

Transforming the employee experience

Exploring the intelligent, instrumented, interconnected workforce



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An invitation

How your employees feel about HR support directly impacts their attitudes about your company, the culture, where they fit in, and how you value them as employees. A truly differentiated employee experience—one in which they’re empowered to be intelligent and innovative—results in employees who are not just satisfied but passionate about your organization.

If your organization is like most, you already use self-service portals in your HR operations to some extent—it could be as simple as an online expense form or as complex as a multifaceted intranet. To create a true next generation employee experience, your challenge is to weave those disparate tactical tools into a

broader strategic solution. This next generation experience embraces technology not as a goal, but as a means to harness the collective and individual intelligence of your employees, to simplify the diverse tasks of their workday, and to create meaningful connections and collaborations between colleagues. The result? Fully engaged employees who drive innovation and competitive performance for your company.

This white paper invites you to consider your HR portal with a more expansive, creative vision. Consider how your individual tactical tools and silos of information can relate to one another, the resulting synergies, and the possibilities that could emerge. Consider the creation of a comprehensive employee experience management system. Based on our experience in helping a range of clients enhance their employees’ work lives, we share our insights into the components of an intelligent, instrumented, interconnected employee experience. Where to begin? Keep reading.

Intelligent: Meet the smart HR portal

Imagine this: just as Amazon knows exactly what genre of e-books to recommend to readers based on past downloads to their Kindle or iPad, the smart HR portal knows what information employees need based on recent interactions with the application. Did they just marry? Start a family? Take time off to tend to eldercare issues? The system leverages that data to push relevant information to the employee.

And what if the required information resides on different applications? In an intelligent HR portal, that transition is effortless to the end user. Just as Amazon aggregates a large number of retail experiences under one consistent, branded end-user experience, your HR portal should have the flexibility to serve as a “branded umbrella” that encompasses diverse, informative resources.

One key point is that employees actually *collaborate* with HR in the process by providing accurate, timely data. No more lengthy waits for HR to process a name change, for example. Empowered by a self-service environment, employees can do this for themselves. Marriages, births, job transfers, promotions—your employees are the first to know of key events that trigger changes in data. Because they own and manage their data, they experience an enhanced sense of autonomy. Their satisfaction elevates further when their HR portal presents them with actionable, relevant information. And from a broader corporate perspective, the data your organization needs for reporting, analysis, strategy and decision making is right on target.

You can be certain of this: just as your company competes in the global economy, the next generation employee experience must exceed performance expectations honed on the broader Internet landscape. That broader Internet harnesses information about your employees to create a personalized experience. With the right HR portal solution, you can do the same.

Instrumented: Hitting the high notes of employee satisfaction

Are you concerned that expanding a technical instrument like an HR portal will deprive your employees of high touch coziness? You can rest easy. Employees are increasingly accustomed to doing just about everything online, whether it's bidding for vacations on Priceline or troubleshooting tech issues for their home PC.

What matters most to them is getting the information they need, fast. And if a live chat session or a quick scan of a short FAQ list custom-tailored to their problem resolves their issue immediately, so much the better. As an HR manager, you free up valuable resource time, and your employee isn't put on hold

while waiting for a live person—even a minute can rankle in this fast-paced world. Ultimately, it's a win-win. Your employees feel good about their HR support and can quickly resume their regular workday activities. And your contact centers free up to resolve those issues (and they still exist) that truly require a voice conversation.

Ultimately, an employee experience management system isn't so much a standalone technology venture as it is collaboration between people, processes and instruments. This collaboration is not unlike a symphony. A successful performance requires dedicated musicians, a finely crafted score, and state-of-the-art instruments. Think of your employees as musicians, your processes as the score, and the technical components of your employee experience as the instruments. You need an integration of all three to make beautiful music.

Interconnected: Different cultures, different continents, same company

In the first eight months of use, one global pharmaceutical company's HR portal enabled over 15,000 manager self-service transactions—half of them in countries where manager self-service had never been available. But creating a truly global HR portal comes with challenges unique as the fingerprint of each location. How do you manage employee data to varied regulatory environments? How do you provide support for your employee experience across 24 time zones? How do you maintain and deliver detailed online information for HR policies that vary by country? No matter where your employees live, their HR experience is a key component of your internal brand. You need to provide a consistent experience across continents and cultures—while respecting local sensibilities.

Just as employees use Facebook to keep in touch with far-flung friends and family, a transformed employee experience will provide convenient, easy ways for geographically distant colleagues to create and join communities of practice; blog; collaborate on intellectual capital; share informative, work-related video clips; and connect in a myriad of other ways. Given the intricacies of global organizations and the challenges of maintaining camaraderie and a shared corporate identity, social networking applications are rapidly emerging as a key dimension to the next generation employee experience.

A robust vision: the foundation of the employee experience

If our vision of a comprehensive employee experience management system has piqued your interest, you'll want to consider **an integrated self-service tool suite**. However, this is not about simply deploying a package of tools. The holistic, day-to-day life of an employee is more than a sum of transactions. Your employee experience should be the branded identity of HR that greets, informs and empowers every constituency within the employee community.

