



# Book Web-Based Human Resources

## The Technologies and Trends That Are Transforming HR

Alfred J. Walker  
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### Recommendation

Editor Alfred J. Walker briefly introduces the new Web-based technologies that are enabling human resource (HR) managers to operate more effectively. He then offers a series of 17 articles by different authors covering these new approaches. The topics covered include Web-based employee self-service, delivering employee benefits over the Web, creating an HR service center, outsourcing and using the Web for a variety of services, including recruiting, staffing, compensation planning, employee development and knowledge management. This specialized book will primarily interest HR professionals, top executives and information technology professionals involved in setting up HR information systems. Since HR professionals are attuned to human failings, *BooksInShort* trusts they will forgive the book's occasional information overlaps - hard to avoid with a collection of articles by different authors - and frequently return to this solid and specifically useful book.

### Take-Aways

- New browser-based human resource (HR) portal technologies are changing the way HR professionals manage human resources.
- Web-based HR technologies can handle benefits, compensation, recruitment, staffing, performance management and many other HR functions.
- These new technologies are linked through an HR data mart and HR applications.
- Web-based technologies enable you to set up an HR system within weeks or months.
- The core of the system is a Web-enabled HR portal and self-service network.
- Self-service applications give managers and employees direct access to the database and other human-resource systems.
- Operating an effective Web-based HR system requires specialists with technological expertise.
- HRIS systems and databases coordinate all transactions, keep records and handle applications.
- You can use a centralized, Web-based service center to handle inquiries and customer transactions, and to resolve routine problems.
- Develop a master plan to select your Internet and computer-based products.

# Summary

## HR.com

Today's new browser-based human resource (HR) portal technology is changing the way HR professionals manage human resources.

Information sharing is only part of this technological revolution. Now you can use point-and-click technology to place text, data and video on the Web, where it can be edited, stored, retrieved and shared. Given this direct access to information, managers and employees can make better, faster decisions about a variety of employment issues, such as hiring, retention, employee development and compensation. Often, employees can access information they need without unnecessary paperwork and without additional help from the HR department.

“HR plans and programs need to be streamlined, tailored and packaged to meet the specific needs of each employee, similar in concept to the customer-driven model that businesses have adopted.”

Depending on your needs, you can set up this system as an Intranet within your company, as an extranet with other companies or on the Internet, permitting even broader access. You can use passwords, encryption and firewalls to limit access to designated users.

These new HR technologies consist of a number of components linked through an HR data mart and HR applications. HR functions that can be linked include an HR service center, HR store, employee and manager self-service, distance learning programs, links with vendors and suppliers, access to internal and external data sources, a knowledge-management system and a Web-based personal portal that can be customized for different employees and managers.

“Properly instituted, knowledge management allows practitioners to find the best research materials, supporting documents, work products and historical data available, not just within the organization, but in the world beyond as well.” [Jack Borbely and Stephen J. Gould]

Today, new Web-based technologies make setting up HR systems fast - a matter of weeks or months, not years. Web and HR portal technology is far more advanced, and the Web has been effectively integrated into a variety of HR applications, such as self-service systems and service centers. Moreover, the Web is a good place to advertise jobs, collect resumes and facilitate transactions involving employees and managers.

## The HR Portal

As HR becomes more complex, with multiple benefit plans, salary programs and career opportunities, HR professionals face an overwhelming amount of information. With the Web, employees can often obtain and process some of the information they need on their own. The Web can also help provide individualized HR plans and programs.

“The concept of HR self-service has become the goal of most Web-enabled HR systems.”

Thus, in planning and setting up your company's HR department, work toward a customer-driven model that responds to individual interests and needs. If you use a self-service system, employees can access services more quickly for themselves across a broad range of plans and programs. These can include health and welfare plans, pension and investment plans, compensation plans, performance appraisals, training and education, employee communication, employee and management development, labor relations, safety and environmental health planning, and more. Virtually everything you do in HR now can be offered more effectively through these Web technologies.

“The reason Web and HR portal technology is seeing a dramatic advance is not because of the technology itself, but because the Web has been effectively integrated with self-service, HR service centers and other Web applications.”

The core of the system is a Web-enabled HR portal and self-service network, which gives personnel access to the HR information

database and other systems. Within this system, the new roles for the HR staff include:

- Strategic partnering with others in the organization from top managers to local divisions.
- Staffing centers of expertise, either centrally or locally within the organization.
- Administering service centers where HR is centralized.

“At the center of the interaction with technology are the Web-enabled HR portal and self-service network, which provide access to the Human Resources information database system and to other major internal and external systems.”

Besides the usual HR staffers, you'll also need HR specialists who can perform a number of technological roles. These include:

- A knowledge-based specialist to build and maintain policies, practices and procedures.
- An overall HR information manager to handle access, use and data privacy.
- Service center technologists to supply data to the shared services units.
- Enterprise data mining and data mart personnel to create and manage HR information.

## **The Web Toolbox**

Whatever kind of human resources technology you are using, keep several objectives in mind:

- Pursue strategic alignment to support the goals of your company.
- Gain business intelligence that lets you give users relevant information.
- Seek efficiency and effectiveness so HR employees provide more service for less cost.

“The HRIS System is the primary transaction processor, editor, record-keeper and functional applications system which lies at the heart of all computerized HR work. It maintains employee, organizational and HR plan data sufficient to support most, if not all, of the HR functions, depending on the modules installed.”

To these ends, streamline the work people are doing before you put the technology in place. To do so, categorize HR work into a set of processes to be reviewed by reengineering teams, customers and users. Then, divide them further into sub-processes. Finally, recombine these to create a new set of processes outlining how HR staffers should work in the future.

