

An “e-HR” Approach: Offering Self-Service Options to Customers

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Abstract:

Providing quality human resource services and solutions to our internal and external customers is at the heart of the mission of FSU's Human Resources Department. With this goal in mind, a suite of applications was designed to achieve an "e-HR" climate that would empower prospective and current employees by offering self-service options. Additionally, an overwhelming need for a more efficient employee maintenance system drove the goal to move our entire legacy and paper processes to an integrated web environment that would allow secured access to employee records through a simple, user-friendly interface. The resulting suite of applications includes job listing maintenance, an on-line employment application, applicant tracking, appointment management, and an online document repository. Additional pieces of the employee relationship puzzle that have been developed or integrated include Business Objects reporting software, a one-stop employee training tracking system, and an interactive employee disciplinary procedures tool known as the G.U.I.D.E.

An Introduction to FSU:

Florida State University is a fully accredited, public, coeducational institution and a senior member of the ten state universities that compose the State University System of Florida. The main campus of the University is located in Tallahassee, the state's capital. In addition to degree programs offered in Panama City, Sarasota, and the Republic of Panama, FSU offers a variety of overseas study opportunities during the regular academic year, as well as in special summer programs.

The preliminary total enrollment of the University for Fall 2003 is 37,328, composed of 79 percent undergraduate, 18 percent graduate students, and 3 percent unclassified. FSU has 17 major academic divisions offering courses of study in 25 major disciplines. In addition to the associate in arts certificate, we now offer 96 authorized baccalaureate degree programs covering 198 fields, 100 authorized master's degree programs covering 193 fields, 1 authorized advanced master's degree program covering 1 field, 29 specialist degree programs covering 34 fields, two authorized professional degree programs covering eight fields, and 72 authorized doctoral degree programs covering 135 fields. Through the Center for Professional Development & Public

Service, the University also conducts off-campus credit courses and degree programs as well as non-credit programs, workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Florida State University has built a reputation as a strong research institution in both the sciences and the humanities. The University is also a nationally recognized center of excellence in graduate training in the visual and performing arts. FSU provides a wide variety of music, theatre, and dance performances. In the area of Athletics, Florida State University is a member of the Atlantic Coast Conference, and sponsors eight men's teams and nine women's teams in intercollegiate athletics.

The mission of the Human Resources Department at FSU is to provide quality human resource services and solutions to our internal and external customers. The University employs over 5,700 individuals in areas ranging from Faculty, Administrative and Professional, and University Support Personnel Services (USPS) positions in skilled crafts and service/maintenance. The HR Department serves the employees at the University in all aspects of HR, including employment services, classification and compensation, professional development through a vast resource of training courses, HRIS and benefits administration, and in the area of employee relations by assisting employees with understanding their rights and responsibilities.

Statement (restatement) of the Problem/Initiative:

In 1995, a centralized Human Resources Management System (HRMS) requiring extensive training and maintenance was implemented. At the time of implementation, there were no existing web technologies in place. Job listings were maintained in paper form in the HR office,

and the manual application process required individual applications for each position applied for. Applications then had to be manually certified, copied, and delivered to the respective departments. Appointments, status changes, terminations, and other transactions were completed on paper and shuffled through the signature process until they arrived in the HR office where they were input into the system. Employee files, in both paper and microfiche form, were housed in a central location occupying large amounts of floor space.

An overwhelming need for a more efficient employee maintenance system drove the goal to move our entire legacy and paper processes to an integrated web environment that would allow secured access to employee records through a simple, user-friendly interface. The resulting suite of applications includes job listing maintenance, an on-line employment application, applicant tracking, appointment management, and an online document repository. Additional pieces of the employee relationship puzzle that have been developed or integrated include Business Objects reporting software, a one-stop employee training tracking system, and an interactive employee disciplinary procedures tool known as the G.U.I.D.E.

Design/Implementation/Benefits:

Job Listing Maintenance

In order to reach a broader audience and to provide unencumbered accessibility to our applicants, development began on a system to convert the antiquated, paper job listings to a database-oriented system providing easy re-listing and prominent web presence. The Job Listing

Maintenance application provides an online method to maintain database entries that drive the Internet job listings. HR representatives are able to manage over 30 individual items related to the listing, including pieces such as opening/closing dates, minimum/maximum salary, job skills requirements, additional notes, responsible department, and position classification information. The system allows for specific release dates to enable immediate or delayed listings with designated time periods to suit departmental needs.

