Improving HR Productivity & Employee Satisfaction through Technology-Based Case Management
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I. Situation Overview & Challenges for Case Management

The purpose of this paper is to consider how technology can be successfully implemented in global organizations in order to help manage human resource needs for large employee populations. It will identify the functions for which technology can be most effectively deployed and present a model for increasing the efficiency of managing a global human resource organization. Finally, this paper will document a successful implementation of case management technology at a global car manufacturer.

In the following pages of Part 1, we will consider several of the most common human resource challenges that global organizations could alleviate with a technology-based case management solution.

Non-Productive Methods for Employee Issues

As organizations grow, adding more employees in myriad locations, the complexity of managing human resource organizations grows. When growing organizations attempt to maintain the same methodologies, they tend to become inefficient, costly and in some cases, a legal liability.

Inefficient management of simple employee requests is the most common and costly problem in global human resource organizations today. Organizations that are handling transactional items such as vacation request forms or change of address through phone and email are incurring unnecessary costs on a daily basis.

As the complexity of the task increases and when the information is handled on a case by case basis, inefficiency increases dramatically. A Towers Perrin study reports that for “nearly half of survey respondents, HR still approves all promotions and all salary changes, regardless of whether they are routine or exceptions. Thirty-seven percent of companies require HR approval (not just notification) for such mundane changes in work status as switching from full time to part time. While this is troublesome for traditional, transactional processes, it could spell disaster when applied to newer, more innovative — and arguably more valuable — MSS [Manager Self-Service] talent management processes that managers need to own.”

Inconsistent Delivery of Information across the Enterprise

As organizations grow, information management becomes a mission critical need. When information is not readily available to front-line HR staff, they will generate localized solutions or look outside the organization for answers. As a result, incongruencies become evident.

For example, when an organization has not clearly and consistently managed its practices for employees with disabilities, an HR staff member may search external resources for the proper course of action. With the volumes and volumes of information available about the American Disabilities Act, it would not be uncommon to identify different responses to similar requests. Not only is this an inefficient use of staff time, it also exposes the company to liability if it disseminates inaccurate or inconsistent information to employees.

Managing the Audit Trail

When large HR organizations are managing information on a case-by-case basis or have not centralized their processes for case management, managing an audit trail becomes a nearly impossibility. A common military case provides an excellent example: A former soldier is ready to retire and contacts a general benefit specialist to better understand his medical coverage. This general benefit specialist must escalate the case to a retirement specialist who must work with the insurance provider. The management of this case, however, must also involve legal because this former soldier has a disability and was discharged dishonorably from the military. Legal provides their recommendation and then the case is sent back to the HR specialist via finance who can communicate coverage and costs to the former soldier. Cases like

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1 Towers Perrin, *HR Technology: Demanding Change, Delivering Results, HR Service Delivery Research Report, 2007*
this and thousands in the private sector must be handled accurately and consistently with the treatment of others to meet federal guidelines.

**Hard-to-Use and Expensive Tools**

Technology-based solutions for human resource organizations are not new. It is not uncommon to find three or more different applications operating in global organizations today. However, these systems are often not integrated with one another and are under-utilized by employees and staff because they are difficult to use.

Disparate systems are not only expensive to purchase and integrate, they are also costly to maintain. When the Canadian government evaluated its HR management technology infrastructure, it concluded that “organizations with fragmented infrastructures and service delivery commonly spend 20% more than they should for IT. The federal government’s expenditures in this area now amount to over $5 billion annually and are increasing by approximately 5% a year.”

**Poor Employee Satisfaction**

Increasing employee satisfaction is among the highest priorities of virtually every human resource organization surveyed. As companies grow and when inefficient methods persist, the problem is exacerbated. Front-line staff is overwhelmed with calls and emails and response times are slow. Early iterations of self-service portals are too often difficult to use and for all of these reasons, by the time an employee reaches an HR specialist by phone, they are angry and the situation has escalated. Organizations end up managing large problems rather than small issues that could have easily been resolved if the process were managed better.

Technology offers a solution for all of these challenges. We turn our attention now to a description of technology-based case management and specific applications for global HR organizations.

