
Make Win-Win a Reality: Delighting the Customer by Implementing Oracle HR

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Abstract

Implementing Oracle HR provides the organization an enormous opportunity to create a win-win situation for customers, the HR department and the enterprise. By soliciting input and feedback at the executive, middle management and employee levels, the stakeholder can match their needs to Oracle capabilities, creating positive expectations and delighting the customer throughout implementation and upon delivery.

Introduction

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Human Resources (HR) Oracle implementation provides insight into how Oracle Human Resources Management System (HRMS) can improve business processes. This paper examines the customer locus approach the HR implementation team is utilizing to maximize the benefits of Oracle and business process reengineering across the enterprise from the customers to the HR department. From an enterprise perspective, the current business systems at JPL will be improved significantly by Oracle's integrated database and applications suite, accessible from Windows and all platforms via the Web. From the HR perspective, Oracle will provide immediate access to integrated data and make transactions more efficient. Finally, from the individual user viewpoint, Oracle will enable direct capabilities that will allow for self-service transactions and more rapid response.

What is delighting the customer?

Delighting the customer means successfully meeting or exceeding user expectations for an accurate, reliable, and easy to use HR system that serves their needs in a timely manner. Accomplishment of this objective is contingent upon well-matched customer expectations. Managing customer expectations can be achieved by maximizing the customer's participation throughout all phases of system implementation and development of the new processes based on best business practices.

The approach described in this paper focuses on exposing the various customer groups to many of the design and implementation issues and increasing their awareness of the tradeoffs. The goal is to reach a consensus and achieve a shared understanding of the best utilization of Oracle's capabilities in combination with HR leading business practices, to create a viable product with effective services that realizes a win for all stakeholders. Although the transition to the production phase of implementation is still seven months away, the results thus far using this approach are positive.

Background

Jet Propulsion Laboratory
Managed for the National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA) by the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) is the lead United States center for robotic exploration of the solar system. JPL spacecraft have visited all known planets except Pluto (a Pluto mission is currently under study for the late 1990's). In addition to its work for NASA, JPL conducts tasks for a variety of other federal agencies. JPL's latest achievement was the Mars Pathfinder Mission whose spacecraft landed on Mars on July 4, 1997 and gathered planetary data using rover technology.

New Business Solutions Program

The motto of the New Business Solutions Program (NBS) at JPL is "Earth Services for Space People". The goal of NBS is to implement a new, on-line enterprise business solution which will enable JPL to achieve its strategic goals and objectives. Earlier JPL flight projects such as the Voyager mission to Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune have had lifecycles typically lasting three to five years. Now, JPL's smaller and more moderate missions, following the theme of "Faster, better, cheaper", with shortened lifecycles of 18 to 24 months. At the same time mission cycles are shrinking, the number of mission launches are expected to increase substantially. To meet JPL's evolving

business needs, executive management determined that the business processes required a radical transformation and re-focus onto leading business practices.

NBS will meet the changing business need of JPL through an eighteen month simultaneous implementation of Oracle Human Resources, Finance and Acquisition applications. Created in December 1996, and planning an implementation date of April 1998, NBS is organized into five Business Process Reengineering Teams: Program Office, Human Resources, Acquisition, Finance and Information Technology. The five phases of implementation are Current State Definition, Future State Visioning, Detailed Development, Transition and Production. JPL consulting partners are Oracle Corporation and Ernst & Young LLP.

The objectives of NBS are to reengineer JPL business processes by incorporating leading business practices, implementing Oracle's commercial off-the-shelf business applications to support the new processes and providing change management to ensure a smooth implementation for all users and customers. Oracle will provide rapid and easy access to people, management information, products and services as well as significantly improve responsiveness to customer needs. More effective business processes and systems will directly result in higher quality and lower cost products.

A Customer-Focused Approach

The HR Project oriented their implementation strategy toward the customer, from the organization and focus of the teams to the determination of which capabilities within Oracle to utilize. The customer-focused approach departs from the traditional functional or process model by maintaining the perspective of the customer continuously throughout the entire lifecycle of the project. The Project expects their results to benefit not only the customer, but also the HR department as well as JPL's entire enterprise.

An advantage of directing the approach toward users is the resulting high level of customer satisfaction. The implementation team acknowledges that the customer maintains a unique perspective that can transcend function, process and systems. Therefore, a customer-focused approach requires participation by the end user and stakeholders in all phases of implementation from software selection to testing the pilots. By treating the user viewpoint as the focal point from which all

customer needs and expectations radiate, this implementation approach observes processes from within the customer mindset outward, rather than examining processes from the vantage point of the HR perspective and randomly soliciting customers for their view point.

