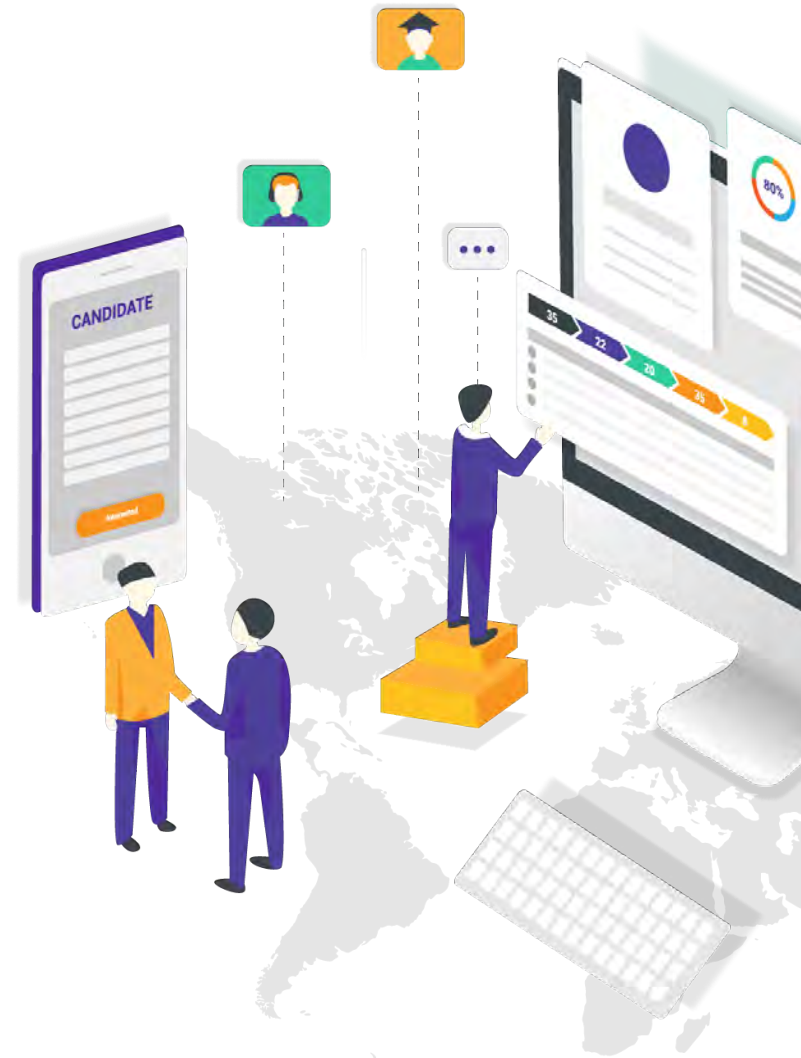


# Demystifying the Newest HR Tech

The HR Application  
Framework & Employee  
Experience Platform





Workplace trends change quickly. Innovative leaders in the HR field are always searching for ways to **make the workplace better and employees more productive.**


## INTRODUCTION

Similarly, new technologies emerge in the market to automate and speed up HR processes. **New mobile employee apps, recruiting channels, HR software and tools** are created with the purpose of making the work-life easier. Sometimes it feels almost impossible to keep up with the latest trends and newest technology buzzwords.

That's why we have taken the time to accumulate the latest and greatest about current HR technology trends and what the future holds for digital HR. The trends that HR professionals and employees experience on a daily basis are often the drivers of change in technological needs. Thus, we experience an evolution from what HR solutions used to be - big payroll - to **a new category known as the HR application framework**. This framework, which was introduced by Gartner, allows for connectivity among the wide range of services provided by HR teams. We move away from the one-size-fits all model of large HCM providers, to a highly customizable and functional suite of HR tools.

With remote working becoming more of a norm across many industries, there is also a great focus on the employee experience. Just like a physical workplace, **the digital workplace and employee experience is being made a priority**. Digital HR is at the heart of this phenomenon as we strive to stay connected to the workplace from anywhere. However, companies are adopting more technology systems, which is adding to the complexity of the work environment. In response to this challenge, the employee experience platform (EXP) has entered the market with the purpose of giving employees and HR managers a user-centric platform to manage the end-to-end employee service experience.