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1 Library of Parliament (Canada), *Shared Services: Lower Costs, Improved Services and a Change in Culture*, September 2005
II. Why Technology-Based Case Management

A technology-based case management system that includes a knowledge base and a web-based employee self-service (ESS) portal offers a solution for the management of information and processes within an organization. Effective systems will introduce efficiencies to the logical flow of information and have many benefits:

- Improve the productivity of HR staff
- Reduce the number of direct inquiries by employees
- Ensure consistency of information across the enterprise
- Faster response times to employee inquiries
- Insulate companies from legal liability
- Reduce the number of agents required to do the same amount of work

Experts agree:

“Often underused, but of significant benefit, is a workflow system. This system is integrated into many call management solutions... For those service requests that cannot be resolved through self-service or closed-in-one interaction, workflow technology is critical to move exceptions to the right source of information quickly and so reduce wasteful research time.”

“Whether an organization insources or outsources, uses an HRMS or another system, employee self-service is far and away the most widely adopted and commonly accepted means of delivering services to employees. Its many benefits include an empowered workforce that is more apt to take responsibility for its own HR and benefit decisions, greater accuracy of employee data and faster HR processes. ESS has truly lived up to the hype of freeing HR from administrative work to focus on more strategic activities.”

“Technology plays an enabling role and it is difficult to conceive of [a global HR organization] without a significant technology component. Traditional HR interaction involves a lot of synchronous communication, either on the phone or face-to-face. This is the most expensive form of support. A goal... should be to replace expensive support methods with cheaper ones, without reducing the quality of service. If an employee can get the exact answer to a question about holiday entitlement with a few clicks of a mouse, this offers a cheaper, yet faster service than calling or e-mailing the local HR person.”

“Vendor-purchased core HR systems generally offer an efficient and effective way for HR to deliver programs quickly, consistently and with a relatively low margin for error. Because they’ve become “commoditized,” they deliver good technology for a reasonable price. And because they are also customizable, they provide the opportunity for enterprising HR teams to create additional and unique value that’s specific to their organization.”

Employee Self-Service Portal & Knowledge Base

An employee self-service portal with an information-rich and up-to-date knowledge base (KB) is a so-called “first line of defense” for human resource organizations. An effective portal will allow employees to instantly and easily log a new case online, 24x7 from any location. When integrated with a knowledge base, employees can also search for company information, policies, forms, and procedures, submit new cases, check the status of existing cases, complete company surveys, and more, all over the Web.

With an effective, easy-to-use system in place, employees can tell their story once and it’s captured for the lifecycle to resolution. The vast majority of requests are common problems that are solved with this single, technology-based interaction.

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3 Accenture, Optimizing Shared Services Performance Through Better Service Management, 2005
4 Towers Perrin, HR Technology: Demanding Change, Delivering Results, HR Service Delivery Research Report, 2007
5 Thomas Otter, Shared Service and HR, IHRIM Journal, September/October 2003
6 Towers Perrin, HR Technology: Demanding Change, Delivering Results, HR Service Delivery Research Report, 2007
There are two keys to success; 1, the depth, breadth, and accuracy of the information in the knowledge base; and 2, the presence of a recommendation engine that can interpret employee status against requests to ensure proper response. In some cases, the answer may be as simple as a form (the correct form based on status) or routing of the case to an HR specialist. Different benefits are understood by the system based on a limitless set of factors (such as job title/level, location, family status, etc.) that can be determined by the HR organization.

Such a recommendation engine has proven more effective than other solutions because the results are not dependent upon employees guessing the correct search terms. It will calculate proper responses based on usage and deliver more relevant responses than a knowledge base without such an engine.

While many integrated technology solutions do provide a recommendation engine to select relevant knowledge base articles according to the key words that have been typed to describe the problem, this single search criterion is not always effective. Different people may describe the same problem differently, and this often leads to different responses from the knowledge base, to the same problem. The most effective recommendation engines provide a second level of integration between the knowledge base and the case form. The second level includes data from specific fields within the case form - data which further qualify case. When a recommendation engine combines these two levels of case information instead of just free text descriptions, the HR representatives will consistently receive more specific, better-fitting responses from the knowledge base.

Case Management System

If an issue is more complex, and requires interaction with an HR generalist or specialist, it is now logged in the system and management via the case management system begins immediately. A centralized case management system significantly improves efficiency and effectiveness with case qualification and routing rules that quickly match queries with the appropriate skill set. Such a solution should also manage a complete audit trail of incoming/outgoing correspondence and case tracking for each employee request. And of course it should provide analytics for tracking key performance indicators, such as time spent on each case, number of cases per HR topic/area, first time resolution rate, and service level management achievements.

