



White Paper

Collaboration Throughout the Employee Life Cycle

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IDC OPINION

The HR function at the modern enterprise today involves many important tasks that touch every aspect of the employee life cycle. From recruiting and onboarding to learning and performance management, HR is an integral component of ensuring that the employees are engaged so that the organization can achieve its strategic objectives. Since HR is involved across all facets and departments within an organization, collaboration – internal within the HR function as well as with other departments, manager and employee, and employee peer to peer – is increasingly critical throughout the employee life cycle.

Organizations are becoming increasingly diverse. To facilitate and even foster collaboration, software tools and applications can be used to streamline communication, coordinate activities, identify expertise, and share knowledge among employees and between departments. The goal of fostering collaboration is to improve communication, which in turn streamlines business processes and delivers better business outcomes – results that HR can positively affect.

IN THIS WHITE PAPER

This white paper discusses how collaboration and social technologies can improve HR effectiveness, speed time to productivity, streamline workforce activities, and improve employee satisfaction across the employee life cycle. In addition, this white paper discusses the SAP Jam collaboration software and explores how one customer is using social to improve collaboration and enhance employee engagement.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Collaborative technology is beginning to play a major role in many areas of human capital management (HCM) and more generally in engaging the workforce. Consider the most important HR functions at most organizations as they affect individual employees:

- Recruiting the right people as swiftly as possible
- Onboarding new employees to speed acclimation, training, and productivity
- Crossboarding to swiftly and effectively move employees into new roles
- Smoothly transition separated workers

- Performance management that focuses on continuous and inclusive goal setting and skills improvement
- Learning that empowers mentoring, coaching, and peer-to-peer learning

In addition, since all employees interact with HR, collaboration software can be used to establish an HR help center for employee assistance, as well as a knowledge base of answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Why and When Collaboration Matters

Both senior line management and HR executives are considering how talent strategies might affect business outcomes such as improved customer satisfaction. To answer such a question, one needs to think about all facets of talent. For example, improving customer satisfaction may entail choosing the right job candidates from a "success profile" formed from assessing those doing the job well today. It may mean that key skills are lacking and need to be improved through targeted training, or it may mean sharpening retention strategies for high performers. In such an environment, collaboration can be what's exactly needed.

Today's organizations are often geographically dispersed and include many employees who are adept at using mobile technologies including social tools to do their jobs. Within HR, collaboration tools can enhance employee engagement – enabling convenient learning options, knowledge sharing, and expertise location services – all conveniently in a manner that is seamless.

Collaboration is key throughout the entire employment life cycle from pre-employment all the way through post-employment. Prime examples for collaboration throughout the HR functions include:

- **Recruiting:** These activities are designed to attract prospective employees and identify talent inside or outside the organization. The time required to fill open positions can be dramatically lowered through collaboration between recruiting and hiring managers. Making timely offers can be critical to obtain top talent.
- **Onboarding:** Getting new hires up to speed as soon as possible is a critical capability; HR is charged with instilling the feeling of connection and purpose from the new hires' first days – and reinforcing that feeling throughout the employee life cycle. Introducing new hires to their new peers and management is essential to true immersion, which can yield better new-hire satisfaction.
- **Performance management:** The performance management function is one that is increasingly being put under the microscope. Many enterprises would like to overhaul performance to make it more continuous, modern, and meaningful. The spectrum of performance management includes:
 - Developing overall performance plans and what gets measured
 - Building departmental and organizationwide goals
 - Building performance improvement plans
 - Assessing employees against goals
 - Assessing employees on skills and competencies
 - Conducting periodic employee review sessions
 - Setting goals for the next review cycle
 - Managing performance workflow

There is a disconnect, at times, between HR and line-of-business managers in terms of performance management and goals, indicating the need for more and better alignment between HR and the internal management team. As well, performance is meaningless without close alignment between managers and employees. Performance needs to be continuous and interactive to achieve performance improvement and overall enterprise effectiveness.