“HR self-service involves the use of interactive technology by employees and managers to obtain information, conduct transactions and essentially 'shortcut' processes that previously required multiple steps, paperwork, the involvement of HR staffers and all the delays such processes are heir to.” [Robert Zampetti and Lynn Adamson]

### **Technologies you can use in setting up an HR portal and self-service include:**

- Workflow - This lets users access employee records or enter data on their own computer terminals and then pass it on to the next appropriate person for review or action. It's like e-mail with a database and built-in intelligence.
- Manager self-service - This lets line managers view and change employee records, access policies and procedures, and gain personnel information. They can rate employees, create budgets or enroll employees in training courses.
- Employee self-service - This lets employees conduct such self-managed activities as changing their benefits program, choosing training programs, examining job postings and engaging in retirement planning.
- Interactive voice response (IVR) - This enables managers or employees to make many changes to benefits, payroll, job postings or other information using the push-buttons on a telephone, which is a simpler, more limited technology, but less expensive.
- HR service centers - You can use this centralized set-up to handle inquiries and customer transactions, and to resolve routine problems. The operator can easily access a caller's records using computer telephone interface (CTI) technology and can use scripted questions to respond quickly on the phone, by fax or by e-mail.
- HRIS systems and databases - This is the core technology that coordinates all transactions, keeps records and handles applications. It holds all the employee, organizational and HR plan data necessary for all HR functions.
- HR stand-alone (bolt-on applications) - Select the add-on programs that are most suitable for your HR set-up including, applicant tracking, success planning, 360 degree assessments and appraisal systems.

- Data marts, warehouses, and OLAP - This refers to information from a single source (mart) or collections of data from mixed sources, such as a mix of financial data and information about production, suppliers and employees. The Online Analytical Process (OLAP) programs are used to bring data to the end users.

“Today, virtually every manager in an organization can access Intranet Web sites capable of providing both the information and transactional or process capabilities to manage the full range of HR programs.” [Lynn Adamson and Robert Zampetti]

Develop a master plan to help you choose among the thousands of Internet and computer-based products, and to create connectivity among those you choose. This way you will avoid having duplicate databases, and overlapping functions and service offerings. Your goal is to establish a comprehensive HR technology strategy.

“Developing metrics for the entire Web site and for specific applications is an important part of the planning process. Web site metrics connect planning and performance.” [Joanne Dietch]

As part of this goal, set up Web-based self-service applications for both managers and employees. Self-service applications for employees can include HR communications, benefits information, personnel data updates and job postings. The managers’ self-service can include data on personnel changes, salary actions and job requisitions. These applications provide everyone with information and a transactional platform for inputting data or making choices about possible options for action.

“Your organization’s employment Web site can uniformly describe what you need, and can collect and process applications from thousands of applicants at once.” [David Cohen]

With this approach, you can improve the delivery of HR services, speed up workflow, reduce administrative costs and increase managers’ access to important data. Managers can also use Web services for improved performance management, recruitment and staffing, time and attendance records, and training and development programs.

## **Using HR Technologies for Other Applications**

You also can use these HR technologies more specifically for Web-delivered or Web-based employee benefits, recruiting and staffing, performance management, compensation planning, technology and employee development, and knowledge management. Focus on using the Web to facilitate providing information and to enable people to communicate across organizational boundaries. Approach each function in a targeted, specific way:

- Employee benefits - Pay attention to planning, metrics, information presentation, knowledge creation, content management, access issues and technology, and empowerment implications. Plan the benefits you want to offer employees and determine how to design your site to offer these alternatives. Develop a metrics system to connect planning with performance, such as measuring how many users have enrolled each new plan.
- Recruiting and staffing - Analyze your workforce and think about what talent your company needs. Consider how to find and select the right people, as well as how to hire, deploy and retain people. The Web can help you advertise a position and make it easy for people to apply. You can have applicants answer preliminary questions, schedule tests and even carry out online skills assessments.
- Performance management - Use the Web for online performance appraisal forms, for getting employee feedback, for self-paced learning programs and for individual scorecards.
- Compensation plans - Provide information about all the components of both fixed and variable compensation plans. You can use a Web-based program for planning and budgeting, much as you would use a spreadsheet on your computer. By feeding in different numbers, you can experiment with different possible outcomes - and you can allow employees to access these programs to make their own choices among selected options.
- Knowledge management - Capture, publish, personalize and distribute information to your employees and managers, whether you want to facilitate individual learning, teamwork, measurements, assessments or other activities.
- Employee development - You can provide classroom training, coaching and mentoring, on-the-job training, communities of practice and organization-wide learning communities.

Once you recognize these possibilities, you can create a business case for setting up a Web-based HR initiative and design a

framework for transforming your HR function to use the Web. Then, determine your strategy and the Web architecture you will use, so you can select workflow software for your system. Decide if you want to create your own HR service center and if so, take steps to set up the necessary technologies and hire and train the staff. You can also outsource many of your HR functions to an Applications Service Provider (ASP) or Managed Solutions Provider. That way, you can internalize various functions when you are ready, and your ASP can help you in plan what to do in-house and what to outsource.

## About the Author

**Alfred J. Walker** is a senior fellow at Towers Perrin, one of the world’s largest human resources consulting firms. Walker is the global thought leader and leading technologist within the human resource administration group in the organization’s Technology Solutions practice. He specializes in the application of technology to HR and management functions. He has written more than 30 articles on HR-related topics and serves on the editorial board of several leading HR journals.

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