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Q: *What is the most significant change you see coming to the HR profession in the next few years?*

A: Historically, the word “global” was synonymous with “big,” and global companies were among the most well-known in the world. Those companies, with vast resources, deep pockets and thousands of employees (sometimes in hundreds of worldwide offices) had the luxury of managing global workforces through installed HR software systems as they had the money to purchase them, the IT staffing/infrastructure to maintain them, and the critical employee mass to justify them. Undeniably, global HRMS and HCM were the providence of large enterprises.

Today, “global” has a different meaning. 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 company whose concentration remains in one country but whose footprint has expanded to include sales, manufacturing and/or customer-service operations on different continents. While today’s global company may look different, the challenges it faces, especially in the areas of HR information, security protocols and country-specific regulations, talent management, currencies, languages and more, are every bit as significant.

It is this globalization and transitioning of business and

companies that will represent both the most significant change and the most significant challenge for HR professionals in the coming years. The changing global footprint of business means that HR professionals will need to find new ways of managing and leading the global HR functions in their organizations. It means they will need to challenge conventional thinking regarding established, installed HR systems, traditional outsourcing options, country-specific talent modules and vendor relationships. They will need to anticipate geographic expansion and help their organizations to better identify, track, manage and develop their global workforces. They will need to seek new opportunities in global benefits administration, global recruiting, global payroll systems and more. They will need to ensure that their selected systems can grow with their companies as they grow, and that they can maintain data integrity and meet international security protocols and safe harbor laws. They will need to seek solutions that allow for global reporting and to pursue solutions that enable the centralization of global HR functions. In short, globalization means that HR professionals will need to become even more demanding and visionary as they evolve to become even more

important strategic contributors to their companies.

While the challenges are significant, new solutions have emerged and continue to do so. Installed systems are now replaceable with SaaS solutions that combine global HRMS and HCM on one on-demand platform. Technological changes are enabling global payroll solutions. New thinking is emerging about outsourcing with services now available to augment rather than completely outsource key HR functions, thereby allowing companies to maintain control and visibility.

The days of country-specific systems linking to individual vendor modules are giving way to integrated systems that allow for seamless data sharing, maintenance of data integrity and multilingual/multi-currency opportunities. Today’s HR professionals no longer need to rely on global systems built from conduit to conduit, but rather can select among new systems that were conceived from the start to be global. The challenges are significant but new technologies, new companies and new thinking are making the solutions much more manageable.

Clearly, the global economy and global corporate expansion are here to stay. Luckily, HR software is evolving in line with, and in time for, this trend.