

Workday and Equifax

Creating one global team with unified HCM and payroll

When it comes to data, Equifax is the authority. Best known as one of the “big three” credit bureaus, Equifax recently extended its reach into advanced analytics and business intelligence, expanding its mission to empower businesses and consumers with information they can trust. But when it came to information on its own workforce, Equifax was hobbled by a legacy system that made it difficult to access the data the company needed to inform its business decisions. Most critical was the lack of actionable insight that prevented Equifax from fully realizing its vision as a unified global company.

That’s why Equifax turned to Workday Human Capital Management (HCM) and Workday Payroll for the US, Canada, and the UK. When the company began its search for a new HCM and payroll platform, the HR team was very clear on the requirements. It had to be global at its core to serve the company’s 6,800 employees and 5,000 contingent workers in 17 countries. It had to have robust employee and manager self-service that could provide managers with the information they required to take responsibility for their employees. HR had to have a unified HR and talent management application that provided a holistic view of the global workforce. And payroll had to be unified with HCM and provide greater control and flexibility while being faster and more efficient.

Finally, the new unified platform needed superior reporting capabilities. “We needed the ability to get deep into the data, answer the next question,” says Michael Bause, Vice President of Global Workforce Information Systems. “Because often with reporting, you ask one question, and immediately someone is going to ask you another question.” Workday, they found, ticked all the boxes.

The burden on HR

Before Workday arrived, Bause and his colleagues were at the end of their tether with their legacy system. Routine updates to employee information were done differently around the world, making reporting a nightmare. “It put a tremendous burden on HR because they became the ones capturing this data that needed to be updated,” says Bause. “HR spent a lot of time on tactical operations instead of strategic items that the business really needed to make critical decisions.”

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Business case at a glance

- 6,800 employees in 17 countries, with 5,000 contingent workers.
- USD 2 billion in revenue (2011).
- Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia.
- Traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol EFX; member of the S&P 500 Index.

Workday applications

- Human Capital Management
- Payroll for the US, Canada, and the UK

Summary of business benefits

- A single global source for accurate workforce information.
- Payroll processing reduced from an hour and a half to minutes.
- Actionable HR reporting for improved strategic decisions.
- Unified processes and aligned workforce.
- Renewed focus on the business rather than technology upkeep.
- Continuous innovation without costly upgrades.
- Greater collaboration between functions.

Deployment locations

North America: United States and Canada

Europe: United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain

Asia: India

South America: Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Peru

Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras

Payroll processing time took hours. “And if you had a problem with the payroll process, you would need to rerun the whole payroll,” Bause says. The old system also couldn’t handle key functions such as talent management and performance management. As a result, Equifax bolted on additional systems to make up for what the basic system lacked.

“But over time, if you take that approach, your systems become customised and expensive to support,” Bause says. “Your data is all over the place – you can’t report on it.” As a result, the management team lacks visibility into some of the most critical functions of the business.

Building all the integrations was an obstacle. One system, for example, would have location addresses needed by another system. Each system needed to be maintained separately and required its own costly upgrades. Employees needed to be trained on each application and needed to toggle back and forth between them constantly.

Issues of time and cost

Before Equifax chose Workday in 2011, the company’s stakeholders investigated using a traditional on-premise ERP vendor for its HCM and payroll needs. But they immediately ran into cost issues. “Essentially, all of the platforms we needed to make a real global HCM and payroll platform – it was just cost-prohibitive for us,” Bause says. They also considered outsourcing their payroll, but they wanted to keep payroll in-house to maintain control over processes and data.

“We realised that we spend a lot of time and money on resources doing technology support for HR,” Bause says. “So, going out and spending money on new servers, disaster recovery plans, business continuity plans – and all the things that would go along with licensing and installing the new software, having to maintain those servers, backing up those servers – it didn’t make sense.”

The Workday deployment was completed faster than planned and under budget. “We had allotted 12 months and we actually finished in 10-and-a-half months,” says Bause.

