# ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN GARMENT INDUSTRY FOR ENHANCEMENT THE EFFICIENCY OF HR MANAGEMENT: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

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## Abstract

Complying with ever changing market needs which affect organization's performance is a core human resource function. To enhancement the efficiency of the organization, HR professionals need to realize just how information technology can be useful. This paper focuses on the role of technology in the HR functions and identifies the impacts of technology on HRM as opportunities & challenges and a number of issues on the development & implementation of information technology systems within HRM.

**Keywords:** HRM, Enhancement, Information Technology, Efficiency.

## Introduction

The increasing importance of technology - especially information technology (IT) - has had a profound impact on how human resources programs and services are delivered in today's workplace. HR practitioners are adding a new technology-focused, dimension to their more traditional roles as HR experts, business partners, employee advocates, change agents, and human resources management leaders. Today's HR professional must be able to harness the new and evolving technologies in order to perform their jobs to a satisfactory level and to be able to do it at all in the future. Needing to more than just understand their technology needs, HR leaders must also determine their end goals so they can ask for the proper tools in their efforts to contribute to the business growth.

## The factors driving changes in HR

* External market change
* Internal factors
* Employee perceptions
* Corporate branding
* Legal issues & compliances
* Quick data flow & privacy

## Role of Technology in HRM

In view of the fact that HRM centers on an organization's unique human and "inimitable" component, whereas technology is more standard and replicable, incorporating technology into HRM introduces some interesting and relevant concerns for practitioners. For example, to what extent is it productive to invest in technology relative to investments in employee development, mentoring, or career management? Or can technology actually support or accelerate management? Or can technology actually support or accelerate positive outcomes in these areas? Does success depend less on how firms manage their technology than on how they manage their human assets?

## Top HR Technologies

The technologies making the biggest impact in the HR market at present are:

❖ Workflow technologies
❖ Vendor management systems
❖ E-recruitment software
❖ Internal mobility software

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- ❖ Performance and appraisal management software
- ❖ Career planning software
- ❖ Package review software
- ❖ Executives and key people management software
- ❖ Employee self service
- ❖ Applicant tracking systems
- ❖ Succession planning software
- ❖ Personal development software
- ❖ Hiring management systems
- ❖ Training and development through e-learning

## The Impact of Technology in Garment Industry

The technology is impacting the work of HR in a number of ways - automation of tasks, elimination of tasks, etc. At the federal level, new initiatives like human capital management, e-government and workforce management are redefining HR and the roles of HR practitioners. To meet these challenges, HR organizations are using a variety of workforce management options. They are adding IT experts to their staffs, helping their staffs gain HRIT skills and competencies through training and on-the job experience or contracting out their technology-based projects and work. Whatever option they exercise, HR organizations must have a long-term strategy to ensure they have an HR workforce that is consistently technology competent.

More importantly, by absorbing latest technology, HR can project a forward looking image which will help it earn the respect of skeptical colleagues. Some of these technologies are:-

### a. Application Service Providers (ASPS)

As the web is becoming more reliable, organizations are increasingly changing to ASPs to host software as well as to manage it from remote computers. Through this technology, many outsourcing companies can avoid up front capital costs associated with buying systems when managed Personal Data Assistants well there is no performance loss. Apart from this, these ASPs are aware of the security concerns of their clients and have taken effective steps to allay such fears. Most major HR software products including SAP, Peoplesoft, Infinium and interlynx are available through ASPs.

### b. Bluetooth Technology

Bluetooth - a wireless synchronization technology invented by cellular phone manufacturer Ericsson. Imagine carrying your mobile phone into office and while it is sitting in your pocket, having it automatically exchange data with your Personal Data Assistants (PDA) and desktop PC or setting your mobile phone down next to your PDA and checking e-mails without cords or wires. That is the goal of Bluetooth, which works automatically within a certain radius, is relatively inexpensive and provides users with a simple way to manage all their devices.

### c. Web Portals

Web portals offer numerous advantages in learning, business process support and employee self-service opportunities. The web has revolutionized the way HR services are offered to employees. Internet and Intranet enabled HR services has facilitated data capture and retrieval and allowed HR executives to concentrate more an HR strategy and employee well being.

### d. The Mobile Web

As PDAs and digital phones become a fixture in corporate world, the next step in the evolution of devices is wireless access to news, personal information and corporate data. In USA progressive organizations are already offering HR services through hand held Palmtops.

