

HR - Yes There is an App for that!

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For human resource (HR) professionals and people in the business of benefits, the influence of mobile apps on employee communications, retention and morale is becoming as significant as the internet has become on consumer purchasing behavior. Many employers already use mobile apps to simplify functions such as payroll, time tracking, recruiting, talent management, and training. Newfound mobility and each new advance in human resource management systems (HRMS) are quickly making outsourcing these

functions a thing of the past.

This dramatic market change has been going on for a few years now, and some of our own clients are using mobile apps for scheduling purposes, allowing their employees to request time off or search and sign up for open shifts using their personal phones. So, employee self-service and online management approvals are nothing new. “The technology from the major HR and payroll vendors has been around for a while,” states Jennifer Reed of the ProSential Group in Dallas, TX, “but many Americans don’t log into a computer at work every day. However, they do carry mobile phones and tablets and know how to use them.” I believe the ubiquitous smartphone and the increasingly common use of mobile apps in HR functions make it clear that it's time to go mobile. Our experience at EmSpring has shown me that it’s far easier to adopt and deploy than one might think.

Mobile HR apps benefit employers and employees. Common HR recruitment functions that can be accomplished on your phone, iPad or other tablet computer include approving job requisitions, reviewing resumes, scheduling interviews,

even evaluating candidates as you conduct the interview. You have access to all the information regarding the job requirements at your fingertips. You can review the applicant’s resume, see other manager’s notes regarding the candidate and post your hiring decision immediately. In short, mobile applications accelerate the onboarding workflow.

Employee management wins as well. For instance, performance reviews, instead of a static, once annual event, becomes an ongoing, year round process with managers providing feedback in real time. Functions often stuck in managers’ email boxes gain fluidity. Time off requests can be reviewed and time cards can be edited and approved from anywhere. Goal tracking is easier with mobile applications that measure progress against stated HR goals and objectives. Promotions, hires, transfers and evaluations are tracked. Workforce trends can be graphed and reported on your tablet. Even management meetings become more manageable, held remotely with no one actually at the office logging on to their computer, yet with all information accessible to attendees.

For employees, the benefits are just

as real. In addition to simplifying schedule adjustment requests and reviews, they can view W-2s, benefit elections, Summary Plan Descriptions and even required HR training videos from any location. For businesses with a dispersed work force, this kind of flexibility is essential. Imagine receiving employee expense reimbursement requests in real time, with receipts attached (via picture taken with their phone). Your sales force uploads reports and records immediately. All activities that help assure that management and employees are “on the same page.”

Mobile HR improves HR self-service. Much like consumers use apps for retail and banking transactions, they also increasingly use them in their daily work life. Employees can use mobile HR apps to check health benefit balances, review claims, monitor 401(k) transactions and balances – all without being tied to a desktop computer. Employees already expect relevant information about their compensation packages and benefits to be readily available. It’s natural to assume they’ll look to their mobile devices first – managing schedules and making benefit comparison and enrollment decisions just as they do when shopping online. We’ve found they appreciate that convenience, plus, studies show that mobility engages employees. Read-only employee portals are no longer viable solutions. To prove the point, consultants often advise taking down static benefit websites and intranets as relics of the past that reflect poorly on organizations attempting to attract a younger and increasingly tech savvy workforce.

Look for flexibility in mobile HR. Mobile HR is like putting your HR

department handily in your employee’s pocket, easily accessible. It provides an excellent point of engagement and the convenience is astonishing. “The mobile HR tipping point came when technology vendors began removing compatibility barriers by developing simple, single-purpose apps with cross-browser and cross-device compatibility,” states Joe Markland of HRT Advisors, Boston, MA. Markland, whose firm provides consulting advice and technology services for human resource departments across the country goes on to say that “employees are faced with too much information from which to make benefits decisions. Mobile apps that are focused, secure, branded to the employer and user-friendly make life easier for everyone. And they are now readily available.”

There are many proprietary apps developed and distributed by insurers, administration firms and even brokers and advisors who assist HR professionals and employees using their services. From Assurant Benefits to AFLAC – they all have apps for their own policies. Yet the SaaS (software as a service) vendors take the prize for truly integrated platforms that allow the employer to own the environment for their workforce, and the capabilities appear endless. ADP, bswift, Paychex, StrateX, Xtensia, Ultimate, and other excellent vendors offer mobile apps as part of their platforms. Recently, a CFO for a 600 employee organization asked on LinkedIn for HRMS vendor recommendations and received 103 unique responses. The trick is to find the right one to meet your objectives while at the same time gaining future flexibility and immediate return on investment. Fortunately, we are finding

matches for clients from small CPA firms to large manufacturers and agricultural employers with widely varied workforces. Although, ADP still rules this market space with their latest real time payroll service combined with Workforce Now features, there really are many viable vendors. For our own employee benefits advisory and employer services firm, we selected Xtensia HR from Stratex and find it meets our needs perfectly.

Choose a solution vs. a system. In going mobile, the first concern has to be security. Employee information must be protected. The second factor is flexibility. If your workforce is not equipped with iPads, tablets or smart phones, or is technology shy, the benefit may not be apparent. However, your HR department will still benefit from mobile technology regardless of workforce buy-in. One goal of going mobile with HR is to drive costs down, and management’s use of mobile HR will certainly do that. The other achievable goals of going mobile include improved decision making with better and timelier information and increased employee retention and productivity. So, before you start down the path of mobile HR, consider two things:

1. Don’t buy a system; buy a solution to a problem. Staying ahead of the technology wars isn’t feasible, so go with your budget and buy a platform you can grow into.
2. Assure the service behind the solution is more than a salesperson and a toll free number. Nothing is more frustrating than having a bike built for you that you and your employees don’t

know how to ride and can't get hands-on help to learn.

We're helping clients every day determine the best technology for their employees and organization. Mobile HR is here and is a valuable tool. It's convenient, it's here and it works.

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