

Delivering HR services to the 21st century workforce – A wakeup call for HR outsourcing providers, buyers and corporate HR IT departments



Recent HR Outsourcing implementation experience across multiple providers and clients has demonstrated that the solutions being proposed by outsourcing providers and other enablers of enhanced HR service delivery are **not keeping up with the demands of an increasingly mobile workforce**. The customer-facing aspect of these solutions has remained effectively unchanged over the past five years, continuing to consist of a call routing solution, a portal with static content, along with some basic employee and manager self-service functionality. In the meantime, a revolution has taken place in the ways that people communicate and do work – some clients have even shared that their executives hardly travel with a laptop anymore – their main method of communication is a mobile device.

No excuses – few barriers remain in addressing the needs of the mobile workforce

Deloitte research shows that when out-of-the-box thinking is combined with proper planning and budgeting, incorporating the needs of the mobile workforce has the potential to not only meet the expectations of the technologically savvy executive, but may also **increase the adoption of new HR Service Delivery models by those that may play traditionally “non-wired” roles at work.**



The technology exists and is improving

Each of the major platforms in HR Management Systems (such as SAP, Oracle/PeopleSoft and Workday) has made commitments to the mobile workforce in current or upcoming releases of their solutions.

Statistics from the United Nations' International Telecommunications Union indicates that in 2010, mobile device access likely reached 76% of the global population across both the developed and developing world.

Access is increasing

Getting these devices in the hands of employees is not a problem. Recent studies on the proliferation of mobile web-enabled devices indicate that by the end of 2011, more web-enabled mobile devices will be sold than traditional PCs, according to research firm IDC (Lohr, 2010). The increase in mobile device and mobile web-enabled access is not just limited to developed countries. Statistics from the United Nations' International Telecommunications Union indicates that in 2010, mobile device access likely reached 76% of the global population across both the developed and developing world. Furthermore, mobile broadband service subscriptions reached 51% of the developed world, and 5.4% in the developing world – it is important to note that both of these figures more than doubled in the last two years (International Telecommunications Union, 2010).

Clients demand innovation

Along with decreased barriers to this service, clients are beginning to demand innovation in HR Service Delivery. Jonathan Taylor, Greater China Human

Resources Vice President at The Coca-Cola Company shares that "Mobile technology is very much part and parcel of today's executives lives, regardless of whether its mobile phones, tablet computers, Blackberrys or laptops – this is how they access information. If organisations want to be relevant to their clients/associates, they need to ensure their solutions embrace technology when they communicate – we are all talking tech these days..."

So why the lack of innovation with regard to HR Service Delivery for the mobile workforce? Cost is likely a key driver, as in recent years, HR outsourcing providers have been driven by market forces to keep costs low, while focusing on maintaining service level agreements with their existing client base – neither of which leave much monetary or human capital to invest in developing new technologies. Lack of customer demand and out-of-the-box thinking is another potential culprit – mobile device use for interacting with supporting functions (vs consumer-facing marketing activities) is still a relatively new concept, and it is likely that this type of communications channel is not considered until it is too late.

Putting ideas into action – Capture this audience whether at the beginning or in the middle of your HR service delivery transformation

What can be done about this issue? Recent experience has identified specific areas in the service delivery model that strongly benefit from additional considerations on interactions with customers that make up the mobile workforce. Each area identified below includes a corresponding list of solutions categorised as “High-tech”/ “Low-tech”/“No-tech”, based primarily on the amount of IT effort (and correspondingly, cost) they would require to implement. Clients who are at the beginning of their HR Outsourcing solutions should strongly consider pushing their providers for solutions that fall into the “High tech” or “Low tech” categories, while clients who might be in the transition phase or operations phase of their outsourcing contracts will most likely find the ‘No tech’ solutions sufficient for the time being (at least until the next future direction planning/contract negotiation meetings.)

- **Customers should expect global access to HR Services through their mobile device**

High-tech solution	Low-tech solution	“No-tech” solution
Build a mobile version of the HR Portal, which includes a “contacts” page, listing the local dial-in numbers for each country	Establish an automated email address that responds with an email of up-to-date dial-in numbers for each country	Distribute both soft-copy and hard-copy “wallet cards” with the local dial-in numbers for each country

- **Customers should expect to initiate inquiries and complete basic “micro-transactions”, such as workflow approvals and leave request initiation/approvals without using their laptops** – In our scenario, an executive needed to approve proposed ratings for their direct reports. Client feedback indicates that they expect their mobile devices to be able to perform most of the functionality they could do through a laptop or a call to the HR service centre.

High-tech solution	Low-tech solution	“No-tech” solution
Build a mobile version of the HR Portal and include functionality for users to submit inquiries and review/approve pending workflow requests (e.g. performance rating approvals)	Allow HR service centre representatives to not only initiate inquiries on behalf of the caller, but also have secured access to pending workflow requests and approve them “on behalf” of the caller	Assuming delegation or “next level approver” functionality has already been established, an HR service centre representative will coordinate the completion of a transaction with the delegate/next level manager designated by the caller

- **Customers should expect to be able to navigate through the HR service centre phone menu quickly and without having to look at their keypad** – Recent experience indicates that clients are frustrated with excessive phone menu options when trying to connect with an HR service centre representative, along with requirements for alpha-numeric passwords to be typed in when most mobile devices no longer use a traditional nine-digit keypad with three corresponding alpha characters.

High-tech solution	Low-tech solution	“No-tech” solution
Implement a full “Integrated Voice Response” solution that allows the caller to speak their selected options and authentication information when contacting the HR service centre by phone	Prioritise/organise phone menus based on most frequently used options, and confirm that authentication information only requires numeric selections	Allow the HR service centre representatives to “manually” authenticate/re-route callers who are not able to type in their information through the phone

Neglecting the needs of the mobile workforce will likely be an increasing barrier for change and further adoption of an outsourced or multi-tiered HR service delivery model. Clients who are considering undertaking such an effort, or for whom a contract renewal is on the horizon, should use their purchasing power and understanding of the potential for this functionality to drive outsourcing providers and their own internal HR IT departments to deliver 21st-century solutions. Clients who are at the beginning and middle of their contract terms should consider the solutions presented here as potential enhancements for their keeping up with the demands of their workforce.

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Contact

Jack Sellschop

Associate Director

jsellschop@deloitte.co.za

Gareth Evans

Executive Lead

garevans@deloitte.co.za

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