The customer-focused methodology is organized around specific customer groups: executives, middle-managers and employees. Each customer group is identified and analyzed to develop a better understanding of their needs and expectations. It is critical to invest the time required to understand the needs and viewpoint of the customer. Along with identifying the customer's needs, it is important to identify Oracle capabilities that meet or exceed user needs and involve in the entire implementation process from start to finish.

Customer-Focused Teams

The HR Project is organized to deliver products and services focused on customer type. By providing services that enable the customer, the HR organization can now accomplish in the personnel realm that which has never been done before - faster, better and cheaper.

To reinforce the importance of customers in the implementation, the HR Project is organized into four working teams based on customer type: Strategic Services, Partnership Services, Expertise Services, and Direct Services. All of these services represent a unique perspective and have contributed to a high level of customer interaction and positive feedback. The teams are characterized by their customer set, transaction time and use of information. The team co-leaders' expertise represent HR functional knowledge combined with the customer/user perspective. The teams are currently at the detailed design of the future state phase of implementation and results to date are described throughout this paper. The teams do not reflect the current organizational model of the Human Resources organization at JPL, however, creating an HR department around customer-focused service centers is an intriguing concept. The next few paragraphs describe the focus of each team and the vision for the services they will provide in the future.

Strategic Services will consist of Human Resources experts focused on helping executive level management determine long-range planning three to ten years out. Results of the strategic planning would be policy directions expressed in general terms. These services will have an enterprise-wide impact, enabling

executives to utilize forecasting tools to lead JPL into the 21st century. A sample of potential services that address executives' strategic planning needs include: Workforce Planning, Training Strategy, Diversity Strategy, and Human Resources Information Systems Strategy.

Partnership Services will have Human Resources experts who partner with various internal organizations in the planning of workforce requirements and other related issues. The time line for these issues will average one to three years. These services will be directed towards upper and mid-level management who will provide organizational metrics and advisory services to better manage their businesses. A sample list of services that focuses on organizational needs includes: Skills Forecasting, Institutional Skills Growth, Curriculum Development, Organizational Development, Change Management, and information Needs Planning.

Expertise Services will provide supervisors with decision-making tools and information. The time line for this service type will be several days to a few weeks. Time services will be directed towards the first-level management. Managers will be able to use historical data as a basis for decision-making. A list of services that will assist in the employer/employee relationship includes: Outplacement, Recruiting, Terminations, Employee Development, Career Planning, Salary Review, Performance Management, and Affirmative Action/Employee Equal Opportunity.

Finally, Direct Services will focus on the individual employee, with some supervisory uses. These services are aimed at administration of rules-based transactions/processing. Employees can expect immediate responses. Yes/no answers or factual information will be generated directly to employees. Employees will have multiple modes of access to services, i.e., touch-tone telephone, telephone voice-to-system, desktop computer, Internet, FAX and walk-in. Much of the system data also will be generated at this level. Services that will be available are: Staffing, Position Control, Employment Verification Separations/Retirement, New Hire Orientation, Training/Education Access, Compensation Reward and Recognition, Payroll, Benefits, Demographic Information and Information Access.

Oracle HRMS delivers capabilities that can be aimed at the needs of all the various customer groups, Oracle is committed to the delivery of functionality on the web as evidenced by their Web Employee, Web Customer

applications. In addition, Oracle has an integrated CASE and development environment across Windows, Mac, Unix, and Web platforms which pertain to Direct Services. Where the teams detect a gap between customer requirements and Oracle HRMS, Oracle has application partners who supply solutions for target markets where core Oracle applications do not provide necessary functionality. For example, Oracle partners, such as Resumix, have viable solutions that will support Expertise Services' recruiting and staffing vision.

Customer Involvement and Participation

Customer involvement is a viable method of creating buy-in and user advocacy. Customers can participate during all phases of implementation. By allowing the customer to contribute from beginning to end, they not only increase their knowledge and exposure to Oracle capabilities, but also help gather data and define future processes. The HR Project's customers have collaborated with the teams during three specific phases to date: Selection, Current State Definition and Future State Visioning. The upcoming phases that will benefit from user participation are development and pilot testing.

The HR Project defines customer levels using several terms: stakeholder, customer and end user. "Stakeholder" represents any individual or entity that perceives a connection with the service. The term "customer" denotes a recipient or user of the service. The word "end user" refers to a functional user of the service.

The Project anticipated that customers would increase their level of commitment and support to a successful implementation based on participation from prior phases. Therefore, at times it was appropriate to identify and invite stakeholders to certain formal sessions and at other times, a more informal approach of self-selection made sense. For example, the visioning sessions benefited from multiple perspectives and benefited brought by the diverse stakeholder group who attended the sessions. So, the HR Project carefully constructed the invitation lists and made every effort to ensure adequate participation. In other instances, the meeting invite lists were general and open forums to everyone.