For this reason, your system should be structured yet flexible, with the look and feel that speaks to your corporate identity. It's crucial that your employees have one continuous experience as they navigate into the HR domain, so single sign-on technology, which ensures your employees are pre-authenticated, is a must, as well as design integration with any existing intranet solution. All dimensions should be intuitive and user friendly. Your employees can plug and play on eBay, and they expect the same from you. And needless to say, the system must be totally synthesized with the complete employee and manager experience.

This is truly a case of the sum being greater than its parts. Through HR portal components such as contact management, knowledge base technology, and chat services, you can collect

timely, accurate data that can be used for analysis and planning—and further enhancements to employee experience and performance.

Keeping contacts in context

Contact information provides value above and beyond a basic transaction. Ideally, you should have a **contact management** component that shares this intelligence across the employee experience system.

From a tactical perspective, contact management serves as the single point of aggregation for all contacts—chats, emails, phone calls, electronic forms and beyond. It enables the most efficient workflow available and tracks resolution of all contacts. Ideally, this component will include voice, chat, email, fax and mail compatibilities, as well as integration with social media and the full range of end-user devices, from laptops and PCs to smart phones and tablets. Your contact center representatives will enjoy an online interface that enables them to document and monitor requests and access key support information. The reps can also gather important data based on each employee encounter.

It's all about integration and intelligence. Contact management houses employee contact history (who they are contacting, by what channel, for what topic, what was the resolution), providing a complete repository of interactions with HR services. This data, integrated across the system, can provide you with intelligence such as statistics and trending on contact categories and volumes—enabling you to better create initiatives that will enhance your next generation employee experience. For example, after conducting such an analysis, one large drugstore retailer uncovered a need for more extensive content and improved processes around the Family and Medical Leave Act.

The brains behind the system

Knowledge base technology determines the content your employees see in their HR portal. It drives all dimensions of the employee experience—whether answering common questions about HR policy, plans, programs, processes and procedures, or providing a contact center rep with exactly the background data they need to answer a complex query, or seamlessly directing an employee to another online tool or application.

To be most effective, your knowledge base design will use time-tested, proven knowledge management standards to collect and manage data. Best practices around taxonomy, navigation, standard subjects and keyword tagging serve to integrate content into your entire employee experience management system. We recommend that you use content management best practices around creation, review, approval and storage processes.

The result is a sophisticated system that captures what content is required, by whom, and for what purpose—and infuses your system with intelligence from all dimensions of your workforce. What does this really mean to your employees? Delivery of the right information to the right person at the right time, as well as data that provides actionable insights on improving the next generation employee experience.

Employees love to chat

One large IBM customer's experience indicates that employee satisfaction is higher with the **chat channel** than with call or email channels. And guess what? Chat is an extremely cost-effective, productive channel for handling employee inquiries—for both employees and customer service representatives. This technology has transformed the way in which a global airline's employees interact with HR—60 percent of questions now arrive through chat.

Not only is chat efficient, it's also smart. Your chat solution can be synthesized with your contact management system and knowledge base. This synergy not only monitors the number of chats your employees engage in, it maintains an accurate contact history record that includes details like previous queries initiated and via which channel. The system even knows which page the employee is on in the HR portal when they initiate the chat, providing the contact rep with helpful insights. Now, that's an intelligent system.

The ideal chat solution also includes an integrated feedback and closed loop continuous improvement capability. On an ongoing basis, the system collects data through customer relationship management (CRM) integration, scripted messages and transcript reviews as well as post chat surveys. This way, you can continue to enhance the next generation employee experience through one of their favorite channels.

Mining for gold: data about the next generation employee experience

Because your ideal solution is integrated and sharing information across contact management, knowledge base technology and chat / voice functionalities, you can benefit from a wealth of data: self-service usage, web trending, transactional activity, contact volumes and types. You will want to consider a **reporting and analytics** component that enables you to fully explore this data. Such a component can capture and aggregate the data, as well as display its complexities in a concise, actionable format.

Perhaps your company changes its 401K plan—with huge implications for your employees. You can track activity around that information, such as number of hits to those pages, subsequent searches, volume of requests for clarification and more. This empowers you to proactively identify and resolve issues. A global airline used this reporting and analytics component to reduce repeat contacts by 10 percent or more through root cause analysis.

In an integrated environment, you'll have information around exactly how employees are using HR services, through what channels, and their feelings and perceptions about their experiences. Your business goals and objectives can only benefit as a result.

