How do I prepare my organization for a new HCM platform?

Kelly Will

Kelly Will is a Principal Consultant at Information Services Group (ISG), Stamford, Connecticut, USA.

When we think about implementing a new human capital management (HCM) platform, we usually think about the hard work that goes into designing, configuring, testing and preparing processes, systems and integrations. But when go-live arrives, we also need to make sure the broader organization is ready to accept – indeed embrace – the new technology platform.

Here is how to prepare your organization for the change.

- *Define your change management approach*: In the future state, job changes and compensation changes may be initiated by mangers via self-service functionality, and the system may route those transactions through a new approval path. Determine how the change will impact different segments of the organization – manager versus employees, sales versus manufacturing, finance versus IT. Identify your stakeholder groups and then secure project participation from individuals who can represent and influence each of those groups. Involve them in the project early, and keep them engaged along the way to avoid surprises for the organization and the implementation team late in the game.

- *Crawl, walk and then run*: Your new platform will offer all manner of bells and whistles, but that doesn't mean your organization is ready to use them out of the gate. First, assess your organization's change readiness. Create a well-thought-out roadmap for rolling out new functionality. An organization implementing a new Software-as-a-Service talent suite may be eager to build a global competency model into the talent processes, for example, but different functions across the organization may not be ready to abandon the work they've done to develop and adopt their own competency models. Focus on bringing everyone into harmonized talent processes in the new technology, and then configure those processes with an eye toward adding a competency model later. Even if it takes longer, deliberate decision-making will help your organization achieve success in the long run.

- *Set expectations*: Keep in mind that, no matter how wonderful your new state-of-the-art HCM platform may be, it will not provide a perfect solution for 100 per cent of your organization 100 per cent of the time. Meet the core project objectives first, and set realistic expectations with your end-users about what the system will and won't be able to do.

- *Talk about change*: Get people used to the idea that new technology brings transformation that very well may upset the way they have always done their work. Be sure you have a defined communication strategy that reaches everyone from the corporate office to the line employees in the manufacturing plant to the employees on the other side of the globe. Give end-users the chance to experience the new system before it goes live so they can see firsthand the benefits it will bring to the organization and how it will impact their day-to-day lives. Continued exposure to what is changing will help drive adoption, so help your end-users see the relevance and importance of your new HCM platform by providing them with system demos, documentation and training.

- *Put the right delivery model and governance mechanisms in place to support the new platform*: Moving from a legacy on-premises solution to a new cloud platform may change the relationship between your functional and technical support resources. In the new platform, the functional team will be able to address many of the business requirements and system changes for which the technical team was once accountable. In the meantime, as employees and managers adopt self-service, HR business partners will have fewer transactional responsibilities and may be asked to take a more strategic focus. Make sure your HR and IT teams understand how their roles may be changing and what their new responsibilities will include, and provide them with the training and documentation that they need to be successful. Support the teams by establishing a governance process that provides clear accountability for decision-making, issue escalation and prioritization of new requests.

Early and focused stakeholder engagement, deliberate change management, pragmatic decision-making and transparent communication can help pave the way to a smoother deployment and successful adoption of your new HCM platform.

About the author

Kelly Will helps clients identify opportunities that impact HR transformation through process redesign and technology deployment. Kelly partners with organizations to successfully deploy large-scale HR Software-as-a-Service solutions and implement global process and technology solutions in the areas of HR operations, reporting and analytics, compensation and talent management/acquisition. Kelly brings more than 15 years of experience in the HR technology and operations space to her role as a Principal Consultant in ISG's HR Technology Practice, and she leverages her expertise to help organizations align their HR technology initiatives with their strategic vision for the HR function. Kelly Will can be contacted at: Kelly.Will@isg-one.com