JPL began by involving the customers in the software selection process, which provided them an opportunity to see Oracle's capabilities to integrate information and provide immediate access and flexibility. This

occurrence was a first in terms of the extent of customer input into the selection process. Many of the participants had never been included in this level of decision making or ever asked about their opinion on how information technology could make their job easier. From the selection activity akin, many end users and stakeholders were exposed immediately to Oracle's capabilities and were visualizing how to significantly improve their current work processes by incorporating what they witnessed in the demonstrations.

The next level of involvement occurred during the analysis of the current state of HR processes, systems and performance. Each customer group (including the functional users) assisted the project in developing an analysis of the current state. Not only did this evaluation provide a chance for customers to exchange various perspectives, but it allowed the Project to note specific areas of alignment or improvement. Other outputs from the current state analysis included identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the processes to determine what was working well and therefore should be retained in the future and what needed improvement. All of these data points contributed toward determining the priority of implementation for all of the processes.

To envision the future state of HR processes and systems, the HR Project invited customer groups to provide valuable feedback and assistance. During this phase, end users lent their experiences toward visioning the HR of the future and resolving how to best utilize oracle HRMS capabilities. After these visioning sessions, the HR Project summarized the findings gathered from the previous requirements definition phase. All levels of customer feedback on the weaknesses of the current state were combined to create a useful output that cataloged the "Top Ten Things to Avoid in Future State Development" (see Exhibit 1). This top ten list was then used during the Future State visioning sessions to remind customers of attributes and characteristics that should not reappear in the future.

Another customer output from the current state activity was a list of "Significant Customer Requirements and Expectations" (see Exhibit 2). While compiling the data for this list, the HR Project realized that the principalsystem and process requirements for executive, middle-management and employee customer groups were almost perfectly aligned. The number one customer expectation of the future state was "easy,

direct access to accurate and updated information". In addition to providing a baseline of expectations for future state development, both of these charts demonstrated to the customers that any perceived differences in expectations or requirements because of organizational hierarchy were non-existent at a high level. As a result, the customer groups tended to coalesce faster in subsequent sessions and have a better understanding of the overall direction toward which the Project was aiming. By capturing customer feedback, analyzing it and utilizing the output for ensuing sessions, the HR Project demonstrated to its customers that had listened to them, and visibly incorporated their words and ideas into the implementation plans.

Top Ten Things to Avoid in Future State Development	
1 Non-value added steps or signatures	6 Manual process steps for anything rules-based
2 Human Resources making decisions for employees	7 Processes not connected to business needs
3 "Training-required" processes	X Over-proliferation of information
4 Redundant data bases	9 1 linear process steps
5 Complicated rules	10 One mode of access

Exhibit 1

Significant HR Customer Requirements and Expectations	
• Easy, direct access	• Flexible and empowering processes to meet changing needs
• Automated search capability of integrated databases	• One-stop shop for all HR-related help and services
• Integration of processes and databases to easily do reporting	• Ensure confidentiality and security of data
• Aligned processes to strategic goals or systems	• Range of help available e.g., FAQ's and templates
• Shortened cycle time by streamlining and simplifying of processes	• Clarity of roles and rules and consistency of responses

Exhibit 2

Customer involvement during future state development was not limited to the groups that physically attended the discussions. Employees that participated in the visioning sessions were given an opportunity to test their innovative models real-time. The participants

used a validation method called field testing to determine the soundness and viability of their initial concepts. After creating a vision of future process [that incorporated Oracle capabilities, the group divided into teams of two and made appointments with users of the processes at the executive, middle management and employee levels. During these appointments, the teams then explained their concepts and asked for feedback on strengths and weaknesses. The HR Project received favorable responses from the customer groups that were interviewed on their opinions as well as from the teams that validated the concepts from the visioning sessions. The field testing method produced a pleasant departure from the traditional techniques normally used to validate concepts. Field testing also allowed the participants to refine their designs based on the fresh perspectives provided by other customers provided through field testing.

Participation in Oracle Special Interest Groups

Encouraging customers to join the implementation team in attending Global HRIS Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings can create positive regard toward Oracle as well as have an impact on Oracle's HR enhancements. The Global HRIS SIG held its first meeting at the 1996 Fall OAUG conference. At that meeting, the HR Project volunteered to host the inaugural meeting in Los Angeles. Hosting a SIG meeting at the home office afforded JPL customers and stakeholders a chance to interface and network with SIG members. Therefore, customers, who would never have attended an Oracle conference or been exposed to external perspectives on implementation, benefited from talking to over 50 SIG members that attended the meeting. Instead of having to fund travel and convincing stakeholders to attend, the HR Project brought the Oracle users to JPL customers, creating an opportunity to increase customer awareness of Oracle products, capabilities and upcoming releases and participate in product development.