Beware “one-size-fits-all” solutions

Our discussion so far has focused on an HR portal as the main conduit for the next generation employee experience. This assumes easy access to web-enabled computers during the day. But does your organization include diverse segments such as retail workers, delivery personnel, sales representatives or manufacturing employees? These are key, frontline contributors to your organization's success, and their requirements warrant special deliberation. Some circumstances to consider include:

When the computer is not personal

Think about the environment of a retail worker, perhaps at a drugstore. There may be just one computer onsite, often sequestered in the manager's office. In such a situation, an employee may rely on a fax machine to both obtain (through calling an automated number) and send HR information. You may need to create procedures that guarantee employees periodic access to a shared computer. Or, you might empower them through in-store smart phones or tablets.

On the road again

Suppose your organization employs delivery personnel. Their work keeps them away from the office for the vast majority of the work day, if not all of it. And other responsibilities—meetings with supervisors, safety briefings, and invoice management—can devour what little office time they have. These workers often rely on smart phones to obtain self-service information and conduct basic transactions—either via web or text messages. You'll want your HR portal to provide a consistent, enhanced employee experience across those channels as well.

Hard hat environments

Perhaps some of your employees spend their workday in conditions that are not conducive to computer use. For example, they might work at a large construction site, or at a noisy, dusty manufacturing facility. Options like smart phones, fax machines, or access to a shared computer in a protected location such as a kiosk can make access to the HR portal convenient and safe.

Savvy employees—except on the computer

More than likely, most of your organization is adept at using a computer. Still, you may have certain employees who are out of their comfort zone when faced with a keyboard. Perhaps their day-to-day job tasks don't require computer literacy, and their exposure to technology outside of work is limited. These employees may experience anxiety attempting to perform self-service tasks, especially in the presence of coworkers. Out of frustration, they may shun the HR portal altogether in favor of phone calls or meeting with HR staff. You should consider providing these employees with the training they need to fully use the HR portal, as well as alternative, higher touch outlets while they are mastering new skills. Also, you'll want to ensure that system help and support meet their developing needs.

Progressing to a transformed next generation employee experience

Expanding your vision of an HR portal can feel like uncharted territory, but other organizations have blazed these trails with great success. Take advantage of their lessons learned:

Skinny down your processes

Your employees are collaborating with you in creating and maintaining much of their information. To keep up your end of the bargain, you need to be sure that your HR portal is not merely a pretty interface that masks a jumble of disconnected or redundant systems and workflows. Red flags? Conflicting versions of the same form and requiring an employee to enter data in multiple places are an employee experience to avoid.

Consult the design experts—your employees

An expanded HR portal can be like a shiny new toy, and it's tempting to load up on bells and whistles. Just engage the end users—your employees—early in the game. What exactly are their information requirements? What channels will they use? What information do they need and how will they use it?

Engage a range of employees from different target audiences, and engage them early. The result will be an information architecture and employee experience that is truly informed by the experts who matter most.

Create an anchor tenant

An increasing number of shopping malls now host grocery stores as anchor tenants. Why? People need to eat. As you imagine possibilities for your HR portal, keep that analogy in mind. What is a key function that all of your employees must do regularly? Include that front and center on your expanded HR portal interface. Just as grocery shoppers might find themselves wandering to a shoe store, your employees will inevitably browse.

Select focus groups for sneak previews

Some filmmakers change the ending of their movies if preview audiences react negatively. You'll want similar options. A more likely outcome—if you've followed our advice and involved your employees in the design of your HR portal—is a blockbuster. Still, previewing sections of your expanded portal to relevant employee groups makes tactical sense. New technology inevitably results in questions, and your contact center won't be overloaded if you limit your initial release. Staggering exposure to the system allows you to rectify any last-minute issues before the curtain is raised to your entire organization. And ideally, your focus groups will create anticipation for the new system by spreading a positive buzz.

Cultivate your knowledge base

Your employee experience management system is only as good as your knowledge base. Before you launch, you'll want tested, vigilant processes in place for maintaining and updating that information. In a world where state-of-the-second updates are tweeted to millions in real time, your employees won't have patience with a system that contains outdated or incorrect information about crucial-to-them subjects like compensation and benefits. The good news? The reverse is true as well. With a sharp, current knowledge base, your HR portal will be the go-to trusted resource for your employees.

The most valued asset of any organization

People. HR is all about people. It's about making the lives of your employees simultaneously easier, more productive and more rewarding. An intelligent HR portal can play a powerful role in enhancing the next generation employee experience. In fact, such a solution, along with best practice training, coaching, and content enhancement processes, can support a first contact resolution rate of 85 to 95 percent. Think about it:

- Knowledge tailored to your employees' needs and interests.
- Multichannel options for interacting with HR services.
- A consistent experience no matter which channel is selected.
- The ability to capture information generated by those interactions.
- The expertise to turn that information into intelligent, actionable insights that can drive real value and innovation to your business.

Let's revisit our symphony for a moment. Once again, consider your employees as musicians, your processes as the score, and the technical components of your employee experience as the instruments. An integration of all three results in an extraordinary experience. A transformation awaits you. Are you ready to begin?

For more information

To learn more about transforming the experience of your employees, please contact your IBM marketing representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website:

ibm.com/services/hroutsourcing

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