In this white paper, we will discuss the current HR trends shaping the digital strategy of many HR departments, the **evolution of workplace technology**, and the key business outcomes you should consider when **investing in new and upcoming HR technology**. Keep in mind, that when we talk about the employee experience throughout this white paper, it's important to take a **comprehensive approach** and include not just the individuals who are permanently employed by your organization, but temporary workers and contractors.

A background network diagram consisting of interconnected nodes and lines. Some nodes are solid circles, while others are hollow circles. The lines connecting them are a mix of solid and dashed grey lines, creating a complex web-like structure.

# **HR Trends Shape Digital Strategy**

## 01 | THE WORKFORCE TRANSITION

**In a 2021 study conducted by McKinsey, it is predicted that more than 100 million workers will need to find a different occupation by 2030.**

That is 12 percent more than was estimated before the COVID-19 pandemic.\*

The transitioning workforce is about shifting talent from one organization to another or transferring within the same organization to a different position. This phenomenon has also become known as the Great Resignation. Ironically, while many things came to a halt during the pandemic, it has also awakened the human side of the work life. Employees today seek meaning in their work and are motivated by their personal values more than ever before. Understanding these values is key to creating a workplace where an employee will be motivated and engaged. As a result, we are currently experiencing a job seeker's market, meaning that there are more open positions than candidates.

For HR professionals, this means a **massive recruitment effort** as people leave their current positions and look for new opportunities. In addition to recruiting, **training and development, employer branding and an effort to retain top talent** are all at the forefront of the workforce transition. These factors must also be taken into account when developing a digital HR strategy. To manage this workplace transition, HR teams need to be equipped with the right solutions and tools.

These tools undoubtedly include **applicant tracking systems, learning management systems, employee engagement and recognition apps, etc.** Today, you will find a plethora of software vendors that specialize in these areas and that are innovative thought leaders when it comes to retaining and attracting top talent in these challenging times. From communication to HR marketing, these solutions are supporting HR teams as well as employees in this post-pandemic transition.

\* <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-after-covid-19>

## 02 | EMBRACING BIG DATA

Data and reporting have been an important part of human resources management for many decades. With data, HR professionals can measure the outcomes of their HR initiatives and interventions **by tracking key metrics and indicators**. Reporting tools and dashboards have been essential in communicating and visualizing these KPIs.

However, companies are now embracing big data to **improve their HR** initiatives in all aspects of the employee lifecycle – from attracting talent all the way to offboarding exiting employees.

Some organizations are relying on data warehouses to store all their HR data. But to keep up with the complexity of big data requirements, many are **investing in cloudbased solutions for big data analytics** so that data is accessible from anywhere an internet connection is available. To make the most out of HR big data, HR managers and leaders need to be able to gain actionable insights from their data in an efficient manner. To achieve this, organizations are starting to take advantage of cloudbased tools that **integrate systems and centralize HR data into a single data hub**.

## 03 | WORK-LIFE BALANCE

According to a 2021 global study by the Harvard Business Review, 89% of workers indicated that their work life was getting worse, 85% reported a decline in their wellbeing, and 56% said that their job demands had increased.\* Since the pandemic and the surge of remote working, **the lines between work and home have become blurred** more than ever before. With worker burnout on the rise, HR teams are now left with the task of ensuring that employees **remain productive without sacrificing their well-being**.



It has become increasingly difficult to reach employees in a remote work environment. We have turned to digital tools in order to **create a digital workplace**, and communication has taken on a new meaning. Microsoft has released some key statistics regarding hybrid work that show just how much we are relying on technology to get work done. Weekly meeting time has more than doubled for Teams users (a 148% increase since February 2020). In February 2021, 40.6 billion more emails were sent than in February 2020.\* This can be attributed to both **remote working conditions** and the **onset of the “always-on” work culture**.

So how can technology help solve the problem it is essentially causing? By helping employees **work both smarter and faster**. Productivity is shifting from working more to working better. In this case, technology can be used as an advantage. However, the right tools must be put in place in order to get the job done. The **employee experience** as well as specific **business requirements** must be taken into consideration when investing in workplace technologies.

