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2013 HR Technology Conference
EMERGING TRENDS, BIG DATA & SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

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We recently returned from the 2013 HR Technology Conference, which is now a leading industry event that has risen to a new level with 8,000 attendees (with a growing global audience) and 300+ exhibitors. Its popularity speaks to the growing value of the industry and confirms HR Technology is alive and well! Perhaps more interesting is that **technology has almost moved to the background.** Technology is now the "assumed support" behind the discussion about **how to get things done!**

The conference speakers offered insights into addressing a broad range of challenges HR leaders are facing to achieve business outcomes. We identified three major themes and key points for each that we wanted to share with you.

Theme I: Emerging Technologies and Trends

There is a major initiative for organizations to start to incorporate mobile technology, social media, and consumerism into strategy to improve business processes and objectives.

1. Mobile Technology: No surprise—80% of people have mobile phones within reach all night and 58% don't go one hour without checking their cell phone. **While mobile has moved from the theoretical to advanced applications**, most organizations are not ready for the digital native workplace of 2020. According to an annual CedarCrestone survey, mobile enabled process adoption grew 67% in 2013. According to a survey by Buck Consultants, mobile is the least used by employers at this point but the intention is the highest.

   > Mobile apps must **Optimize** (make content friendly), **Connect** (acknowledge use of mobile devices), **Integrate** (use native apps and messaging services to take advantage of other features/software on your platform); and **Engage** (influence and drive desired behavior).

2. Social Media: Collaboration and knowledge sharing using social media is now more accepted and used by larger employers to improve internal communication and drive efficiency. Speakers confirmed **social media embedded into human capital management is not going away**. Recommendations included:

   a. Integrating social media into strategies but maintaining control internally.

   b. Making it part of the employee handbook or conduct code. Have clear policies, follow-up on social actions, and enforce your policy. Data showing employees 16-34 would rather learn from their peers and online versus calling a professional. There is a trend and opportunity in HR/Benefits for peer collaboration and sharing, for example, online dialog about healthcare choices to help drive behavior.

3. Consumerism: A senior Mercer speaker noted that Mercer's data shows lower rates of health care spending growth in 2013. The slowing in annual cost increases is attributed to employers shifting to consumer-directed health plans and to increasing use of health management programs to better control costs. Still, **younger workers over insure and under save**.

   Technology has a role to play in promoting personal accountability to reduce healthcare costs and improve quality. One example is work developed by Stanford's Center on Longevity, which uses digital avatars to alter behavior. http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/science_nation/virtualself.jsp The Stanford study found that when students watched their avatars age they were more inclined to save more for retirement.

Theme II: Big Data/Data Analytics

It's all about having a good pool of data and knowing how to manage and manipulate it. **HR managers will need a multidimensional skill set especially regarding technology**. If you're an HR manager and you're not focusing on technology, you'll soon get left behind.

Big Data Recommendations: Use fact based analytics to debunk general gut feelings that often drive business decisions. Start by determining desired impact, and then choose metrics/measures to work with, collect data (which can be from multiple sources) and define assumptions made about the data, then analyze, and report metrics, findings and recommendations.

- Collaboration & communication; create a common language across departments. Don't let technology silo your organization. Create cross-functionally and balanced teams including leaders, data analysts, subject matter experts and communicators to examine data and ensure relevancy for all aspects of the company.
- Data quality. Is your data up-to-date, relevant, obtained in systematic manner? If there are data accuracy issues, don't start with data cleanup. It's too lengthy and ultimately a waste of time. **What data is needed and relevant for you to gain further insights into your organization?**
- It's a never-ending process. New data is constantly flowing and new directives are being created by management calling for data to make decisions.

On the **analytics side** there is a lot that's new. Among the most fascinating is Entelo, a predictive analysis system that crawls the web to find best talent for your organization. It hones in on relevant skills for applicants and tracks them in real time for status updates (e.g., they leave their current job, update their LinkedIn skillset, etc.). "Entelo Inside" does the same for previous job applicants, letting you flag and track desirable candidates. (It also uses predictive analysis to let you know when current employees' online data indicates they might be looking for a new job!)

Finally, with a **nod to social media**, our data pools are increasing beyond our internal network/data pool. External networks are equally important to gathering data and are used on a daily basis for many work functions. Don't restrict yourself to an internal focus!

Theme III: Some Things Never Change

While all the new, cutting edge stuff is fun and certainly worth noting, the tried and true basics still matter in this business. A few highlights to remind you of what you already know.

1. You get what you pay for. Technology choices should not be made based only on price.
2. Start with WHAT (strategy)… not with HOW (technology). Letting technology lead your decision-making can be ineffective and costly. Technology will not solve inefficient business processes. Organizations that review, adapt and standardize processes during evaluation and implementation are better able to leverage new technology and achieve top performance.
3. Getting the best from your HR Tech Provider. It's a (long-term) partnership. Don't assume it will/should be adversarial; you both want the same thing! If you want a great tech provider implementation experience, treat the provider the way you want to be treated!
4. The heavy lifting will be performed and managed by the client, not the provider. Technology providers don't design systems to integrate with others, so if you want something more out of your system, the onus is on you to deliver it.
5. Make the most of your platform. So you bought it for payroll. That doesn't mean it won't do a whole lot more. Use and expand what you now bought and own. Look at the modules, try them out and see what additional efficiencies you can achieve.

We are excited about many of the "future looking" topics that were covered this year:

- "Consumerization" is the measure of NOW with real time feedback.
- Bring the interaction to the employee; don't expect the employee to go to the interaction.
- Most of us are not ready for the digital native workplace of 2020.
- No more 1-to-1 interface; the future is hub and spoke.
- Technology is global; no more US versus non-US.
- Technology will be the equalizer for the mismatch between human capital supply and demand.
- Skill building and credentialing will exceed degrees in importance in the workforce.
- There's a lot of stress and pressure around supporting the asset of human capital. Companies that don't view employees as assets will be left in the dust.

We'll be back to you on these topics and more in 2014.

In the meantime, if we can assist you with your HR benefits and administration technology and outsource needs, please contact us.

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