

Talent Management in the Cloud: The Answer for Today's Workforce Challenges

Recruiting and retaining talent has never been more important for state and local agencies.

State and local governments have always had to recruit, train and retain the next generation of skilled employees. But today, successful talent acquisition and management are more crucial than ever. One reason is the increased competition for talent as Baby Boomers approach retirement age. By 2016, the number of workers aged 55 to 64 will increase almost 37 percent, according to some estimates.¹

Other challenges include the fact that methods for finding and recruiting top talent such as newspaper ads and online job boards are being replaced by more responsive digital tools, including social networking sites. Once talent managers connect with viable candidates, they must vet applicants to ensure they have the skills for evolving public sector missions.

Unfortunately, legacy recruiting and talent management systems fall short in helping government overcome these challenges. A new survey by the Center for Digital Government (CDG) found that 64 percent of state and local government decision-makers consider outdated technology systems an impediment to human resources (HR) efforts. Reasons included a lack of must-have capabilities, such as mobile applications and automatic connections to social networks, as well as resources for easily integrating new tools with legacy human capital management (HCM) systems.²

This issue brief from CDG presents the results of research outlining workforce challenges state and local organizations face and offers insights into how the cloud can deliver modern recruiting and talent management capabilities while avoiding costly rip-and-replace overhauls of current HCM platforms.

Shifting priorities

The CDG study asked IT managers and other decision-makers to identify today's most important workforce trends. Not surprisingly, a majority of these leaders noted the ability to develop a skilled workforce as their top HR priority. But in an era of close scrutiny of government effectiveness and competition for young talent, government executives also place a premium on areas beyond this HR activity. Forty-four percent

of the respondents see measurement of employee performance as a key priority, while 35 percent give that status to employee engagement efforts. Sustainably recruiting and retaining talent along with efficiently transferring knowledge are also critical elements in obtaining a skilled workforce.

Responses like these offer insights into which capabilities are important in modern HCM systems. In particular, tools for gathering and analyzing data are high on the list — 90 percent of respondents want their organizations to quickly access HR insights for informed decision-making. Nearly as many respondents — 89 percent — said retaining talent while gaining real-time insight and transparency is mission critical to their agencies or departments. This helps explain why nearly 75 percent of the executives want access to dashboards and reporting utilities. Fifty-nine percent of decision-makers also consider mobile access for staff members an important capability.

However, many respondents had concerns about the tools to support these efforts. For example, 40 percent said difficulties in integrating legacy systems with new technology are preventing agencies from implementing an HCM system with analytics and performance measurement, and 64 percent said outdated technology is as an impediment to HR and administration efforts.

Flexible cloud options

However, the survey respondents also see a possible answer for these concerns, namely cloud-based solutions. Nearly half — 48 percent — are either considering cloud-based HR options or are already in the planning stages to bring these technologies online. The reasons are varied, but meeting a host of practical demands is a common thread. Reasons included a desire for less maintenance overhead, more opportunities to lower costs of ongoing operations, reduced capital expenditures and faster delivery, especially when the cloud solution doesn't require a rip and replace of a legacy system.

Cloud-based HCM solutions offer other potential advantages. A look at important modules in leading cloud-based HCM platforms shows possible benefits for six key areas.

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Recruiting. To hire employees with the right skills for current and future mission needs, agencies must convince young talent that the public sector can be an environment for job satisfaction and personal growth as they work to serve the community and their fellow citizens. New recruiting strategies can help, including connecting with up-and-comers via LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. The best cloud HCM applications automatically post job openings on these sites, make them accessible on mobile devices and then track responses.

Performance analyses. Gathering detailed data about skills requirements and candidate backgrounds help hiring managers identify gaps in operations and forecast future needs as agency missions evolve. Leading cloud programs offer business intelligence programs to support these analyses so managers can target the right hires while also developing training and career development programs that help keep high-performing talent from considering jobs in commercial industry.

Sophisticated analytics offer an additional benefit for HR departments with insight that helps managers show how investments in new recruiting and retention programs result in higher productivity and improved constituent satisfaction.

Workforce analytics. These related analytics tools available from cloud solutions let HR managers design and launch employee surveys to gauge engagement levels. The best programs combine internal results with statistics from third-party surveys for comparisons with industry averages. The results help decision-makers clearly understand whether their recruiting efforts are attracting the right employees.

Employee onboarding. Attracting top talent is the first step in hiring success, but just as important is shortening the time it takes for new hires to make valuable contributions to department operations. Cloud tools can accelerate results by using social networks, mobile apps and internal, virtual communities to help new employees learn how their roles will help the department or agency execute strategy. The programs also let new hires collaborate with agency experts, gain insights into agency processes and access job-specific training resources.

Career management and development. Self-service tools within innovative cloud programs help employees maintain a record of training classes and certifications and track areas for

6 Essential Capabilities to Look for in Cloud-Based Solutions

1. Proven, stable vendors with a large installed base of happy customers
2. Tools for taking advantage of social networks for recruiting
3. Support for mobile users
4. Capabilities for recruiting, onboarding and professional development
5. Sophisticated analytics for employee performance and engagement
6. Easy integration with existing human resources systems

future skills development. These repositories, often accessible via mobile hardware, also become a central storehouse for interim and yearly manager evaluations.

eLearning. Managers can promote skills development with virtual classrooms and mobile apps that augment in-class formal training sessions. Cloud-based modules distribute videos, screen recordings, wikis, blogs and polls to help employees access information and share insights with peers to enhance retention of important concepts.

Modernization without disruption

The flexibility of the cloud enables agencies to combine one or all of these attributes and capabilities as needed within the existing HCM environment so leaders can focus on areas most important to their particular mission. For example, some organizations may need to enhance recruiting while others place a higher priority on career development. With the cloud, HR managers and executives can target investments in new resources while avoiding expensive rip-and-replace overhauls.

Government organizations face challenges around talent acquisition, employee retention, workforce analytics and the modernization of HCM systems. Nevertheless, there aren't any one-size-fits-all solutions. Fortunately, senior managers can identify their greatest mission needs and then adopt the latest cloud tools to enhance HCM platforms to deliver the capabilities they require without disrupting the existing environment.

Endnotes

1. www.huffingtonpost.com/cathy-leibow/put-em-out-to-pastureor-m_b_4326131.html
2. CDG surveyed 167 state and local government IT and decision-makers on the topic of talent acquisition processes. Responses were gathered in an online survey fielded from July to August 2014.

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