In fact, a centralized case management system is the most recommended method for management of Service Level Agreements (SLAs). These agreements are often complex and only a case management system with sophisticated tracking and analytics will be capable of consistently managing customer segmentation and value identification. What is more, it can automate the management and evaluation of services delivered, costs, service options, and relevant business processes. An effective case management system will also permit customization of individual, departmental and enterprise-wide processes as the needs of the organization change. Additionally, it will be able to centralize and manage interactions among the various providers including HR teams, legal departments, finance, accounting, and outside vendors.

Put into action, a case management system will significantly improve fulfillment of service level agreements based on automatic assignments. Each case has a specific commitment time and date stamp when it is created, based on the type of the case, and the employee to whom it pertains. The system will then monitor the progress of each case, and help HR staff to prioritize their tasks based on these Service Level Agreements.

Overall, a technology-based system has proven effective in significantly improving employee satisfaction with HR for three reasons:

- It provides a single point of contact for all human resource-related questions.
- The web portal can help employees quickly find accurate answers for basic human resource inquiries on-demand, 24/7.
- The centralized system gives managers a direct view into case handling, which lessens their dependence on HR contacts and improves their own speed-to-resolution.
III. A Model for Case Management with “Lines of Defense”

The model described in this section documents the three “lines of defense” for managing employee requests before HR management must be involved. As described in the previous section, a technology-based case management system can dramatically improve quality of service delivered to employees and the productivity of an HR organization. When selecting a vendor, Thomas Otter recommends that organizations consider two items:

1. “Employees should be able to interact with the HR function through the most convenient method, be it the telephone, a meeting, the Web or even SMS. The answer should be consistent, even though the delivery method differs. This calls for a clear integration strategy where the technologies and people need to talk to each other.”

2. “In today’s economy, assess the financial viability of the vendor carefully and align the HR shared service with IT shared service to avoid building an HR island. The greatest technology challenge is interfaces. The more processes that run in one application, the less your cost of interfacing will be. For every “best of breed” application, beware of the mongrel interface!”

Pre-Purchase Planning

Application of technology alone, however, will not suffice. Prior to the implementation of a case management system, HR organizations must do two things:

1. Establish clear roles and responsibilities. “Have a structure to target skills where they will bring best return. The skills required to close service requests in one interaction may be too advanced for all customer service representatives. Leverage a multi-tier support model. Progressive... organizations use a two-tier model, where Level 1 representatives process the calls within agreed service levels, and pass complex requests on to a Level 2 subject matter expert... Only if the request cannot be processed at Level 2 will the call then be routed to... management.”

2. Prepare a complete set of information in a knowledge base with routing rules. Thomas Otter, in an article for the IHRIM Journal called “Shared Service and HR” agrees, “Service centers have limits, and it is simply wrong to suggest that all processes would benefit from a service center model. Some processes only work with real-time face-to-face interaction. The challenge is to identify those few vitally important cases where such personal interaction is essential.”

With those two items established, a technology-based case management system can immediately begin saving even the most complex global HR organization time and money. The remainder of this section will detail a “line of defense” system that has proven effective for managing employee requests by human resources organizations.

The first “line of defense” is an employee self-service system supported by an online portal and knowledge base. The second is a call center staffed by HR generalists. And the third line of defense are the HR specialists deployed for more complex requests, such as disability and retirement. When applied correctly this system will drastically lessen the number of necessary face-to-face interactions, improve the productivity of front-line teams, preserve the time of HR specialists for only the most complex tasks, shorten response times to employees, and insulate HR management from routine requests in order to focus on high-level, strategic issues.

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7 Thomas Otter, Shared Service and HR, IHRIM Journal, September/October 2003
8 Thomas Otter, Shared Service and HR, IHRIM Journal, September/October 2003
9 Accenture, Optimizing Shared Services Performance Through Better Service Management, 2005
10 Thomas Otter, Shared Service and HR, IHRIM Journal, September/October 2003
1st Line of Defense

“In the same way that most people are happy to order a new credit card without meeting the bank manager, much of HR’s routine work can be done with limited face-to-face contact.”

The first line of defense in this model is an employee self-service portal supported by a knowledge base (KB). It is a single point of contact for employee requests. Items that can be resolved without live interaction with HR include:

- View job postings
- Apply for job postings
- Enroll in training courses
- Viewing training history
- Update performance goals/results
- Plan career/identify needed competencies
- “Onboard” a new hire prior to start date
- Create cases and review status of current cases
- Review case history
- Browse and search the Human Resources knowledge base

An effective ESS system will be integrated with a form that retains complete employee information and also captures the incident request. “The data captured at customer contact time is crucial to diagnose the best resolution, track status of the request, and provide a rich source of continuous improvement.