\* <https://hbr.org/2021/02/beyond-burned-out>

\* <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index>

The background features a complex network diagram with various nodes (circles) and connecting lines (both solid and dashed). The nodes are arranged in a non-uniform pattern, creating a web-like structure. The lines are light gray, and the overall aesthetic is clean and technical.

# **The Evolution of Workplace Technology**

HR technologies are not new to the market. Organizations have long recognized that their **human capital is an important asset** and that they need to administer various HR processes in order to manage it efficiently. HR management systems have been developed to conduct processes from recruiting to payroll and beyond.

## HR TRENDS

### SHAPING DIGITAL STRATEGY

#### 1 WORKPLACE TRANSITION

The transitioning workforce is about talent shifting from one position of organization to another.



#### 2 EMBRACING BIG DATA

Organizations are starting to take advantage of cloud-based tools that integrates systems and centralized HR data into a single data hub.

#### 3 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

With worker burnout on the rise, HR teams are now left with the task of ensuring that employees remain productive without sacrificing their well-being.

However, it took decades **to perfect the HR management system** and the business model is still evolving today. Keeping in mind the **HR trends** that are shaping today's digital strategies, let's take a look at **the evolution of human resources software** to better understand what needs HCM systems are looking to fulfill and how that has changed over the years.



## HCM Suites

The first HR systems in the 1970s were built to **automate tedious administrative processes**. The goal was to reduce costs and become more productive. However, these systems were primarily **server-based payroll systems** that relied mainly on **manual data entry**. While this was a step in the right direction, HCM suites came to be much more complex, making the lives of large HR departments simpler.

After the first HR systems were adopted by large organizations, HR software started **move to the cloud** in the late 1990s. Instead of being hosted on a computer's mainframe, now HR systems became available on the cloud. This made solutions **more accessible and affordable** than before. Because of this, more and more mid-sized and small companies made the **transition to HR management systems**. Among other benefits of cloud-based software, HR data also became more secure. Not only that, but the number of solutions available on the market grew tremendously.

Furthermore, what were once large payroll software vendors, started to adopt various HR modules in order to **expand the functionalities of their solutions**. They essentially evolved into end-to-end systems. In addition to payroll administration, these systems now also administer benefits, performance management, learning, recruiting, onboarding and more.

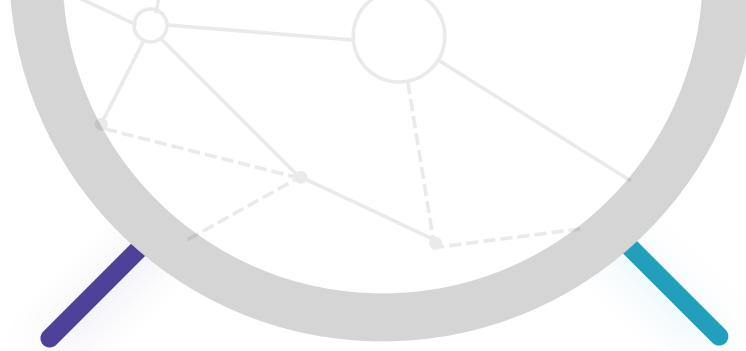
## Best-of-Breed HR Applications

End-to-end providers gained popularity across the markets, and companies in all industries started to adopt these systems in order to manage their human capital. However, these large all-in-one systems **lacked the specialization** required to give organizations a competitive edge they need in each HR function. From here, **best-of-breed systems** started to emerge in the early 2000s. These systems specialize in certain areas such as recruiting, performance management, etc.

The **number of solutions increased significantly** as vendors created specialized systems that fit industry-specific needs. As a result, the one-size-fits-all model started to become less and less attractive.

These solutions are hosted on the cloud which make them **low cost options**. Additionally, these cloud-based applications were able to operate on mobile devices once the app-market started to gain traction in the mid-2010s. Now the market is divided into two types of solutions: **all-in-one solutions and best-of-breed applications**. More likely than not, companies have adopted more than one solution into their organization, whether it be all-in-one, best-of-breed or a combination of both.





