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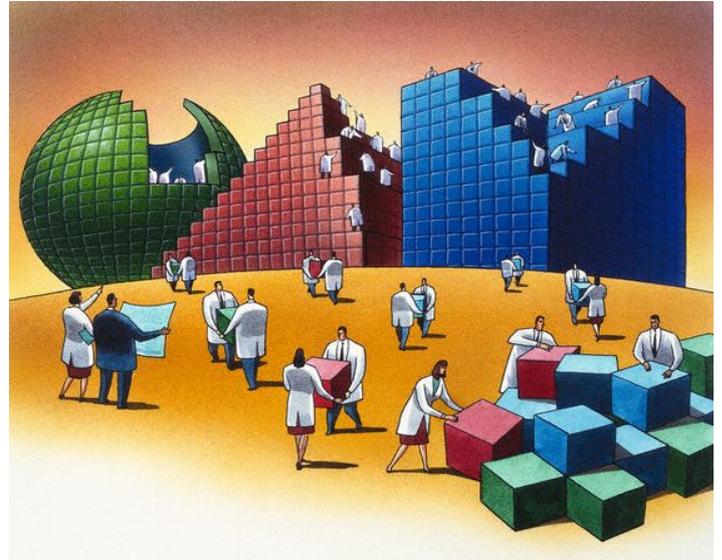
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The Enterprise- wide Application of Human Capital Management Intelligence (HCMi)



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For some time now, organisations have brokered various initiatives on projects such as HR scorecards, carrying out employee surveys in an ad hoc fashion and conducting the odd ROI exercise here and there. Much focus has been on process rather than outcome and evaluation has, in many cases, not been undertaken. But what is emerging is a move towards an enterprise-wide organisation intelligence, connecting what may often be seen as disparate parts into an integrated whole. Further, the collation of data and evidence does not follow in the footsteps of the giant CRM type projects which consume so much time, resource and money.

On the contrary HCMi not only provides a present view at several organisational levels but also enables the advent of predictive analytics in various forms. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data when collated as part of embedded practice provides a powerful advantage to organisations. This article describes the journey with practical examples.

The next generation

Amazingly, it's now over 30 years since the first attempts at providing insight on people was introduced with the advent of simple HR metrics and the subsequent benchmarking movement. This actually may come as a shock to some management and HR executives out there who may think that this is a far more recent phenomenon. Many also forget that psychometrics, the oldest human capital measurement tool in use, has been around for 100 years.

As organisations continue to grapple with measuring and reporting insightful 'numbers' relating to people, the reality is that things have moved on. It's not metrics anymore but intelligence. Sure – base metrics will always be with us like absenteeism and turnover. But these are very limited in insight and the associated people scorecards that are currently in use represent an old 'clapped out' model.

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The next generation of people measurement/intelligence that is now with us, uses far more sophisticated techniques and approaches that provide far greater organisation intelligence for executives to aid decision-making and to improve aspects of organisational performance¹. Sophistication does not necessarily mean greater complexity but greater understanding. It also means far greater capability. It's a similar parallel to the abacus and a pocket calculator.

For example, organisations are now collating structured employee survey data in the form of engagement constructs² and relate this to productivity and performance models, combining qualitative data and quantitative data. As a result organisations

are becoming smarter whether the focus is on recruitment, talent, reward, career development, teamwork etc. What's really smart is the way in which organisations now have the ability to model potential undesirable behaviour that is created through the interaction of systems, policies and people and the desire to achieve objectives. Combining this type of knowledge with data on customer/citizen interaction or supply chain management, for example, can provide far greater insight into organisation issues or challenges on a (quasi) real-time basis – what is termed organisation intelligence. This can have a large impact on improving aspects of productivity and/or avoiding significant costs or worse, the failure of organisations themselves.

It is only now that an enterprise-wide application of human capital management intelligence can actually be undertaken. What's more, for organisations it's not a 'nice

to have' anymore but its becoming a 'needed to play' in the market.

The really exciting opening is that some organisations are beginning to combine various available data to create predictive analytics – the ability to forward-look and spot potential 'hot-spots' that can be avoided or minimalised such as absenteeism, turnover or particular key role talent shortages as well as performance issues to name a few human human capital (management) intelligence components.