Online Employment Application/Applicant Tracking

In a further effort to attract the best and the brightest employees and to streamline our workflow, development began to provide a means for applicants to submit applications electronically and to process those applications in an increasingly paperless environment.

Prior to development, applicants were required to submit a separate application for each position they were applying for. This obviously created tremendous amounts of paperwork and required an extensive, labor-intensive filing system. Each application had to be manually certified and reviewed for appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities. Applications of qualified candidates were then copied, compiled, and delivered to the respective departments for review and further handling through the hiring process.

The vision for the Online Employment Application was one that could be completed in its entirety once, edited as needed, and submitted individually for consecutive positions. The entire application process had to be offered in a secure environment to assure the users that the system provided complete integrity. Applicants were to be notified through e-mail to confirm receipt of the application and to furnish instructions for submitting supplemental documentation. To fulfill security requirements, the developers utilized the existing University Online Personalized Web

Services portal for internal applicants, and created an additional code to accommodate external applicants from around the world. To meet the needs of our customers who have no access to technology, we continued to accept paper applications, and existing imaging technologies were utilized to allow for indexed input of paper applications, as well as supplemental documentation. In conjunction with the deployment of the Online Application for Employment, a new self-service tool was introduced that provides departments with the flexibility to view employee applications from the desktop, replacing the outdated paper versions, the corresponding filing systems, and the need for delivery of paper copies to the departments. The Applicant Tracking module enables HR Employment staff to electronically view applications, measure knowledge, skills and abilities against the requirements of the position, refer qualified candidates to the department and monitor departmental progress throughout the hiring process. Departmental hiring authorities now have the option to conveniently view applicant packages, track their interactions with applicants, and provide feedback to Human Resources about the hiring decision, online and in real-time.

Based on departmental responsibility through budget codes, basic security only authorizes departmental representatives viewing access for their respective open positions. While the system is a “closed” system for security purposes, options are provided to give registered University Portal users access to specific positions as needed. This simplifies the process for designated hiring authorities and members of Search Committees by enabling them to view their applicants’ information online.

Statistics support that offering an electronic application alternative to our customers has been well received. Of the nearly 5,500 applications received monthly, approximately 83% of our applicants have chosen to submit information electronically in lieu of completing a paper

application. Our applicants represent 21 different countries and every state, with the exception of Alaska. Many of our candidates are regular users of the online application, which is evidenced by the 49,380 applications that have been received by a pool of nearly 11,000 applicants since going live with the online application in November of 2002.

Employee Appointment System

The Online Employee Appointment System (EASy) is a user-friendly, web-based system designed to expedite the employee appointment process and eliminate the need for paper documents. The EASy system provides a java-based web environment that allows departmental representatives to navigate through a series of screens with extensive editing capability and electronic approval, which includes workflow architecture to provide secured authorization. Human Resources has the final authorization with the approved appointment downloaded in real-time into our current HRMS.

Through our imaging system, required supporting documentation is routed electronically to the employee's personnel file, located in PC Docs, for review by Human Resources. PC Docs is a function of EASy that enables departments to access their employees' files online, after the files have been imaged. Access to PC Docs is limited to Departmental Representatives whose viewing access is restricted to their own employees' files. Since February 2003, over 30 Departmental Representatives have been given access and trained in the use of PC Docs. There are currently thirty-five departments at FSU who are taking advantage of EASy for their new hire appointments. Rollout of additional appointments, one-time pay, and courtesy appointment processing to the entire University began in the summer of 2003. Obvious benefits

include improved accuracy, cost savings and time savings to Human Resources and our University partners. Our off-campus units like the Ringling Museum of Art located in Sarasota, Florida, as well as our branch campus in Panama City, Florida, have especially enjoyed the benefits of EASy.

Security access for EASy is maintained by the HRMS Security Manager and is limited by department and job duty. Compensation staff and the HRMS Team provide the user Training and Help Desk Assistance for EASy.

Online Active Appointment Reports

In March of 2001, Human Resources began providing active appointment reports in a web-based format to the University and currently produces 523 reports for review by 270 departments. The implementation team replaced printed reports with online versions that simplified and improved a difficult and tedious job. Employee appointment data is taken from our HRMS on a biweekly basis prior to time and leave entry and payroll processing. Departmental Representatives are able to review active appointments and send comments and corrections electronically from the convenience of their desktop.

The web-based format can be modified according to the user's personal preference and is therefore easier to check for discrepancies. Online Actives provide:

- The means to see only those employees who have been added, deleted, or who have had a change of status since the previous pay period.
- The ability to see future dated actions for employees.
- Seven options for grouping employee data into categories for large departments.