## The HR Application Framework

HR software and tools on the market have been evolving to meet the needs of companies that are ready to take advantage of HR technology. But as human resources departments face new challenges, HR teams are looking for new HR technology that will take them to the next level. As we saw, there are multiple HCM suites available on the market today which cater to a plethora of HR needs. However, according to a Gartner study, the future of HR systems will take on the form of an **HR application framework**.\* This is a new way of structuring HR systems that uses an **integration approach** to give companies the flexibility to choose the tools that best fit their organization's specific requirements.

The main goal of the HR application framework as defined by Gartner, is to **close the functionality gap** that currently exists among all-in-one solutions and dispersed specialized solutions. By integrating multiple HR applications together, the functionality of **the entire ecosystem is improved**. Organizations can have the **flexibility to choose** the solutions that most closely fit their requirements without sacrificing connectivity and unification. The convenience of the one-stop shop model combined with customization creates a new direction for HCM suites. Based on this framework, a new type of solution is introduced: **the employee experience platform**.

## The Employee Experience Platform

Bigger is not always better. The era of big payroll made reporting and analytics much more challenging. It also had a negative impact on the employee experience. Software vendors and HR professionals were more focused on how to streamline HR processes and make HR administration more efficient. As a result, the employee experience fell to the wayside. But now, it is becoming a priority once again. As discussed previously, HR trends are shifting to **support employee well-being and improving the productivity of employees** through HR technology. Employees are once again becoming the drivers of business' **competitive advantage** as opposed to the technologies they operate with.

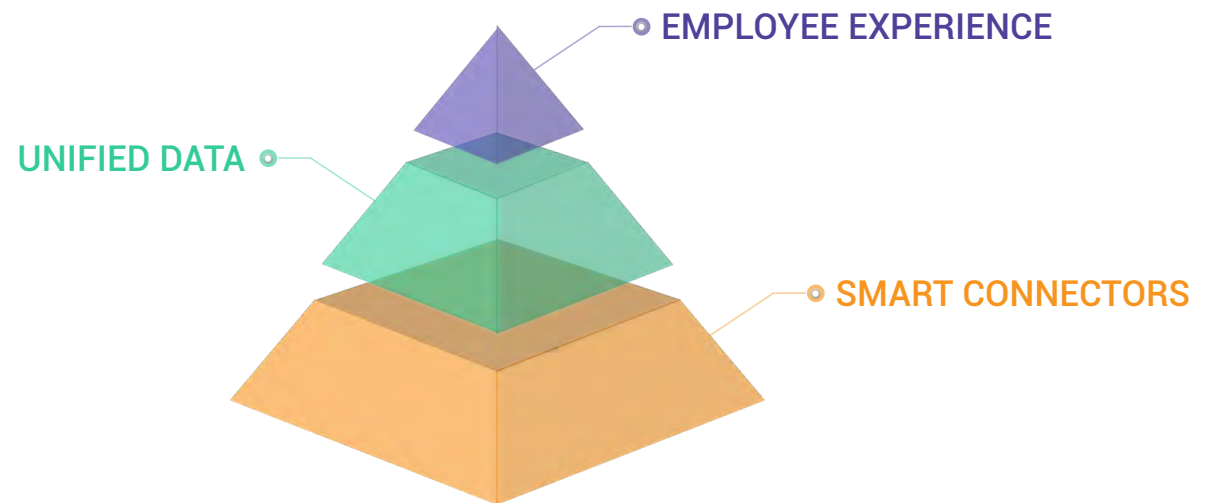
The **employee experience platform (EXP)** responds to this shift by integrating various HR solutions into a single platform. With a **single user interface**, organizations can continue to take advantage of specialized solutions that fit their specific needs while benefiting from a single HCM system of record. This model consolidates HR data from multiple applications. Thanks to this connectivity, an EXP can now offer features that **bring employees together** and engage them in the workplace. For example, this employee experience layer can include workflows, chatbots, notifications and alerts, means of collaboration and feedback sharing.

\* <https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/3994171/summary-translation-the-future-of-cloud-hcm-suites>


## HR Application Framework vs. Employee Experience Platform

Although the last two concepts we have just discussed seem to be interchangeable, there is a slight difference that must be noted.

