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SEARCH

Management (US)

• Training and Development on the Fast Track HR Management (US)

- THE PUBLICATION
- COVERAGE AREAS
- ANALYSTS
- ASK THE EXPERT
- THE LEADER
- INTERVIEWS
- ROUNDTABLES
- WEBCASTS
- EVENTS & PARTNERS
- SUBSCRIBE
- LINKS
- SAMPLE PAGES
- HRM PORTFOLIO
- SPONSORS
- CLIENT LOGIN

Just How Global Is Our Global HR Software Solution?

Historically, the word "global" was synonymous with big, and global companies were among the largest and best-known in the world. Today, however, "global" has a different meaning.

Article continues below



Today's global player is often a midsize company that became global through a merger, alliance, or its own organic growth. Frequently, it's a cash-conscious company whose concentration remains in one country but whose footprint has expanded to include sales, manufacturing or customer service operations in multiple countries. While today's global company may look different, the challenges it faces, especially in the areas of HR information, employee management, and staff development are just as significant.

When HR software first came on the scene, the big companies began to experience the efficiency of tracking and managing their workforces through installed systems. As those companies expanded beyond the domestic market and as their growth led them to add talent management modules to their HRMS databases, conduits to additional providers and to country-specific systems were often needed. The more countries, the more country-specific systems. The more new modules, the more new conduits. At each juncture, the ability of information to be shared seamlessly, of data to maintain its integrity, and of databases to be used across languages, currencies and continents became compromised. While the resulting systems could now be considered global, the focused system that most companies began with initially probably now looked more like Frankenware than it did like HR software. Just look at a Visio diagram of most "global" software systems and you might be shocked at how difficult it is to understand.

While the larger global companies had systems, albeit imperfect ones, to manage their global employee bases, the midsize market lacked a viable solution. Happily, as the industry grew and as the platform on which HR software was delivered evolved from licensed, installed systems to on-demand, Internet-based offerings, new opportunities emerged, especially for the new "globals." It actually became possible to create a true global ASP... a one-system/one-world solution that combined HRMS and HCM (Talent Management) modules on one on-demand global platform. It became possible to do benefits administration and recruiting on a global basis. It became possible to provide global Human Resources Augmentation services and customer support. And, importantly, it became possible to insure data integrity/transferability/usability, in every language, every currency and under every set of security protocols... in one database.

So, when you think about your current system, or when you contemplate a new one, ask yourself a few simple questions:

- Does the global system share data seamlessly, ideally in one database?
- Does the system enable managers and employees to work in their respective languages, or does everything need to be done in English?



Companies in this issue

- Blackboard
- CIGNA
- DeVry
- ELI Inc
- Ellis University
- Go Jobs Inc.
- HCR Software
- Health Fitness Corporation
- HM Insurance Group
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- Can the system accommodate the Unicode and double-byte character sets that are required for Russian, Mandarin, Arabic, etc.? (The languages in some of the fastest growing regions of the world).
- Does the system meet Safe Harbor laws, data transfer laws and security protocols from region to region?
- Is the data on the system co-mingled with data from other companies who share the same data server, or is it segregated on its own, or its own virtual server (in industry terms, is the system single-tenant or multi-tenant)?
- Will the system provide 24/7 global support to accommodate your locations around the globe, or will you only get support on US-based standard time?
- Can the system allow you to run reports based on your global organization, or must you spend time running individual reports and then merge them together manually?
- Does the system enable validation tables that translate into different languages to accommodate users in different parts of the world?
- Can the system manage currencies and compensation plans from different countries or regions, e.g. expats?
- Will the system allow for different benefit plans in different countries and can the PTO/absence and electronic calendars be configured to reflect different workdays and holidays?
- Can the system do one global payroll export or must it export payroll country by country with multiple data conduits?

The world, as it has gotten smaller, has also gotten easier to manage with the right HR solutions. Happily, in the past few years, great strides have been made in global HR software and services, and especially in software and services for today's midsize global organizations. Knowing what you need and what is available, however, is the key to make the decisions that will be right for you, for today and the future.

[Back](#)