Delighting the Customer

After using a customer-focused approach for the Oracle HRMS implementation and business process reengineering, readers may wonder what our results are thus far. How can one successfully engage customers and satisfy them to the point of delight? As one can imagine, where one or more gather to discuss any topic, the possibility of dissension enters into the picture. The key to customer satisfaction and maintaining alignment lies in successfully managing expectations along the path toward implementation. Our approach to date

has been fairly successful based on follow-on attendance at sessions and feedback from customers after meetings.

Management of customer expectations is derived from clear, direct and consistent communication. Management of customer expectations results from using plain English and up-front interactions that seek to mitigate resistance to change by outlining the business reasons driving change and anticipated benefits from the customer's perspective. Successful management of customer expectations requires trust and time dedicated to answering questions and not only hearing what the customer has said, but demonstrating that you heard by responding in an intelligible and satisfactory (to them) manner. Clearly, customer delight lies in the eyes of the beholder, but as the implementation team, you can take certain precautions and adhere to specific customer interface standards to ensure the highest level of satisfaction.

The HR Project has informally noticed themes of customer opinion and behavior that follow a curve demonstrating customer commitment in change (see Exhibit 3). These themes were gathered at debriefing sessions for HR Project members. The debriefings were used to discuss customer participation, behavior and opinions at implementation meetings. Generally, during their first interactions with Oracle and the HR Team, customers showed signs of resistance, negativity and non-support of change. As their level and frequency of participation increased, more customers showed signs of buy-in and acceptance, even voicing their positive perceptions toward the future state. As the implementation moves toward the development, pilot testing and transition to production, the HR Project anticipates that the majority of the customers will continue following the curve upward by exhibiting acceptance toward the new HR processes and systems. Finally, customer delight could be realized as the majority of customers adopt and commit to the innovative systems and processes they helped to create.

Making Win-Win a Reality

Realizing a win-win on various customer levels is a feasible outcome based on the HR Project's customer-focused approach and the level of customer participation in documenting the current state, defining the future state vision and developing the detail of future HR systems and processes. We predict that the customer, the HR department as well as the enterprise

will perceive value and benefit from implementing Oracle HRMS.

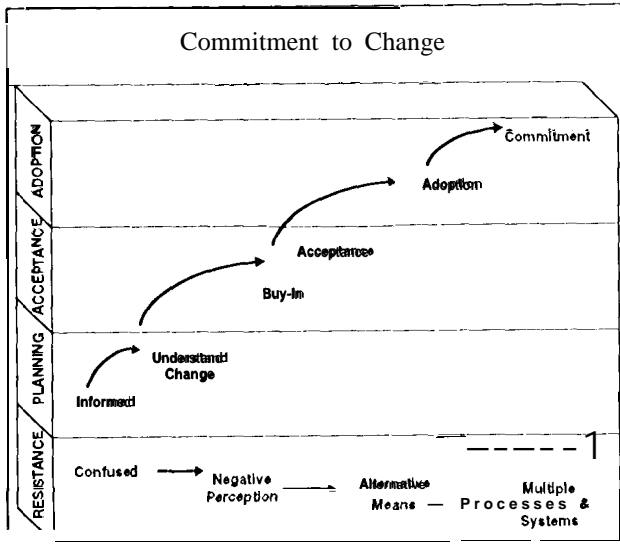


Exhibit 3

A win for customers is being demonstrated through the trend of their acceptance of and participation in the new HR systems and processes. Customers have not only accepted requests to provide input, but afterward ask when the next opportunity for input will occur. That is a dramatic departure from the initial interfaces and an example of the level of positive reinforcement for the implementation strategy.

A win for the HR department is being achieved also through eliminating non-value added activities and transforming HR activities from clerical processing to a service-oriented (~); from policing, to consulting; from being perceived as an obstacle to being perceived as a partner in getting the job done right and on time. These changes truly position the HR department precisely where they want to be in the organization; a significant and important contributor toward the accomplishment of the JPL missions,

After securing a perception of value from the customers and the HR department, a win at the enterprise level is inevitable, JPL can accomplish its initial goals for forming the New Business Solutions Program, to meet the business needs of the Laboratory by enabling smaller missions through providing higher quality business processes, reliable systems at lower costs, and supporting more effective and integrated technology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to succeed in realizing a win-win outcome at the completion of implementing Oracle HR, a customer-focused approach is a viable solution to aligning and managing customer expectations as well as meeting and exceeding functional end user and enterprise-wide business needs and requirements.

About the Author

Jeanette K. Mills is a Team Co-Lead for Partnership Services and a member of the HR Project Core Team. Prior to working on the New Business Solutions Program she was a member of a Reengineering Team focused on the Growth and Assignment of People at JPL. In addition, she has nine! years of experience as a Senior Contract Negotiator in the Acquisition Division at JPL where she supports various flight projects.

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