Even further, new developments now extend to gathering collective employee feedback on areas such as potential new products or any other organisational initiatives through the use of predictive markets, as utilised by a few leading organisations³. Rather than view any type of internal feedback mechanism as an intrusion or the citing of 'survey fatigue', smart

¹ See for example 'Organisation Engagement: Evaluating your Human Capital Signature, Journal of Applied Human Capital Management Volume 1 Number 2 2007

² For more on employee engagement see 'Employee Engagement: Factors of Successful Implementation', Journal of Applied Human Capital Management, Volume 2 Number 1 2008. Also see 'Employee Engagement', JoAHCM Volume 1 Number 1 2007 and 'Transforming Employee Surveys into Workforce Intelligence Instruments', JoAHCM Volume 1 Number 2 2007.

³ See for example, Prediction Markets at Google, Harvard Case Study 9-607-088, August 2007

organisations are realising the key potential of engaging employees in different ways that assist the organisation as well as monitoring the effectiveness of people management (the two are linked). It's a completely different view – and a far more positive approach.

What is becoming clear is that many organisations have been producing profits or achieving social objectives despite incurring greater costs and disruption through inferior management practice when related to people. It has been the floating iceberg that many have steered past, not realising how much resource and associated cost it has absorbed in the process.

Given that there has been an accentuated focus on greater efficiency and/or enhanced value, for example, in supply chain management, financial capital management, working capital management, product (value) pricing and so on; it is odd that the same rigour has not been applied to human capital management despite people being a large slice of an organisation's operating model. Even though relevant data is collated it is not usually interrogated to provide intelligence, often remaining 'distributed' or 'disconnected' in organisation silos, both vertical and horizontal. Time or frequency of data, in this case, is another dimension given little thought.

As many economies face the prospect of a 'slow-down' and organisations grapple with income-cost challenges, the truth is that those who embed evaluation principles and

'The days of the one-dimensional HR metric and the employee survey question benchmark are well and truly numbered as the new generation of evaluation kicks in. For some these very limited aspects of people management assessment have roamed the earth long enough. Thus it is time to acknowledge their existence and move on. May they rest in peace.'

practices around human capital management effectiveness will no doubt benefit over those who continue to treat it ephemerally. When the going gets tougher and some of the organisational performance froth is blown away, the optimising of employee engagement and talent management further accentuates performance differentials. The benefits of organisation intelligence are also

accentuated as organisations try to negate more uncertain times with the greater effort required as well as potentially avoiding the greater downside risk of getting it wrong.

Like it or not, most organisations have been fairly slow to adopt practices which embed organisation (workforce) intelligence as part of the organisation's decision-making processes and focus. But given, as I have remarked before, that people are essentially the greatest differentiator in organisation performance what CEO or CFO would not want to optimise performance or reduce risk given their respective incentives?

'The times they are a-changing...'

Unfortunately, too often in human capital management, inferior or sub-optimal management has been exacerbated by the very slow take-up of evidence based management principles as the prime driver behind effective people management practice and utilisation.

The focus on HR scorecards has only highlighted the paucity of well-developed thinking when it comes to implementing people related measurement. For many organisations, the 'pragmatism beast' has over-ridden more 'thought-through' solutions, no matter the outcomes. There are many scattered remnants of 'go-nowhere' or 'blind-alley' HR metric projects. Insufficient investments in understanding, time and resource have been particular constraints. To

a great extent it has been amateur-driven rather than expert-pushed.

However, a lead echelon of organisations have started to appear who are following 'the appliance of science' when it comes to managing people. The days of the one-dimensional HR metric and the employee survey question benchmark are well and truly numbered as the new generation of

evaluation kicks in. For some these very limited aspects of people management assessment have roamed the earth long enough. Thus it is time to acknowledge their existence and move on. May they rest in peace.

The new order combines qualitative and quantitative analysis with sophisticated techniques, designed to provide outputs that are both meaningful and presented in new graphical formats that convey far greater information or intelligence to give the correct terminology. The emphasis is on understanding the complexity of people management and organisational performance - 'the input' and simplifying 'the output' (without making it too simplistic) and not the other way around.

'No - HCMi is about being smart and understanding what is important from an evaluation perspective. In that respect it is the other way round to the above data-driven approach.'

The growing calls for organisations and their management to adopt evidence-based management⁴ and evaluation-based management principles and approaches to human capital management are well overdue. The use of such practical concepts however will take time to permeate both the HR 'profession' and line management to become preferred practice just as it has in other domains such as medicine.

