

Don't Be So Quick to Overlook System Upgrades

You might regard system upgrades as a thankless, perfunctory task; an annoying distraction from your real work. They can be time-consuming, can temporarily disrupt your department's productivity and they're not without the occasional hiccup. All that being said, when it comes to your system upgrades, it pays to take the long view.

Changes in your HRIS software are ultimately making less work for your administrators in the long run—but not until the upgrade is completed. Technological innovation is like a teenager: experiencing rapid growth spurts, changing almost daily, and paradoxically requiring both less oversight and more vigilance in order to stay connected.



MORE THAN A SYSTEM UPGRADE

Paying attention to each upgrade is more than just pushing a button and letting the program run. It's strategizing how improvements in the software can best benefit your team, reducing workloads, and bringing improved self-service to your employees and contractors.

There is also the time you need to invest in successfully rolling out the new technology and training your staff and workers on how to use it. But your employees will likely welcome the convenience—and less paperwork in HR means less hassle and overhead. To Stay Competitive, HR Software Is Growing Increasingly Sophisticated

As HR/Payroll software companies continue to develop features both the market and their customer base are requesting, they are bringing more to the table—but it's up to you to leverage these new offerings.

As HR expert Josh Bersin explains, "Implementation of HR technology will always be a challenge: but other than change management and communications, the systems are becoming easier and easier to use, making HR technology 'disappear' into the corporate infrastructure and become just 'part of doing business and coming to work.'"

Legacy HR software vendors are competing with startups who often have a better of how the HRIS is evolving from a "System of Record" to a "System of Engagement." Your particular vendor is likely developing ways to answer these needs right now.



MAKE TIME TO SAVE TIME

Many software vendors have a quarterly or tri-annual system upgrade cycle. These upgrades (or interim 'hot fixes') include "bug" fixes, but frequently the vendor is introducing new functionality that can have significant advantages for your company. So if you aren't taking advantage of these periodic upgrades, or you're simply not paying attention, you could be missing out.

Consider how many HR software vendors are adding new functionality to address the new ACA reporting requirements. According to Matthew Kaiser, director of HR technology for the Lockton Companies, a consulting firm in Kansas City, "tracking and reporting requirements often go beyond what a company's core technology systems can provide."

New functionality isn't useful unless you implement it, and that takes time—something many busy HR/Payroll professionals are loath to sacrifice. But again, if you take the long view, many new HRIS features will save you work by adding automation or enabling employees and managers to be more self-sufficient.

Today's workers, particularly the Millennials, expect self-service functionality, whether they are banking, ordering take-out, or changing their withholding information. Harnessing the functionality of increased HR self-service is an acknowledgement of the changing needs of your employees, who may balk at filling out sheaves of paper forms or making repeated trips to their HR department. Workers value a forward-thinking company who is considerate of their employees' time and how they live now.

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MAKE TIME TO SAVE TIME (CONTINUED)

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Likewise, HR professionals need to focus on what they do best: talent management, employee retention and engagement, and other overarching strategic goals that raise HR's value to the company. With less on boarding minutia and hand holding, the HR professional's time is freed up to concentrate on more important things.

There may be some initial training required for your HR team and employees. But a few hours of initial roll out and training are worth the overall savings you'll net the company.



SYSTEM UPGRADES: IMPORTANT FOR A REASON

Instead of putting off your next upgrade until the last possible moment, take the time to see what that upgrade is offering in way of improvement. You don't want to miss an opportunity to improve your HR or Payroll process. If you don't have the in-house resources to easily facilitate your next upgrade, consider working with a third party partner who has the expertise and resources to assist you during the process and make your team work stronger as you work through your next upgrade.

* <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joshbersin/2014/10/15/the-top-ten-disruptions-in-hr-technology-ignore-them-at-your-peril/>

** <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/articles/pages/how-to-use-technology-to-implement-the-affordable-care-act.aspx>



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