The difference can best be explained using the example of the PeopleSpheres model. This is a solution that follows the HR application framework by presenting **three key layers**: smart-connectors which integrate multiple applications into a single platform, **a unified database** which stores the data from all integrated applications and finally the **employee experience platform** which provides employees with usability of each integrated application in an enhanced manner.



The employee experience can be considered to be **the top layer of an HR application framework**. It essentially manifests the idea of an HR application framework through integration technology and ensures that the employee experience is improved.

A background network diagram consisting of interconnected nodes and lines, some solid and some dashed, in a light gray color. The nodes are represented by small circles, and the lines form a complex web of connections.

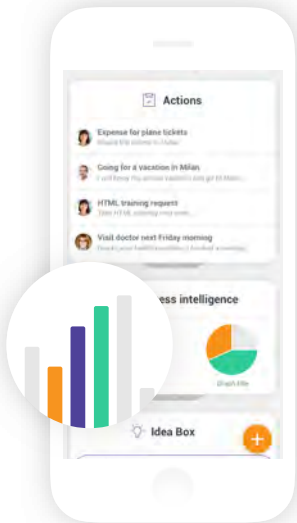
# Key Aspects of an Employee Experience Platform

Now that you know how HCM suites have evolved over the years and where the future of HR technology is going, let's take a deeper dive into the EXP. As we stated previously, its main purpose is to create harmony in the currently dispersed HR ecosystem and provide a more positive employee experience. How does the EXP aim to achieve this? There are several aspects that together to enable organizations and employees alike to face the current challenges of the workplace.

## 01 | EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

Change is not always received well by all employees. With more options available in terms of HR solutions and the increase of HR technology adoption, it is important that **change management** is well structured within an organization. However, the solution itself must be developed with this in mind. Employee assistance resources such as **learning materials, chatbots and automated HR requests** help guide employees through a new system. Whether your organization is adding new tools to the ecosystem or you are onboarding new team members in the company, these features can go a long way in getting employees familiar with your chosen technology.

Chatbots are becoming increasingly popular among HR software providers. The goal is to overcome the challenge of an increasingly remote and digital workplace. Chatbots allow HR professionals to **extend their knowledge, expertise and support beyond normal work hours**. It's an automated way to respond to employee needs without having to constantly (and instantly) respond to emails and phone calls. This helps shift the role of HR from an administrative one to a **strategic and humancentric one**.



## 02 | MOBILE FRIENDLY

We live in a **mobile-first era**. Employees and their managers are always on the go. From remote work to service-sector employees, the traditional 9 to 5 office job is becoming rare. Therefore, employees need to be able to take their HR tools with them wherever they are. In terms of employee engagement, this also gives them a channel to **stay connected** to important work-related information and company news. Therefore, **designing for mobile** and evaluating options with **mobile capabilities** in crucial for the future of HR technology investments.

## 03 | PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The employee experience platform gives employees control over their career **progression and professional development**. By integrating performance management, learning management systems and internal recruiting into a single platform, employees can more easily take control of their own career path. At the same time, providing training and development opportunities is made easier and tracking progression and skill development across the organization becomes more efficient for HR.

The professional growth aspect of the employee experience approach is a muchneeded **response to workplace transitions**. As many workers make career moves and transition to new roles, professional growth has become a significant driver in terms of **employee satisfaction and well-being**. Technology can support the growth of employees, motivate them to stay in their new positions and increase their productivity.

## 04 | EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

The concept of employee empowerment has extended beyond the human resources department. Quality management standards have also come to recognize employee empowerment as a vital principle to **demonstrate effective leadership** within an organization. Many quality management standards require leaders to establish working conditions that **support engagement and collective commitment** to the growth of the business. This includes contributing to the achievement of business's objectives and taking corrective actions to improve current business practices. The connectivity of employee experience platforms allows organizations to integrate the tools they need to **give employees a voice** and give management teams the tools to motivate and recognize employee contributions and strengths. For example, conducting feedback surveys or providing a platform for employee suggestions can **foster an engaged culture**. Furthermore, **employee self service** features allow employees to be self-reliant when it comes to administrative tasks. Employees feel more confident and motivated when they can take control of their work life.