However, the available technology and the availability of data collated provide two catalysts to 'jumping up the curve' that much quicker.

Enter the HCMi dragon

Fortunately for organisations, the implementation of enterprise-wide HCM intelligence (HCMi) doesn't normally come with a price tag of six or more noughts at the end.

Because HCMi isn't necessarily about collecting terabytes of data, finding how to locate it under one roof and then spending lots of computing time uncovering 'patterns'

which may or may not be of use. Typically 'business intelligence' approaches have consisted of identifying patterns in existing information which may or may not generate actionable insight – the inherent drawback to this approach is that considerable resource is required to collate, clean and compare data, with the additional limitation that analysis of this nature can identify spurious or 'false positive' connections given the dataset (ignoring the issues of any subsequent model flaws).

No - HCMi is about being smart and understanding what is important from an evaluation perspective. In that respect it is the other way round to the above data-driven approach. Rather than starting with collecting reams of data that is available or

to be made available, HCMi starts with the perspective of identifying that effective people management/intelligence includes a set of axioms or hypotheses and underpinning frameworks that can be used to interpret current practice and its variance. Variance can occur in three primary dimensions: variance from 'best practice' (however defined); variance from historical, longitudinal organisation data and variance within the organisation (i.e. differences across business units/directorates/services).

This means that the HCMi approach identifies what is relevant from an evaluative perspective before gathering related data (either de novo or with use of existing information). Relevancy will span generic best-practice frameworks and models (e.g. people management practice or HR functional delivery) as well as organisation-specific factors (e.g. causes of absence, specific drivers of employee engagement etc).

A fundamental difference in HCMi relative to, say, financial data, is its ability to draw on a mixed-method approach through combining quantitative data such as costs or efficiency metrics, with qualitative data such as employee perception in a way that existing and new data can be utilised.

⁴ For EBM in a leadership context see Effective Organisational Leadership: A Case of Utilising Evidence based Management (EbM), Journal of Applied Human Capital Management, Volume 2 Number 1 2008

Take for example absenteeism. We know of several organisations who are using more advanced analysis than the norm. In one particular case - a public sector organisation has applied HCMi approaches relating to absence data. Through a forensic approach, they have identified patterns that predict the probability of the length of absence. These insights have allowed them to establish 'rules based' reminders and line manager interventions triggered by milestones when an employee is absent (i.e. a particular activity after two days absence, four days absence and so on), with the aim of bringing the employee back into work in the shortest time practical. Of course, this to some degree is focusing on the symptom rather than the cause and more work is being undertaken to understand the underlying factors and variables of causation.

Another example is that several organisations have been viewing and implementing talent management⁵ in a different light when it comes to expected performance. They are interested in creating the ability to predict future performance of a staff member in a new role (whether internal or external placement). The propensity to

'The HCMi approach is embedded practice – it incorporates 'business cycle' timelines as standard allowing for repeat analyses that provide further longitudinal trend evaluation.'

establish potential performance outcomes statistically based on available and relevant data is becoming a reality. This has many uses including risk.

Through HCMi approaches to identify relevant parameters, with appropriate use of supporting evidence (such as individual capability, prior performance, role profiling, psychometrics, assessment etc), probability-based models can predict the likelihood of an individual of a given profile performing at a particular desired level.

Reward optimisation (RO) is another area where HCMi is beginning to show up. Some leading organisations are employing techniques to evaluate how effective their reward, in particular the mix of benefits are

utilised or perceived. Resulting insight provides the organisation with opportunities to 'fine tune' the use of benefits that can (i) save money (ii) enhance engagement or (iii) both. The technique has actually been around for some time but has remained somewhat latent. Changing economic circumstances may accelerate its use. Given more recent events RO will also look at the link to minimising potential risk due to negative behaviours associated with reward schemes⁶.

Embedded practice

The HCMi approach is embedded practice – it incorporates 'business cycle' timelines as standard allowing for repeat analyses that provide further longitudinal trend evaluation. This differentiates between the 'one off' interventionist analysis and the ability to conduct continual assessment/intelligence providing insight over time (and more integrated interventions). A simple company analogy would be the difference between 'Big company plc announcing profits of £100 million' (a 'one-off' analysis that is little more than a statement of fact) and 'Big company

plc profits of £100 million have risen by an average of 3% annually over five years which is 1% higher than peer performance' (longitudinal analysis/trend comparative).

