

Dealing with a remote workforce: HR's need to leverage tech

✘ While HR technology has played a vital role in human resource department activities for quite some time, usage has soared during the COVID-19 pandemic as companies seek ways to dispense information, maintain connections, and perform business tasks. And with the odds pointing to many operations remaining virtual for the foreseeable future, organizations seem poised to continue looking for HR tech that meets their needs.

“As companies continue to grow their remote workforce, we are seeing a greater need for the right HR technology to increase employee experiences and productivity,” says Michael Roloson, founder of the HR consulting firm [PEO Focus](#). “Our clients now more than ever are looking for ways to reduce the administrative burden of their HR staff so that they can make a more meaningful impact on the company in other areas.”

ZoomInfo, which has been tracking the adoption of [technologies that help companies conduct business remotely](#), reports that “back office” business operations like confirmation signatures and running payroll increasingly have moved online as the pandemic persists. Usage of DocuSign and ADP, for example, grew 52 percent and 75 percent respectively from the end of May to the end of June.

In addition to such basics, however, Roloson notes that “companies are looking for more complete SaaS-based solutions that also incorporate interviewing solutions, hiring tracking, performance management, training modules, compliance modules and communications tools all wrapped in with their HR technology platform.” Along with inquiries about HR tech, his firm is receiving requests to train HR team members how to effectively use these tools.

Undoubtedly, companies today prize digital literacy. Areas in which HR professionals commonly leverage tech in the current climate include:

Hiring technology

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) play an important role in keeping a handle on talent. With the onslaught of resumes most companies currently receive for every position due to the high unemployment rate, staying on top of matters proves especially crucial. Using automated filters and predetermined criteria bring the most promising candidates to the forefront. Regardless of where they are working, HR staff can check who on the team has evaluated a candidate and if any actions have been taken.

With a good number of HR professionals facing limited days on site or restrictions as to who they may let in the building, interviewing proves challenging. Non-contact platforms such as Zoom have become a vital alternative by allowing employers and candidates an interactive space in which they can see and hear one another. To make virtual interviewing successful, HR reps need to know how to schedule, send links, operate mics and cameras, and assist candidates with technical glitches on their end.

Virtual onboarding

New employees fill out a great deal of paperwork. HR technology ensures new hires receive all the necessary forms and send them back to the appropriate person for processing. The company stays compliant and organized no matter where the new person is working.

Similarly, remote training allows getting up-to-speed quickly on job duties and company policies. Some organizations have been pleasantly surprised by the results.

“Since we have a lot of remote employees now, it just makes a lot more sense to record our onboarding sessions as videos instead of relying on meetings or in-person training,” says Tatyana Tyagun, HR Generalist at [Chanty](#). “For all of our new hires, we sat down and recorded onboarding videos which we uploaded to the cloud. New hires can just review these videos on their own terms instead of booking a call with us every time. This freed up lots of our time, and new hires ask fewer questions. The best part is we can reuse some videos for more than one position or if we need to hire for the same position again.”

Some places opt for virtual classrooms, which provide a similar vibe as learning in an in-person group. Another option is virtual shadowing in which HR pairs a new hire with an existing employee to sit in on calls, watch specific activities, or even eat lunch together via video conferencing.

Managing remote set-up

In conjunction with IT personnel, HR reps have been key to ensuring employees new and seasoned have what they need to maintain productivity – from instructions on how to log in to the correct charger for a company-issued Chromebook.

At [Captain Experiences](#), for example, the HR department has been helping with tech rollouts. “We have our tech specialists test out new tech and services to make sure they'll work well with our business and that they're secure, but HR is responsible for distributing that tech,” says CEO Jonathan Newar. “This can come in the form of equipment (we recently bought everyone better mic and webcam setups) and HR helped order and distribute these items. They also hold a vault for account information for new services including VPN, video conferencing, work portals, etc.”

Distributing and gathering information

During this unsettling time, companies want to keep in touch with workers as much as possible. HR tech keeps communication flowing. E-mail blasts provide everyone with updates, procedural changes, and COVID-related info on insurance and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). HR can send out surveys to assess well-being and identify ways to make improvements to remote operations. Reps may take an active role in dedicated Slack channels to promote engagement and workplace culture. They also may monitor mailboxes or other outlets designed for employees to confidentially report concerns or offer suggestions.

HR technology after COVID-19

While many HR leaders undoubtedly will be happy when they can resume in-person meetings, hands-on orientation, and the like, some are finding elements of remote procedures influencing how they might proceed even when on-site interaction returns.

“One area where technology has improved our HR department is employee offboarding,” says Amara Ukaigwe, CEO of [Book Learn Pass](#). “Prior to the pandemic, all exit interviews were conducted in person, and we often found that employees were not always forthcoming about their reasons for leaving the company. Since the shift to remote working, we now collect employee feedback through a series of questionnaires and surveys. We've

found employees are leaving more constructive reasons for their departure, and the platform we use allows us to dig into the data, helping us uncover any systematic problems contributing to higher staff turnover.”

What hasn't changed? HR reps are still the “people” people of the organization. HR technology can enhance how they go about their jobs, but the bottom line remains a commitment to building employer-employee bonds - regardless of either side's physical location.