- The capability of saving up to six view options according to viewer preference for quick retrieval.

Security access to Online Active Appointment Reports is maintained by the HRMS Security Manager and is limited by department and job duty. Three levels of access are available: Approval, Correction, or View Only. Compensation staff manages comments and corrections, and the HRMS Team provides continual training for users of the online actives, as well as help desk assistance.

This innovation has benefited our internal customers in that the departments no longer need to physically pick up and return hard copy reports, freeing them up to devote their time to more critical tasks. Similarly, time spent by Human Resources personnel sorting and preparing reports for departmental pick up has been significantly reduced resulting in increased responsiveness to our customers' more pressing needs. The financial impact has been compelling as well, resulting in an annual net savings of \$186,485.35. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this tool provides departmental representatives with more accurate and timely data, making their jobs easier, reducing errors, and ensuring that employees are paid correctly and in a timely manner, which increases overall employee satisfaction.

Document Imaging

In an effort to provide faster access to records, eliminate paper files, and reclaim office space, the University embarked on an aggressive imaging project. In July of 1998, following the lead of the University Registrar, Human Resources began its initial project to image all active employee files, including files of those who separated from the University since July 1, 1998, and all incoming employees from that date forward. The primary objective was to enhance our service

to the departments throughout the University by providing them with a method of electronically accessing and viewing employee files. Reducing expenses that would result from ultimately eliminating the need to copy files was another goal that we hoped to achieve.

Since inception, more than 1,000,000 documents have been imaged into the system for over 45,000 full-time, part-time, and student employees. These documents are filed in an indexed system that is integrated with our current HRMS and allows for detailed searches by employee name, ID, or document type. For quality assurance purposes, each document is indexed and verified. Confidential documents are identified as such and proper security is applied in accordance with Florida's Sunshine laws. The expected completion date for imaging of all hard-copy personnel records is February 2004.

After the successful implementation of the personnel file imaging system, the technology was again utilized to provide our University partners with electronic access to position classification historical data. This application of the technology provides the department, as well as the HR Classification staff, with easy access to historical data pertaining to individual positions and job classifications which simplifies the process of writing, re-writing and updating position descriptions. This phase of the imaging effort is expected to be completed by the end of 2003.

Business Objects

Florida State University is now using Business Objects reporting software to access, analyze, and share important financial, student, and employee data with the University community, as well as with federal and state agencies.

In August of 2001, Human Resources began developing reports to access employee data stored in our HRMS. The HRMS Universe used for Business Objects reporting contains current, future

and historical data and is supported and maintained by the HRMS team. Since the data is updated nightly, Business Objects allows users to retrieve more current and accurate information than ever before for reporting purposes, as well as to verify information within employee files. FSU's Human Resources team believes that service to our customers is our primary concern. Through the use of Business Objects, we have added a new dimension to the service we provide to the University community. Our HRMS team, responsible for and most knowledgeable about the employee data, provides the following services that benefit our employees and departments:

- 1) Creates reports for University departments such as the Inspector General, Human Resources, University Library, Payroll Office, and Budget Office as specific needs arise for employee data for reporting purposes. (i.e.: Workforce Analysis Report and Equity Accountability Report required for EEO reporting, Annualized Salary Report for the Institute of Public Affairs, Semi-Annual Deferred Retirement Optional Program Information by Division for Vice Presidents' Offices, OPS Employee Audit Report, Vets 100 Report, etc.)
- 2) Creates "canned" reports commonly requested campus-wide for departmental use that can be retrieved by authorized individuals any time they are needed.

The HRMS "canned" reports resulted from the campus-wide demand for similar information on a recurring basis, so the HRMS team took Business Objects one step further by providing reports that could be easily retrieved and used as many times as needed by our departments. These reports can be "refreshed", but the reporting logic cannot be changed, thereby assuring that only "tested and approved" data is presented. Authorized users can retrieve these reports for departmental use and get current information about various items affecting their department and individual employees. There are currently 45 HRMS "canned" reports, including several

variations within each one and a continual stream of others under consideration for development.