We note that organisations typically organise themselves on an annual (or quarterly) cycle or similar - think of budgeting, planning, appraisals, financial targets and audits. Embedded or ongoing HCMi therefore simply aligns insight on people/productivity with other core business management processes.

Yet HCMi doesn't require organisations to discard all their related HCM approaches, insights and data. All of the relevant techniques, approaches, models, tools and measurement are already available. Using

⁵ For an insight into talent management see also Managing the Talent Equation: The Seven Fundamentals of Talent Management, Volume 2 Number 1 2008

⁶ For more insight see The folly of Rewarding for A, Penalising B and Getting C, Journal of Applied Human Capital Management, Volume 2 Number 1 2008

them together in the most appropriate manner is the core driver.

For example, a simple objective might be to identify factors likely to result in staff turnover in different parts of the organisation (employee segments). An HCMi-based approach would be to forensically link reliable qualitative data (such as that already gathered in joiner/exit interviews) together with trend and factor analysis carried out on recent employee survey data and other determined data.

With the establishment of a 'macro' picture representing the organisation as a whole, evaluation of employee engagement and its relationship to turnover across different employee/manager populations and its variance from this model will provide key insight and understanding that can inform decision-making and targeted action.

Whilst this data/evidence is likely to exist within the organisation without conducting additional data gathering, combining this with an additional in-depth analysis of current people management practice across a range of areas will provide more robust and comprehensive 'evidence' to act upon.

This combination of the use of existing data, plus underlying output models provides specific benefits to organisations adopting HCMi approaches.

A variety of 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional measurement output models can be selected dependent upon audience and focus – this provides different options around generating and presenting insights/actions.

Analysis can be conducted in a short timeframe, with findings reported in 14 days or less, rather than the four months and upwards that can still be the case in, for example, with too many employee data gathering exercises which degrades their application.

Reporting templates also provide organisations and their HR functions with internal and external pictures which are far more recent than the usual 12 months (and still in many cases incredulously 2 years) timelines common in the use of human capital measurement (e.g. survey conduct or scorecard updating). It should not be overlooked that timeliness is a key element in decision making and determining organisational actions.

Furthermore, external reporting templates (such as a dedicated, appropriately structured Human Capital Report within any externally published document⁷) can be an important branding instrument. For example, a potential recruit may well look more favourably on an organisation that reports on its employee engagement and factors driving absence/retention, relatively to one that does not allude to any aspect of its workforce in external documentation (with all other aspects being equal).

Thus, the whole chain of human capital management can be viewed in multiple ways and formats providing far greater insight to what has gone before, with more robust top-line metrics/comparators available to provide meaningful comparison.

Though this article is not focused on the HR function per se, inevitably, the evaluation of the HR function in terms of its contribution to the organisation is important. This is particularly key if an organisation's HR function takes a lead role in the embedding the enterprise-wide application of HCMi. Thus measurement of HR's value contribution is also part of the whole HCMi picture.