# Business Outcomes

Investing in HR software for your company is more than just following a trend. You should be able to expect a **return on investment (ROI)** in terms of business outcomes as well.

## BUSINESS OUTCOMES OF AN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE PLATFORM



Reduce  
Labor Costs



Increase Employee  
Productivity



Attract and Retain  
Top Talent

Here we discuss just a few ways you can leverage technology and start seeing growth in your organization.



## 01 | ATTRACT AND RETAIN TOP TALENT

In addition to **fostering communication and employee engagement** through HR technology, being able to continuously improve HR processes through **automation and analytics** are some of the perks of investing in HR technology. However, the real results are measured by the business outcomes. By attracting and retaining top talent you **reduce the costs of employee turnover** such as recruiting, and training efforts made by the HR staff.

Using technology can **streamline and facilitate the recruiting process** and enable employers to put their best foot forward when it comes to their recruiting efforts and employer branding. Not only does a positive recruiting experience attract more and better-quality candidates, being able to concretely measure the results of your recruiting efforts through solid metrics enables HR managers to make better decisions and improve certain HR processes such as recruiting and beyond.

## 02 | REDUCE LABOR COST

Purchasing new HR software can be a big investment. However, it is important to carefully consider the return on this investment. There are many ways that these solutions can reduce costs. In fact, a 2020 PwC HR Technology survey showed that 35% of managers see the cloud as a way to reduce costs. From **making processes easier and more efficient** to **reducing employee turnover costs**, there are multiple areas of human resource management that can be optimized and drive a significant ROI.

One of the biggest costs that employers are looking to reduce is labor costs. Depending on the industry, this can sometimes be a **company's largest cost** which needs to be managed very carefully. With the use of workforce management software, which includes scheduling tools and time and attendance modules, labor costs can be monitored and kept under control. For example, with the use of **dashboards and predictive analytics**, managers can better schedule and adjust staffing levels based on operational needs. They can also keep track of **unintended or unplanned overtime**. With a software in place, it is much easier to trace unwanted labor costs to the source such as **absenteeism or recruiting needs**. Managers can more quickly address problems and mitigate costs as a result.

## 03 | INCREASE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

With the remote work culture becoming more prevalent, **productivity is at the center of attention** when it comes to managing teams and keeping up operations. Therefore, companies are turning towards technology as an asset and critical tool in their daily lives. Employee productivity is one of the main benefits of using HR software. It allows users to complete work faster and sometimes even **automate certain tasks**. It also allows HR teams to measure their own productivity levels as well as their employees in order to identify what needs improvement. In a 2020 PwC HR Technology survey, about 44% of talent managers indicated that they look to cloud solutions to increase efficiency and productivity.\*


As software vendors become more conscious of the employee experience in the development of new solutions, HR software will become more and more integral in keeping up with the changing workplace. HR solutions can foster employee engagement and help companies **understand what motivates employees**.

44%

of talent managers indicated that they look to cloud solutions to **increase efficiency and productivity**

Managers can as a result better manage their teams and produce better business outcomes.

\* <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/workforce-of-the-future/library/hr-tech-survey.html>

A background network diagram consisting of various nodes (circles) connected by solid and dashed lines, representing a complex web of connections.

# **Collaborating with your IT department**

While the HR team is usually the main user and owner of HR software that is adopted by the company, they should not be working in a vacuum when it comes to choosing, implementing and managing their HRIS. At the same time, it cannot be the sole responsibility of an IT department to implement and manage HR solutions. Essentially, they need to work hand-in-hand in order to **successfully implement a new HR solution**. A Gartner 2019 Artificial Intelligence survey indicated that 41% of organizations attribute the success of their HR software to a close collaboration between IT and HR.

41%

of talent managers indicated that they look to cloud solutions to **increase efficiency and productivity**

Gartner, 2019

At first glance, HR and IT seem to be completely opposite support functions. HR is people oriented while IT is stereotypically the introverted computer geek. How can these two collaborate on a project? There are a few **key moments in the process** of adopting new HR technology into the organization to make the process more effective.

