach quality candidates has increased by **14 percent** in the past year.

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DAVID LEWIS

President and Chief Executive Officer, OperationsInc



SHARING INFORMATION THROUGH EMPLOYEE SELF-SERVICE SOFTWARE SYSTEMS

Employee Self-Service (ESS) solutions let employees perform a number of actions without having to contact HR directly — such as checking the number of sick days they've taken, viewing benefits, checking on health insurance co-pay amounts and entering their hours.

Currently, more than half of organizations use HR portal technology, according to global professional services company Towers Watson's [2013 HR Service Delivery and Technology Survey Executive Summary Report](#), “primarily to enable self-service, but also to ensure compliance, communicate policy and increase collaboration within HR.”

Popular self-service HR system features include an HR knowledge base, which 60 percent of companies have; onboarding information for new employees, which 43 percent use; and web-based summary plan descriptions, which 34 percent of organizations use. Slightly more than six-in-10 organizations say their portal is somewhat effective, and 17 percent describe it as very effective, according to Towers Watson.

By sharing information with staff in a more targeted, automated way, ESS programs can help free up HR representatives' time, according to *HR Magazine*, letting them focus on strengthening other key firm initiatives — if employees agree to use the system.

“Some see the inclusion of the employees being able to update information and access it as directly reducing HR workload,” says David Lewis, President and Chief Executive Officer of HR outsourcing and consulting company OperationsInc. “Others [have] unrealistic expectations as to the impact and, as such, have been disappointed by how much HR still has to do.”

If your firm decides to implement an ESS system, the HR department needs to approach the endeavor with realistic goals based in part on staff availability and interest.

“I'd recommend that employers recognize that culture needs to be adjusted to optimize ESS, or it will come up failing to meet expectations,” Lewis says. “Software is just a tool. You need buy-in and adaptation to have it optimally work.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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