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information. This critical discipline simply cannot be neglected.”

The recommendation engine described earlier plays a key role in this first line of defense. Human nature dictates that many employees will not always take the time to search the knowledge base for answers before submitting a question through the self-service portal. Recommendation engines can intervene, and “push” the answer out to the employee’s screen, before the question has actually been submitted to HR representatives. This functionality can increase the success of a Self-service initiative.

The benefits for deploying a technology-based self-service system are clear:

- Helps improve the productivity of HR agents (which saves costs) by handling less basic inquiries.
- HR personnel are able focus on more strategic areas. For example, rather than answering the same HR benefits questions over and over again, they now have time to work on recruiting.
- Employee satisfaction is increased by having a system that provides easy access to accurate information accessible anywhere, 24/7.

Results

- “More than 90 percent of service requests could be handled routinely, before any exception processing is required.”

**2nd Line of Defense**

The second line of defense is a call center populated by HR generalists. The key responsibilities for this team are:

- Logging and tracking all employee requests through to completion.
- Resolving employee inquiries wherever possible during first call.
- Transferring complex requests to the appropriate processing area or HR specialist.
- Escalating major problems and issues to management.
- Ensuring service level agreements are fulfilled.

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12 Accenture, Optimizing Shared Services Performance Through Better Service Management, 2005
13 Accenture, Optimizing Shared Services Performance Through Better Service Management, 2005
The knowledgebase documented above also provides a central repository of information for HR professionals seeking answers. An effective system will organize information logically by topic such as benefits, payroll, policies, etc. It will also provide front-line HR staffs with a set of case-specific scripts to guide them through a series of questions to ask the employee, in order to elicit the information that’s needed to properly resolve the case.

The benefits of applying technology to this line of defense include:

- More accurate and rapid handling of cases drives faster resolution.
- The majority of employee requests can be handled by HR generalists.
- Reduction of training time for front-line staff because case forms and requests are integrated and the knowledge base is simple to query.
- Resolution of requests occurs more quickly and is well-documented.

Results:

- “For HR and pay transactions in particular, nearly 70% of respondents report less work for their generalists and specialists; 63% report less work for their HR service center administrators and 42% report less work for managers themselves...” 14
- “Workload continues to drop most dramatically for HR generalists and specialists (fully three-quarters reported less work) (see Exhibit 5 in previous section) and for HR service center administrators (75% reported less work). And, this year, two-thirds of respondents reported less work, or no change in workload, for their employees as well.” 15

3rd Line of Defense

The third line of defense is the final stop before items must be escalated to HR executives. The goal of an effective “lines of defense” system is to minimize the volume of cases that reach this level, as it is the most labor intensive and requires the most specialized talent. The most common items handled at this level are:

- Retirement benefits
- Disability
- Parental leave

These cases often require a deeper examination of benefits, rights and responsibilities and therefore require coordination with legal departments, managers, executives, and external vendors. Although time-intensive, the productivity of staff at this level can be improved with a comprehensive case management system in several ways:

- Full case information and interactions available in case management system reduces investigative redundancies.
- An experience base will contain resolutions for similar cases and speed closure.
- Policies and procedures are centralized and readily available.
- Communication with other departments and outside vendors is captured in a single location and improves transparency.
- Complete information is available at a glance for executives and other stakeholders.

Results:

- Number of cases that reach this level is reduced to, on average, 5% of total volume.

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14 Towers Perrin, HR Technology: Demanding Change, Delivering Results, HR Service Delivery Research Report, 2007
15 Towers Perrin, HR Technology: Demanding Change, Delivering Results, HR Service Delivery Research Report, 2007
IV. Case Management Case Study

A global French-Japanese automotive company needed a case management system to more efficiently manage requests from their growing employee base around the world. The company knew that only a technology solution with an intuitive user interface would be rapidly adopted by managers and employees, and scalable enough to manage the demands of 25,000 employees. Lastly, the company needed a system designed for its own specific HR demands and processes.

The 53 human resource shared service center (HRSSC) agents at the company were receiving approximately 3,500 requests per day, three-fourths of which come through e-mail and the remainder by telephone. The new solution would have to provide the following benefits:

- Productivity increase of at least 30%.
- Case tracking with a complete record of the inquiry and its resolution process.
- Reporting for daily performance, queue management and strategic objectives.