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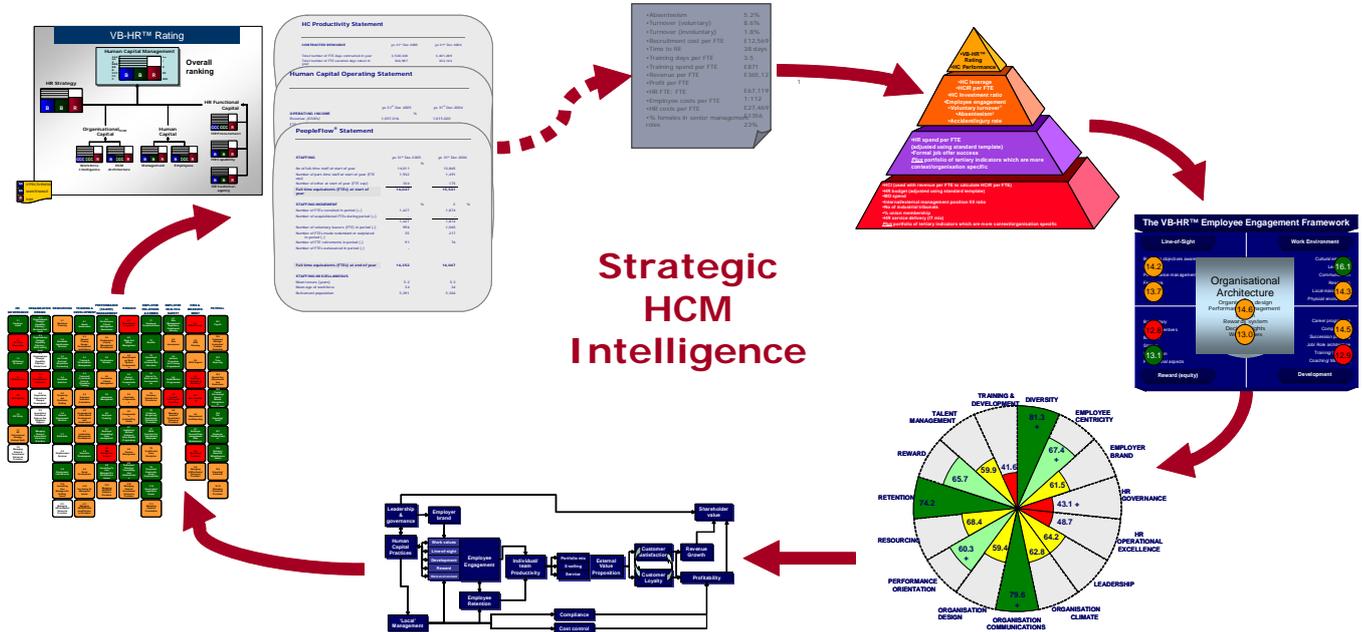
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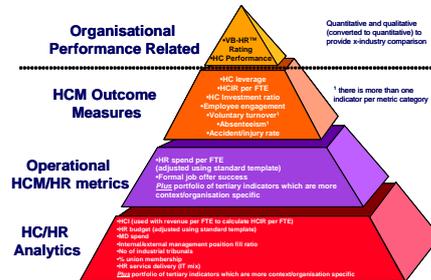
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⁷ See for example Human Capital Reporting Standards, GHCRS2006 www.valuentis.com. Also see Human Capital Reporting, Journal of Applied Human Capital Management Volume 1 Number 3 2007.



• Absenteeism	5.2%
• Turnover (voluntary)	8.6%
• Turnover (involuntary)	1.8%
• Recruitment cost per FTE	£12,569
• Time to fill	38 days
• Training days per FTE	3.5
• Training spend per FTE	£871
• Revenue per FTE	£365,121
• Profit per FTE	£67,119
• HR FTE: FTE	1:112
• Employee costs per FTE	£27,469
• HR costs per FTE	£1356
• % females in senior management roles	23%



Many organisations are familiar with some form of 'pro forma' report card which contains a set of people related metrics.

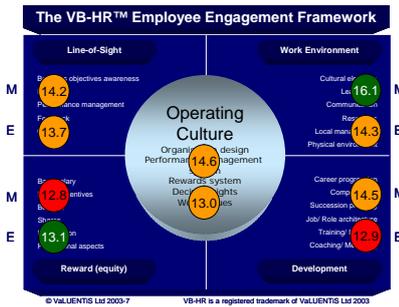
These very often include line items such as absenteeism, turnover, training days per FTE etc. Report cards can be seen in dashboard type formats with graphical outlay and trend analysis normally over a previous quarter, for example.

However, by themselves, these metrics tend to be limited in terms of insight and are usually very operational in nature. They are quite often reported without qualitative context and provide only the minimum of executive intelligence.

A number of organisations, particularly those with multi-structures, have migrated to a more advanced platform by using 'layering' of various metrics as part of a scorecard.

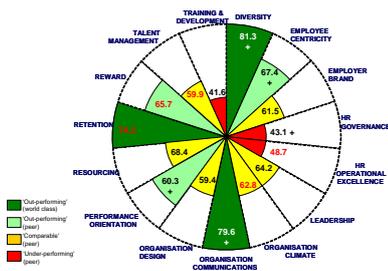
This process is usually undertaken with a people strategy map process with resulting 'metric trees' which breakdown the 'systemic' nature of relationships between various measures.

However, the reporting is still done on a single metric basis as previous in various graphical outlays, with the same potential limitations, even though more is effectively reported.



Employee Engagement scorecards are beginning to emerge with 'drill-down' capabilities that provide organisations with insight as to the dynamics of their workforce. EE can be reported on an index basis and can be reported in the above scorecards mentioned.

