

Your District's Got Talent: Technology Tools to Help Keep Good Employees

By Cheryl Turk-Peterson



Even in these extraordinary times of state budget shortfalls, furlough programs, and layoffs, school districts must still fill positions and compete for top talent among Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Y (those born in 1981 or later). Has the time come to take a more strategic approach to managing your workforce?

A survey of 150 human resource departments uncovered some of the most important questions that HR leaders want their talent management systems to answer, including these:

- Where can I find more leaders both internally and externally?
- Who are my high-potential employees and how do I keep them?

- Which employees are getting ready to leave?
- Do we have succession profiles for key jobs? Do they help us recruit, retain, promote, and reward our best employees?
- Do we have a single data source for all information about our people?

In the past, there was little urgency to have these kinds of data readily available since significant talent shortages in the labor market were rare. HR departments could focus their attention almost exclusively on optimizing HR processes. Times have changed and so has the role of technology; it's gone beyond a sole focus on optimizing key processes like benefits and payroll administration.

Although streamlining those processes is still critical, organizations are looking at additional investments in technology to take it one step further and to harness the tools they need to remain competitive given the workforce changes they see before them.

An organization with an integrated talent management system can package employee system-of-record data with higher-level talent management and workforce management applications. Such a system allows organizations to move beyond automation, using analytics to leverage data more effectively and make more informed decisions about their people, positioning themselves for greater success.

These systems support three areas:

- **Talent acquisition and the on-boarding process:** strategically fill current and future employment gaps with top-quality talent, shorten the recruitment cycle, streamline the on-boarding process, and ensure compliance with budgetary rules and union requirements
- **Employee retention:** enhance employee satisfaction with step-by-step guides to complete the on-boarding and new hire training processes and online employee access to record life events, review employee management goals, schedule professional development, and review paychecks
- **Workforce management:** facilitate complete compliance with No Child Left Behind initiatives, manage all state-specific certification and endorsements on the

organizational job or position classification, and track individual employee assignments against instructional requirements

Talent Acquisition and On-Boarding

Parents expect the best possible education for their children in a safe and trusted environment. The citizens in your community expect the most from those tax dollars that are earmarked for education initiatives. Your workforce plays a key role in making that happen. Your people are one of your most valuable assets.

Coupled with today's economic environment where administrators are expected to be as efficient as possible and to manage budgets effectively, having the ability to make rapid, well-informed decisions about your workforce is critical. Aligning people with key organizational objectives and identifying, developing, and retaining the best and the brightest are vital to accomplishing your goals.

Talent management systems help hiring managers, recruiters, and others involved in recruitment activities strategically acquire top-quality talent. They offer tools to define workforce needs, tap into appropriate job-candidate sources, efficiently communicate offers and contracts, and effectively manage data about current and potential talent. Once you have selected your top talent, the on-boarding process can be expedited by leveraging functionality for all employee transitions. As a result, your new and current employees are better equipped to quickly and productively perform in their new roles.

Employee Retention

Every day, you're challenged to cultivate, assess, and retain employees across the district and stay in compliance with federal and state rules and guidelines. Talent management systems can help address these unique challenges. They can help you manage and develop the best teachers and other school employees, reveal where the top talent resides in the school district, recognize top performers, and create ways to identify and track specific employee goals. Plus, they can identify those behaviors that make people succeed.

School districts can also use talent management systems to establish ongoing employee professional development plans, which will not only increase employee satisfaction but will also have a positive effect on students and their performance. Standardized, on-line performance appraisal forms can be created and deployed, including clearly defined evaluation scales based on mandates like union requirements and state-specific certifications.

Workforce Management

As a public entity, you must balance the complexity of unique requirements and regulations against the need for flexibility as mandates and compliance rules are prone to change. Talent management systems can help school

districts bridge that gap and set a model and standards for their schools to follow now and in the future.

As you know, school districts manage many employees across locations, positions, and work schedules. Technology tools can help automate and simplify the complexity of the ongoing management of teacher contracts, enhancing the accuracy of managing contract work. Technology can help you gain a full view of all aspects of your workforce, positioning you for making better business decisions to maximize the value of your most important assets—your people.

The dynamics, trends, and profiles of your workforce have evolved and will continue to evolve. Although changes will undoubtedly occur, what won't change is the importance of teachers, administrators, and other support staff delivering the best possible education and environment for the students in your community.

Technology—specifically, integrated talent management systems—can play a critical role in managing your workforce and remaining competitive for the entire life cycle of your employees—from hire to retention to retirement, all while addressing the unique needs of the education industry.

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