“One Equifax”

The company chose to deploy globally all at once, using the opportunity to make its business processes more consistent and reinforce a unified culture. As Bause describes it, “At our company, ‘One Equifax’ means, ‘One team, one voice, one vision.’ If we’re going to say that and mean it, then we need to treat our employees and our contractors that way. So, going with a global big bang approach gave us the opportunity to look at all of our processes and make sure that they fit all of our associates in all countries and locations.”

“It gave us the ability to say to our employees, ‘We are making a commitment to you. You’re part of one team. We’re doing this for everybody. It’s not that we’re doing this from Atlanta, Georgia, where our headquarters are, and pushing this out to the rest of the world. We’re doing this for you.’ So, Workday became essentially their Workday. And it was impressive for us to see the parties that were going on in each of the locations the day we went live.”

“We call our approach ‘process harmonisation’. That’s a big factor for Equifax. We want people to feel like one team,” Bause says. “That’s a big benefit culturally because you’re getting a unified user experience globally.” In addition, there is now a unified data set to draw from for better decision-making around the world. “Workday has enabled us to have that single source of truth that everybody always talks about but few people have,” Bause says.

ROI realised immediately

A few months after their global go-live event, Equifax was seeing a host of benefits from Workday. Previously, processing payroll for the US, Canada, and the UK took an hour and a half. “Now we can run reports and know that the payroll in the US, Canada, and the UK are accurate – that has been greatly enhanced with the audit capabilities and reporting available out of the box in Workday.”

Integrations are tighter than before and easier to maintain and support. Workday even issues a notification if there's a potential problem. “Our old system wouldn't do that,” says Bause. “There was a lot of heavy, manual monitoring at our end to verify that files were correct.”

Instead of the costly upgrades that were necessary with its old system, Equifax is benefiting from the latest technology through regular Workday updates, which are part of the subscription model. Two updates came to the company during the 10-and-a-half months the company was deploying. “And both brought in significant functionality changes, both in HCM and payroll. The functionality worked flawlessly,” Bause says.

“Now we're being pulled by our vendor to actually take on new functionality that everybody else in the HR space wants and needs,” he continues. “Before, if we wanted to make a change, we had to make that change ourselves. We had to go develop some code or we had to go build something. Now we're being pulled along and that information and functionality are available to us.”

A newly energised workforce

Bause sees new vitality spreading throughout the HR team as a result of Workday. “The platform is energising because it's new and it's fresh and it's continually evolving,” he says.

“People want to be engaged in it. Now there's more collaboration between technology, finance, payroll, and HR. It's refreshing to see that.” He looks forward to rolling out the mobile capabilities in Workday soon, which he says will have a “huge impact” on the Equifax workforce.

The ability to have complete control over the payroll processes, run faster, and produce a more accurate payroll has created a much more confident payroll team. “It's been the quietest pay day I've had in eight years of payroll,” says Suzanne Forbes, payroll lead, after successfully completing a BACS clearance day for Equifax in the UK.

“They know they are doing a better job of serving their customers,” Bause says. “The platform definitely gives me greater peace of mind that our payroll team can balance their lives a little bit better since we're saving hundreds of hours of processing time. They can go home at night and sleep well, knowing that payroll is right.”

Best of all, the role of HR is moving from transactional to strategic, as it becomes a source of timely, reliable data. “We can put some thought leadership around the metrics that we need to be presenting to the business and to our leaders,” he says. “The HR team can be better partners because they have more data at their fingertips. And now we can provide it quickly.”

Spending time on the activities that matter is a benefit of Workday that affects the entire Equifax organisation. “Do you want sales managers spending hours of their day filling out spot bonus forms and shepherding them through the organisation, or do you want that person on the phone with your key customers?” Bause says, referring to the new streamlined spot-bonus procedure that now takes seconds in Workday because HCM is unified with payroll. “It was a big win when we sat down with the investment counsel and showed how much we have impacted our workforce to do more of what makes us money.”



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