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Case Study on Europ Assistance and HR.net

Introduction

Europ Assistance provides travel, motor, home and health assistance services on a 24-hour, 365-day basis in more than 200 countries throughout the world.

The company's UK and Ireland subsidiary employs more than 400 people across three locations, on average handling a claim every two minutes.

The Challenge

The nature of the company's business involves a variety of staff contracts - full time, shift workers and those on annual hours – creating a number of distinct HR management challenges.

The previous HR system, whilst adequate, placed much of the administrative burden on HR. Most processes were paper based, creating inefficiencies and delays, as well as increasing the possibility of errors.

Tom Randle, Director of Human Resources, explains, "Our previous system was simply a standalone database, only accessible by the HR staff. It performed the essential tasks but offered no interactivity with our employees.

Also, because data was held in a variety of locations, and maintained by staff on an individual basis, we were sometimes unable to produce management reports quickly and with accuracy."

The Solution

Having identified the need for change the company was introduced to HR.net by its software consultant, who undertook an evaluation of the new system.



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As a web based system, HR.net can be accessed at any time, from any location. Employees can make holiday requests, change personal details and carry out other transactions online without the need for assistance from HR. This flexibility was one of the key benefits identified by Europ Assistance.

"Whilst many other products could provide a great deal of functionality the price meant it was difficult to justify," said Tom Randle. "The business case for HR.net was convincing, and we made the decision to go ahead with the implementation."

Implementation

In total the roll out took place over approximately three months, with the deployment handled in stages across each department. This had the advantage of highlighting any teething issues and allowing users to provide valuable feedback, used to assist with the subsequent installations.

Tom Randle outlined the process, "Adapting HR.net's standard configuration to meet our specific requirements was a relatively straightforward task, and we were able to complete the implementation within the agreed timescales. Since completion, we have been able to operate the system without a great deal of ongoing support."

The web-based architecture of HR.net made the fact that it needed to be implemented across three offices, two in England and one in Ireland, relatively simple.

The system can also be easily configured to allow different access privileges to different employees with high levels of security. For example, senior management may be able to view salary details across the entire business, whilst departmental heads would only have access to the information regarding the staff within their department.

Employees enter the system via a dedicated home page, giving them access to their individual account, where they can make real-time changes to details such as address, bank details, etc.

This page also acts as a portal for the distribution of company news and other announcements, which has proven particularly useful, replacing the need for an internal newsletter. As with all aspects of the system, the content of the home page can be easily edited by authorised staff.



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Benefits

Efficiency gains were achieved immediately after implementation, notably the fact that HR has been freed from many repetitive tasks. Transactions are quickly handled, and employees receive rapid responses that make them feel more involved in the process.

Management have also benefited from improved reporting and greater access to management data, as well as the ability to implement rapid changes to many HR processes.

One example that illustrates the advantages of HR.net's configurability can be seen in the way in which the company is able to deal with holiday entitlements. Many staff work an annual hours basis, for instance working 1,200 hours across the year, but split into variable amounts; perhaps 37 hours one week and 20 the next. This made it complicated to calculate their current holiday entitlement on an ongoing basis. With HR.net this is now handled automatically.

Employee reaction to the new system has been positive, with the look and feel of the web based front end encouraging user involvement. The self-service nature of the system has reduced errors and improved response times. Better access to information has made a valuable contribution to efficiency, and internal communication has certainly improved.

Future Plans

Although HR.net has produced immediate and measurable benefits, Tom Randle acknowledges that the system can go further, with scope to add more functionality and extend its reach to other areas of the business, such as fleet and asset management.

Speaking of future plans he said, "One aspect that we intend to build into HR.net is our appraisal process, allowing us to respond quickly to any issues highlighted during an individual's appraisal."



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The move from a conventional HR model to an interactive, real-time system has undoubtedly been a success for Europ Assistance.

By placing control of the processes into the hands of the users, HR.net has not only delivered an immediate return, but given the company a system that can evolve to serve the business and its employees long into the future.

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