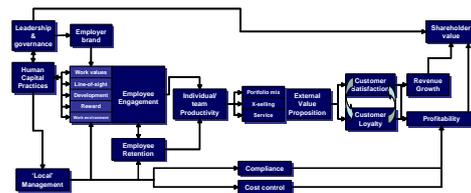
For EE measurement to work, it is critical to that an underpinning framework exists rather than a randomly chosen question portfolio. However, EE measurement contains other analyses that provide much greater intelligence that can be linked with other people management evaluation and/or benchmarking for specific actioning and implementation purposes. Newer frameworks have emerged that combine qualitative and quantitative data and represent the next generation of Employee Engagement measurement/initiatives.



People management evaluation, i.e. the ability for organisations to carry out 360 degree assessment of management practice across a range of areas such as leadership, reward, performance, learning, resourcing, diversity, wellness, communications, organisations design, employer brand etc have only been around in the past few years.

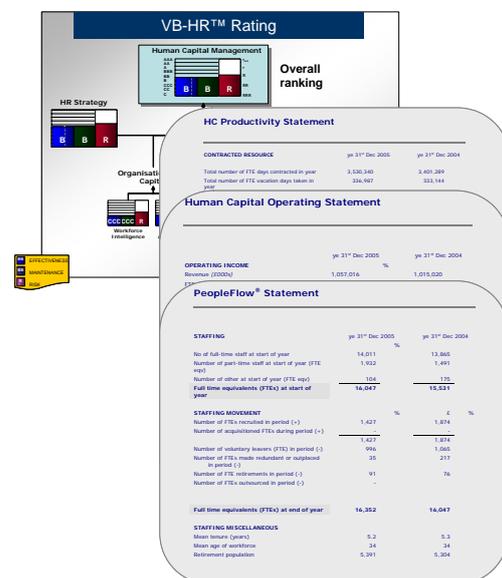
Again combined qualitative and quantitative methods are used to provide organisations with a whole raft of strategic and 'drill down' intelligence which also connects to any employee engagement or

performance/productivity measurement being undertaken. With the corresponding analysis and graphical outputs, organisations use more of an 'evidence-based' approach to implementation/change as well maintaining current effective practice. Benchmarking takes on a new 3-Dimensional aspect. There is no doubt this is where the future of people management measurement lies.



Organisations also have the ability to map and assess current delivery effectiveness and/or undergo risk assessment in terms of people management processes. Inexorably, this involves HR functions.

HR functions have the ability to provide their own functional scorecard as a separate entity from the organisational 'people' scorecard with analytics around resource and spend proficiency. HR functions can also use an array of instruments that derive their value proposition(s) which link back to previous evaluation analytics above. The benefit to HR functions is that shouldn't need to justify their role in an organisational context. The benefit to organisations is that they can optimise the HR function's capability and focus.



Organisations have the ability to build on their internal human capital management intelligence by having the option to report externally through established frameworks. In the race to differentiate in the employer brand space, the use of externally available HC reports is often overlooked. Of course, it is left to organisations to volunteer information in this area and some leading organisations do. However with standard frameworks such as the GHCRS2006 in place, the time may come when organisations are expected to report externally.

Effectively, organisations can start on the HCMi curve at any point. There are a myriad of ways for organisations to develop an enterprise-wide HCMi solution and one that doesn't involve armies of advisors and costly customisation.

The pay-off for organisations is much more than the immediate benefits towards decision-making, performance enhancement and cost control. There is an opportunity to change aspects of operating culture that get in the way of effective people management practice and ultimately organisation performance.

What does an enterprise-wide HCMi project look like?

The first thing to remember about an enterprise-wide HCMi project is that it builds on current practice and tools employed by the organisation. Part of the analysis to implementation may result in some of these being 'ejected' ('Not fit-for-purpose') or 'altered' ('Partial fit for purpose') but primarily the objective is on upgrading the organisational output and outcomes which may or may not correlate with a corresponding upgrade of input.

For example, organisations may already use some form of employee surveying process that isn't underpinned by an employee engagement framework nor employs the use of factor/regression analysis in the data. Both of these can be achieved by judicious choices of development and use of technical expertise.

From a measurement angle, the establishment of reporting layers and outputs that are driven by both operational and strategic requirements rather than the

existence of a 'one size fits all' scorecard with all its of its limitations is another potential 'Quick-win'.