- ▶▶ Identify the common goal between both departments. Normally, both HR and IT have the goal of **delivering the optimal employee experience** throughout the organization. Technology can be the driving force behind creating and maintaining a positive experience for all employees, especially in the era of remote work. Without technology, employees can't be seen or heard, and HR cannot effectively engage with employees.
- ▶▶ In the initial research stage of the project, ensure that all stakeholders contribute and state the **most important criteria** for their team. For example, HR may be focused on administering payroll, recruiting and onboarding processes while the IT department is more concerned about data security and installing any necessary hardware such as timeclocks. When the priorities of both sides are taken into account in the initial research stage, all aspects of the employee experience can be made positive, and the **transition to a new system can become smoother**.

- ▶ ▶ Leverage **employee feedback**. The way HR and IT interact with employees is different due to the nature of the jobs they carry out and services they provide to employees. As a result, the feedback they hear and collect from employees is different. When the **insights from both sides are combined**, the implementation of a new HR software can be done in a more effective way. A way that is more conducive to improving the employee experience.
- ▶ ▶ **Combined expertise of HR and IT teams** can go a long way in the implementation process. You may not necessarily have a tech savvy HR professional on your team. Therefore, the IT department can step in and manage implementation tasks such as data migration, hardware installation and permission configurations. At the same time, HR professionals have the expertise in how HR processes are managed in the company as well as laws and regulations pertaining to employment and payroll.
- ▶ ▶ **Change management** is a crucial part of any implementation project which can often be forgotten or ignored. However, it can be made more effective when HR and IT collaborate. Implementing a new software is great. But if employees don't have the hardware and equipment to use it and lack the training to properly navigate the system, the outcomes of adopting the new technology will most likely not live up to expectations. Furthermore, management teams will not get the ROI they want. For this reason, HR and IT cannot work separately to implement new technology but should find a way to **work closely together as advocates of change**.



## **SUMMARY :** The HR Application Framework & EXP

With new challenges that emerge come new solutions to manage them. Combined with the need to continuously improve current operations, the HR software market has evolved over the years and is expected to adapt to the future of the workplace. The rapid adoption of HR technology is a reflection of this very notion. No matter what your HR digital strategy currently looks like, it's important to understand the main drivers of the HR technology market in order to shape your future digital HR strategy and turn your human capital into a competitive advantage for your organization.

## MAJOR DRIVERS

- ▶▶ The workforce transition is about shifting talent from one organization to another or transferring within the same organization. For HR professionals, this means a massive recruitment effort.
- ▶▶ Companies are now embracing big data to improve their HR initiatives in all aspects of the employee lifecycle.
- ▶▶ Communication has taken on a new meaning as we have turned to digital tools in order to create a digital workplace in the remote work era.
- ▶▶ The employee experience as well as specific business requirements must be taken into consideration when investing in workplace technologies.
- ▶▶ Large all-in-one systems lack the specialization required to give organizations a competitive edge they need in each HR function.
- ▶▶ The goal of the HR application framework is to close the functionality gap that currently exists among all-in-one solutions and dispersed best-of-breed solutions.
- ▶▶ Software vendors and HR professionals were once focused on how to streamline HR processes and make HR administration more efficient. As a result, the employee experience fell to the wayside. But now, it is becoming a priority once again.

