

Building Independence: A Digital HR Transformation Journey

The Project

Our customer – a listed engineering company with a focus on electrochemical plants set out to transform its HR landscape by implementing a modern HR suite. Since they need to run a carve-out initiative from the corporate IT infrastructure. The primary aim was to achieve digital independence from legacy group-wide IT tools, streamline payroll through outsourcing, and introduce a fresh user experience with SuccessFactors.

Project Objectives

The project's objectives focused on establishing an independent HR platform to manage core HR data, payroll, and time management. A central goal was to achieve full autonomy from the parent company's systems, supporting the company's strategy for digital transformation and operational self-sufficiency.

To meet these aims, the project set an ambitious timeline for a rapid go-live in Germany targeting completion within a year by deploying SuccessFactors Employee Central (EC), EC Time (Time Off and Time Sheet), Employee Central Payroll (ECP), Concur, a project time tracking tool, and an electronic file (e-file) solution, ensuring a smooth transition from legacy systems for their German entity.

How HCM Supported

The HCM team played a central role in driving the digital HR transformation project, taking on full project management (PM) and project management office (PMO) responsibilities, as well as complete technical ownership of both Employee Central and Time Management modules. In addition to overseeing these core areas, the team provided vital support on the integration side, leveraging dedicated integration experts and a solution architect to ensure seamless connectivity between systems.

Their leadership, technical expertise, and collaborative approach facilitated a smooth payroll transition and effective integration, while teamwork, adaptability, and knowledge sharing kept the project aligned with both the schedule and budget. The team's diverse backgrounds further strengthened collaboration and contributed significantly to the achievement of project objectives.

Challenges Faced

Key challenges included:

- Managing the transition of responsibilities from a prior vendor following the departure of essential personnel during the project.
- Initial cost and effort estimate that did not fully reflect the customer's requirements, necessitating replanning and adjustments.
- Delays in several parallel initiatives, requiring the rapid development of workarounds and interim integration solutions
- Unforeseen challenges, including budget discrepancies and resource shortages, lead to the need for adjusting of the customers timelines, conducting renegotiations, and allocating further efforts to fulfil emerging requirements.

Added Value

Since go-live, the project has delivered:

- An enhanced user experience with unified access to HR applications.
- Reduced total-cost-of-ownership - through outsourced Assisted Maintenance Services (AMS) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) services.
- Digital access to personal data for all employees, significantly reducing manual effort within the HR team.
- Improved internal training and knowledge exchange.
- The establishment of a strong, agile, and flexible HR organization.

Lessons Learned

The HR-Suite Project highlighted the importance of robust resource planning and comprehensive early requirements gathering in successful digital HR transformation initiatives. The project demonstrated that relying on a single expert introduces significant risk, while providing realistic effort estimates is vital to prevent unexpected challenges.

Pro-active client engagement, prompt data provisioning, and well-defined stakeholder responsibilities were identified as critical project success factors. Effective cross-functional collaboration, transparent communication, and integrated data validation enhanced overall project outcomes.

Furthermore, streamlined change management processes and mentoring of junior team members contributed positively to team performance. These insights will inform our approach to future projects, ensuring that we continue to deliver high-quality results for our clients.

Conclusion

Key achievements were marked by the successful implementation of all the modules, culminating in the inaugural payroll run and payout for all employees. Despite scope changes and customer timeline delays, the team's dedication and collaborative approach facilitated a timely and effective deployment. The project presented significant challenges; however, steadfast teamwork and productive client partnership led to the establishment of a future-ready HR platform, serving as a model for transformation moving forward.