Technology-Based Solution

As an organizational solution, the car manufacturer established a shared services center for human resources with seven operational teams: three groups of first-level support for administrative tasks; one group of dedicated agents for executive support; technical support; managerial reporting; and one group of experts to receive the more challenging cases. HR managers needed a method and enabling technology to organize those groups and maximize performance.

The company’s HR Shared Services Center (HRSSC) receives initial requests at one of its three Level One points of contact. Agents there are equipped with Neocase knowledge base and the Neocase case management system to transfer and escalate cases where appropriate.

Examples of case transfer would include technical support issues, executive request processing, payroll adjustments or highly delicate or complex cases that require teams or veteran HR personnel for resolution. As an integral part of the overall operation, all cases and team performance are visible to a supervisory body through sophisticated analytics and real-time dashboards.

To improve operational efficiency at the HRSSC, the company deployed Neocase technologies in two arenas:

Case Management and Workflow

Neocase HR, in combination with Neocase Knowledge Base, improved the workflow of information because it offered sophisticated case qualification with routing rules that quickly matched queries with the appropriate agent skill set. The interface was simple for the team to use because the system dashboards were consistent regardless of topic and included key performance indicators. It also provided an audit trail of incoming/outgoing correspondence and case tracking for each employee request. And lastly, the system included analytics for tracking key performance indicators. All told, Neocase HR helped standardize resolution procedures, streamlined workflows and improved productivity by more than 30%.

Employee Empowerment and Case Reduction

Neocase’s dynamic knowledge base, combined with an employee self-service portal based on Neocase SelfService, reduced strain on the HR Shared Services Center by reducing the number of inbound inquiries. Historically, it had been common at the company to burden HR managers with extremely simple requests as well as updates on inquiries previously submitted.

The Neocase Knowledge Base and employee self-service portal succeeded in minimizing these types of requests, and freed up HR manager resources to tackle more involved, strategic issues.

The Neocase HR solution was deployed in a SaaS (Software as a Service) delivery model, which was
the clear choice for the company due to its fast deployment cycle of approximately 50 days, including customization of the employee self-service portal and workflow engine. After seeing the functionality, the remaining point of concern was the integrity and security of maintaining sensitive employee information. Neocase responded to the company’s high security requirements by incorporating the highest security standards available within the solution.

**Results:**

*Within a short timeframe, the company was able to accomplish impressive results in its HR Shared Services Center after implementing the Neocase HR solution in combination with Neocase SelfService and Neocase Knowledge Base. Some of the key results from this project are:*

- **HRSSC staff productivity increase of 30%.**
- **Significant reduction of case creations and inquiries resulting from employee self-service portal and knowledge base.**
- **Improvement of employee and manager satisfaction by 40%.**
V. Neocase Solutions & Modules

Neocase HR

Neocase HR is the premier case management solution to manage and optimize HR processes within a Shared Service Center & HR Call Center. The solution has empowered companies such as Air France-KLM and Renault-Nissan to gain significant productivity improvements and cost savings in their HR operations. The solution brings efficiency and productivity to HR Shared Service Centers through: collaborative case management, automated workflows, web self-service, intelligent knowledge base, Service level agreements (SLAs), and executive dashboards.

Neocase KB

Neocase KB is a knowledge management tool with an intuitive search engine that categorizes and stores information for agents and customers to resolve cases quickly.

Neocase SelfService

Neocase SF is a customer and employee self-service solution that is available 24x7 to access information and check the status of open cases and review case history.

About Neocase Software

Neocase Software is a leading provider of customer service solutions for shared service centers and customer support operations. It empowers large global corporations to manage and optimize their shared service and support operations performance and processes through its uniquely adaptive and award-winning customer service technology platform. Neocase Software solutions include Neocase HR for Human Capital Resource Management, Neocase CS for Customer Service, Neocase CRM for Customer Relationship Management, and Neocase FR for Financial Resolution. All solutions can be deployed on-premise or in a SaaS model. With more than 200 clients worldwide, representative customers include Air France, Renault-Nissan, L’Oreal, Brinks, Callidus Software, and International Decision Systems. Neocase’s award-winning solutions bring efficiency and profitability to SSCs and customer service departments through web self-service, intelligent knowledge management, service level agreement (SLA) management, employee/partner case collaboration, executive dashboards, and automated workflows.

For more information about Neocase and its solutions, please visit our website - www.neocasesoftware.com - or contact one of sales representative at info@neocasesoftware.com.

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