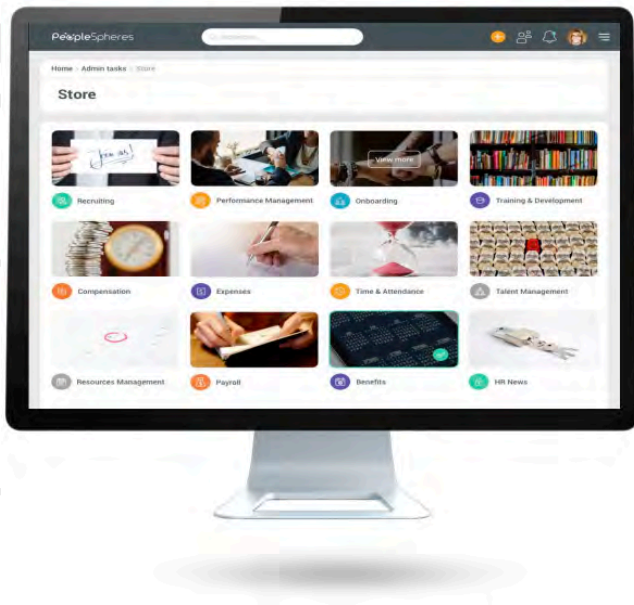
## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ ▶ Organizations are starting to take advantage of cloud-based tools that integrate systems and centralize HR data into a single data hub.
- ▶ ▶ What were once large payroll software vendors, are starting to adopt various HR modules in order to expand the functionalities of their solutions, evolving into end-to-end systems.
- ▶ ▶ The market is divided into two types of solutions: all-in-one solutions and best-of-breed applications. More likely than not, companies have adopted more than one solution into their organization whether it be all-in-one, bestof-breed or a combination of both.
- ▶ ▶ The HR application framework is a new way of structuring HR systems that uses an integration approach to give companies the flexibility to choose the tools that best fit their organization's specific requirements.
- ▶ ▶ With a single user interface and integration technology, organizations can continue to take advantage of specialized solutions that fit their specific needs while benefiting from a single HCM system of record.
- ▶ ▶ Key aspects of an employee experience platform (EXP) include employee assistance, a mobile friendly interface, professional growth and employee empowerment.
- ▶ ▶ Investing in HR software can yield improved business outcomes such as reduction in labor costs, increased employee productivity and attracting and retaining top talent.
- ▶ ▶ HR and IT departments need to work hand-in-hand in order to successfully implement a new HR solution.



# PeopleSpheres

PeopleSpheres is the first 100% adaptable and adjustable HRIS software in SaaS

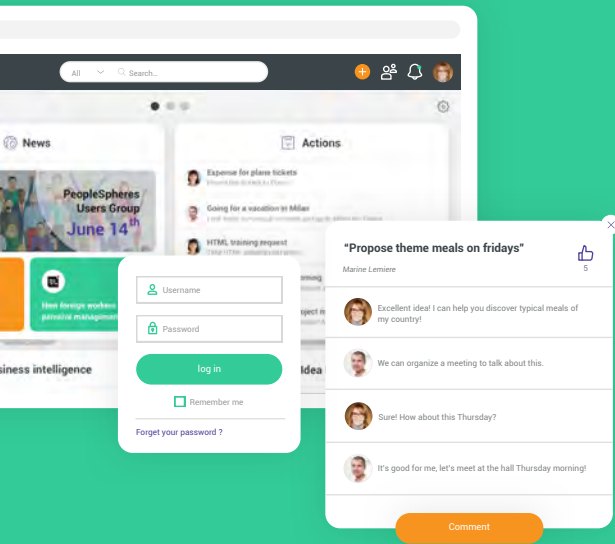


Composed of an HR core and the best HR software, our solution allows you to customize your HR portal according to the needs of your company and thus accelerate all your HR management

- 1.** **Connect** your existing HR software
- 2.** **Add** the HR modules of your choice
- 3.** **Manage** all your HR from a **single platform**

## An HR core with multiple features

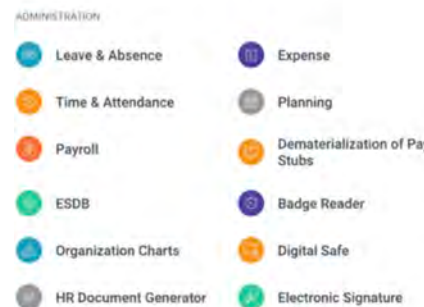
Benefit from a powerful platform which allows you to connect all your existing HR software, to synchronize all of your employees' data and provide a unique user experience.



- A unified user experience:
  - HR Portal
  - Unified profile
  - Notification Center
  - Cross-Modules actions
- **HR Cross-Modules reporting**
- Driving force of **Cross-Modules workflows**
- Marketplace for HR components (tools, services, content)

## Benefits for your HR management

From administrative management to talent management, choose the HR modules according to your needs among a wide choice.



- **Save time:** on our marketplace, choose the best software and ready-to-use connectors.
- **Have a single HR portal** with all the solutions chosen.
- **Adopt a flexible solution:** you can add or replace HR modules at any time.
- **Connect your software:** take advantage of standardized interoperability thanks to a dedicated "smart connector".