### e. Internet Network Monitoring

The media is flooded with articles on internet security and internet misuse. Many organizations are installing sophisticated software to track down web sites an employee is accessing. The HR Manager has to formulate an E-Policy and give it widespread publicity. There are issues related to discipline, corporate ethics that might come up due to increased use of internet and networking technology. The HR Manager has a crucial role to play in formulating and implementing internet policy.

### f. Benefiting from Online Enrolment

In addition to traditional Employee self-service (ESS) solutions, using an intranet or the Internet to distribute and collect benefits enrolment information is rapidly gaining acceptance as a new technology in HR/payroll community. Via a common Web browser, employees are guided through the process of selecting benefits and entering required information into Web-enabled enrolment forms. The HR/payroll department defines eligibility criteria, so employees are presented with only the benefits and plan options for which they are eligible. Once employee enters data into the online enrolment technology, it is immediately available to HR/payroll for review and approval. After approval, the data from the enrolment system automatically updates the HRMS system, eliminating duplicate data entry.

## Technical and Behavioral Dimension of Technology in HRM

The technical and behavioral part of the influence of technology in HRM can be analyzed through the training and competencies requirement of an organization. A critical issue in training efforts among technologically focused organizations is the task of achieving a balance between a concern for mastery of mechanical facets of automation on one hand and for command of traditional "people issues" on the other. Firms that provide their members with high technology tools for performing their jobs (i.e., desktop video-conferencing systems, collaborative software systems, virtual teams) implement increasingly flat (or horizontal) organizational structures, so teaching people to master technology is only one aspect of the training process. Individuals must also acquire the interpersonal and behavioral tools necessary to implement self management.

The behavioral descriptions could provide a behavioral basis for selection interviewing or testing and for training and appraisal. Technology can introduce such change in an organization that identification of job requirements is like chasing a moving target. Upgraded technology can bring with it changes in work content and process. Furthermore, the changes are dynamic, not static. That is, changes due to the implementation of intensive technology often bring with them decentralization in decision making and greater worker independence. Moreover, technology makes it possible to easily and quickly share information among workers and to form teams, perhaps virtual ones, around projects. Technology can reduce the time needed for previously labor-intensive tasks, but can increase the need for effective communication and interpersonal skills. Given the capabilities offered by technology the particular tasks performed by workers can change dramatically over time and across projects. This organizational reality poses serious problems for identifying the worker knowledge, skills, abilities, personality, and other characteristics needed for maximal performance in this environment. Traditional job analysis falters when confronted with a dynamic work environment (Carson and Stewart, 1996). Given the influence of technology, the tasks identified through job analysis could be out of date by the time the list of tasks is compiled. It follows that the inferred worker characteristics given those tasks could also be in error and specifies technical skills and knowledge that are no longer important.

## Industry Trends of Garments: A Retrospect

The Society for Human Resource Management's new HR Technology Survey highlights the following key findings for the industry:

- ❖ Expanded use of the web for delivery and utilization of HR applications on a service basis.
- ❖ The majority of HR professionals surveyed said their organization did not have an employee self-service component built into its HR technology system.
- ❖ This is likely to change according to HR technology experts, however, as Internet-based self-service applications are improved and are better integrated into other work processes.
- ❖ Most organizations are not measuring the ROI for HR technology systems, and thus some are finding making the case for HR technology problematic.
- ❖ Significant growth in the use of e-learning.
- ❖ Heightened awareness of HR data privacy - an increasingly important issue given the rise of identity theft using employee information.
- ❖ Increasing outsourcing of human resource information technology systems.
- ❖ Increasing transition to paperless payroll.

## Challenges Ahead

Some of the specific challenges include:

* Attracting, retaining, and motivating employees.

* Meeting the demands for a more strategic human resource (HR) function.

* Ensuring legal/regulatory compliance.

* Managing the "human element" of technological change.

* Shifting from a tactical (transaction processing) focus to facilitating strategic planning.

* Combating the perception that the HR function, while necessary, is not a "value-added" service in the public sector.

* Addressing the push for increased performance and greater accountability in the public sector.

## Conclusions

The organizations today are dependent on the various Human Resource Management (HRM) solutions, which enable them to overcome the challenges faced in retaining the best employees. The HRM solutions support in process management, thereby assuring accuracy of data, data and workflow integration by using technology. In today's organization(s), HR can partner with the technology team and fill the vacuum. A company needs to look for HRIT solutions that enable knowledge of processes, tools, and allows it to understand the trends, thereby enhancing the business values.

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