These HRMS Business Objects “canned” reports include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Timesheets that can be created for new employees, which include important data such as name, employee ID, and department number. An established employee’s original timesheet can also be duplicated when needed. These timesheet reports are very popular and are used more than any others.
- Leave detail for each salaried employee can be obtained for auditing and advising purposes. Several report variations include a leave usage graph, balances, accruals and usage by category, and a detailed chronological record of all leave detail
- Leave balances for all salaried employees within a department for tracking, advising, and payouts
- Position detail for each department reflecting all established, filled, and vacant positions
- Employee data for a specific budget number
- Employee check detail used by departmental representatives for auditing and advising purposes
- Graduate Assistant Fee Waiver management and tracking
- HRMS security reporting for the Security Manager and auditing needs

The popularity and usefulness of Business Objects Human Resources “canned” reports is supported by the following:

- As of April 9, 2003, 450 of the 932 total of registered users of Business Objects at Florida State University were authorized users of the Human Resource reports.
- In March, 2003:
 - Of 260 total users of Business Objects, 97 were users of Human Resources reports
 - Human Resources users logged into Business Objects 661 times for an average 6.81 logins
 - The HRMS “canned” reports were accessed in 306 sessions, and a report is generated one-to-many times per session. Although statistics are not available, user interviews indicate an average of 4 to 7 reports per session.

The HRMS and Business Objects Security Managers maintain security access for the Human Resources data. Access can be limited by object (type of data), department, report, and special needs. A much smaller group of authorized users is allowed to create their own reports, but are still subject to security limitations. Although not present in the counts above, these users account for substantial usage totals, since they tend to be the “power” users.

Training the users of the Business Objects “canned” reports is an important focus of Human Resources with classes being offered on a continual basis. Approximately 300 authorized users have attended training since it began in September of 2001. As reports are revised or created, users are notified via the HRMS listserv and the HRMS biweekly newsletter.

Training Server

The Office of Training and Development was established in 1995 with a goal of becoming a central location for employees to look to for training and development needs. In late 1999, Human Resources purchased Training Server, a web-based scheduling and registration suite that

has enabled the University to make great strides in attaining this goal. As part of the online registration process, participants automatically receive notification via email to confirm course registration, and the system also archives their attendance allowing employees to view their training transcripts. Currently, over half of all participants register for training classes online, which has increased significantly from 10% since launching Training Server in 1999.

G.U.I.D.E (Gateway to University Interactive Decision Making for Employees)

The GUIDE is an online tool that contains information on how to respond to instances involving possible employee misconduct and applies to all University Support Personnel System (USPS) employees of the University with permanent status and Administrative and Professional (A&P) employees.

The disciplining of an employee is considered to be a very serious action that is undertaken with care, objectivity and full consideration for the rights and interests of both the employee and the University. Discipline should be administered in a judicious manner that assures equitable treatment for all employees included in the USPS and A&P pay plans. Through the GUIDE consultation, supervisors have a self-service option that will assist them in determining when disciplinary action may be appropriate. The GUIDE provides our limited number of Employee/Labor Relations professionals the ability to leverage knowledge expertise in the field so that employees who need this information have it at their fingertips, even when staff may not be readily available. Additionally, the GUIDE helps to provide consistency and objectivity in the administration of discipline, and helps supervisors stay more informed and make defensible decisions when addressing employee misconduct. Consequently, recurring cost savings include avoidance of possible litigation and appealed disciplinary actions in the form of grievances or complaints. Other cost savings include less time on the part of Employee/Labor Relations staff

in counseling management regarding employee misconduct because the information is readily available through accessing the GUIDE online.

Prior to the introduction of the GUIDE in May of 2002, Employee/Labor Relations staff spent approximately 50% of their time assisting management in addressing disciplinary actions. Based on this information, a projected 30% reduction in the amount of time spent by Employee/Labor Relations staff on disciplinary issues and grievances or complaints results in a recurring cost avoidance of approximately \$41,300 per year. As a result of savings to the University, the GUIDE was awarded a Davis Productivity Award for the 2002 award year.

Our HR Vision

The Florida State University Human Resources Team has taken a holistic approach to technological innovation. Some may view each of these different applications as specific to a functional area of HR, but the benefits to the entire department and the University are compelling. While each piece is unique based on its individual merits, it is the interdependent relationship between the applications that has produced dynamic results. The Online Employment Application, Applicant Tracking and EASy, for example, all utilize the imaging system to facilitate their processes.

As human resource professionals, we are continually seeking ways to improve efficiency, better service our customers, and do our part to help FSU be the employer of choice. Our ultimate goal is to evolve from paper processors to consultants and collaborative partners. By embracing the “e-HR” method and developing a suite of applications designed to streamline processes and offer self-service functions to our customers, we are making strides toward becoming a model human resources center.