A big difference with an HCMi project is its focus on associated learning in an applied sense.

There are three core objectives of organisation intelligence whether specifically on the workforce and the associated people management practice or wider applications. They are:

- To optimise people performance and associated organisational performance in whatever guise measured
- An evaluation of the current organisation state with regard to human capital and the management thereof in order to be able to implement required changes where sub-optimal outcomes or practice exists
- To provide the organisation with potential 'predictive' abilities that can feed into the previous two or wider organisational initiatives.

All three have competitive advantage as their core driver. Public sector organisations are equally represented here since the market in human capital talent terms is exactly the same as indeed is the potential in fulfilling wider organisation remits.

The key phases of an HCMi project

So for organisations undertaking an enterprise-wide HCMi project there are six key phases (and with varying degrees they overlap in parts). These are:

- Scoping
- Analysing
- Designing
- Building
- Deploying
- Evolving (Maintaining)

Scoping essentially ensures the 'boxing' of the solution in terms of the main deliverables/outputs of the HCMi project as well as highlighting any organisational 'constraints'. The ability to link-in with any current initiatives is also explored to provide the most optimum implementation setting.

This phase should conclude with draft 'requirements' in terms of the types of combined evaluation processes, data collation, ongoing analysis, reporting, results outputs and executive education. One important note is to distinguish between organisation and specific HR function requirements as the two are not the same even though some overlap is bound to exist.

The **Analysing** phase provides more in-depth assessment and thus feasibility provided by the scoping phase. A reworking of the proposed solution may take place in light of the evidence ascertained to ensure that the implementation is workable and meets the objectives set. A project risk profile is usually drawn up here to assist with flagging potential obstacles or trade-offs that may have to be made.

Designing takes the draft solution provided by the two previous phases and turns it into a workable design. There may be a number of different strands of HCM intelligence which may include, for example, the redesign of an employee survey instrument which has both platform and customised question sets with ensuing outputs; the introduction of a quarterly pulse survey process with a blended mix of alternating foci alongside the annual 'run'; the introduction of an extended people management practice evaluation with associated processes; the integration of various people data already in use; the decision to 'piggy back' on current reporting technology or to introduce a new reporting channel. Also attention to the education side in terms of delivery methods and content is located here. Education in HCMi projects are more suited to 'hands-on' working sessions rather than individual 'on-line' training. Logistics around delivery to various levels are important.

The **Building** phase really converts the Design phase into reality normally with some form of pilot project being instigated which can be (sub)unit or organisation-wide driven. Configuration in this context is more to do with the timing collation and usage of both qualitative and quantitative data rather than any particular technical interpretation.

The **Deploying** phase is what many would know as the full implementation process. Depending upon the solution being sought as evidenced above it can be singular or multi-

stranded. Again, education looms large here with much emphasis on application of HCMi. Deploy can last up to 12 months for a full implementation to occur (prior to repeat cycle).

The **Evolving (Maintaining)** phase is just that. All HCMi projects are organic and dynamic. They are not tick-box exercises. The organisation needs to ensure that processes or protocols are in place to maintain current HCMi objectives being achieved or are adapted in the pursuit of these. At this point organisations should begin to see and benefit from the evaluation and ensuing action taking place.

Conclusion

Those who have started on the HCMi journey are not necessarily the household names with which recent human capital measurement has been associated.

Organisations from the business services, transport, engineering, The NHS, local government, telecomms, utilities, and, yes, financial services are represented to name but a few. We know because many are our clients.

What is certain is that organisations' use of HCMi is accelerating exponentially. The lead cohort will definitely 'steal a march' on the rest who adopt eventually. What is being recognised and realised however is that the potential achievements of enterprise-wide HCMi are extending particularly in terms of how optimised organisations can get and the ability to derive predictive analytics that can save time and money. After all basic HR metrics have been with us for thirty years and nothing much has changed.

In the currently unfolding economic scenario, that could mean the difference between survival and extinction for organisations. If we are talking about extinction let's hope that it is limited to the one-dimensional HR metrics and dumb survey benchmark questions.

But let us also be crystal clear: enterprise-wide HCMi is an organisational 'thing' not an HR function 'thing'. HR functions may or may not be the lead executive on these types of projects. And the question isn't, 'should we jump on the curve?' but 'how far up the curve do we want to go?' Because the curve is already here.

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