- **Learning:** Companies deploy learning management applications designed to automate the development, tracking, and delivery of learning content and experiences to employees with the goal of improving employee skills and productivity. Modern collaborative learning environments enhance the learning experience with blended learning and through peer-to-peer and group learning, one-on-one coaching, and fostering mentoring relationships.
- **HR call center:** The HR department has to field daily inquiries and requests from the workforce. Often inquiries are repetitive yet common questions. Combining collaborative technologies with a comprehensive knowledge base can cut down on HR's need to respond to such inquiries due to employee self-service capabilities; this in turn makes HR more responsive and improves employee satisfaction while also empowering individual employees. In addition, collaboration enables HR agents to become more efficient, as agents work together on issue resolution; collaboration as well facilitates the sharing of best practices between HR business partners.
- **Expertise location:** Pockets of expertise exist throughout the enterprise, but finding it is no easy feat. Collaborative technologies can unlock those hidden skills for the betterment of the whole organization.

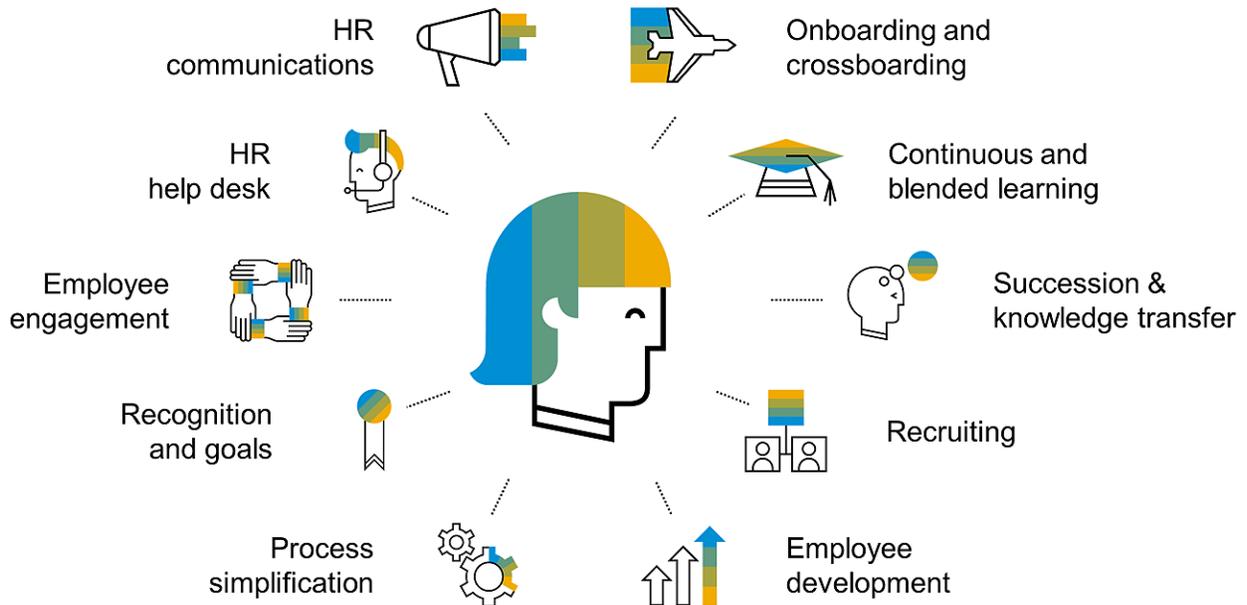
CONSIDERING SAP JAM

SAP Jam is a collaboration platform designed to help organizations bring together data, business processes, and people to deliver measurable results. Specifically, SAP Jam aims to deliver social collaboration where and how employees work throughout an organization. One of the main focal points of SAP Jam is enhancing collaboration through "work patterns" – companywide learning, enterprise work, IT work, team and topic work, and work with integrated data. Within an organization or department, SAP Jam can enable the easy sharing of data, documents, schedules, and the like and also enable interactive Q&As and FAQ pages.

Within HR, SAP Jam can bring together recruiting, onboarding, performance management, and learning processes into a collaborative environment, enabling organizations to manage the entire employee life cycle (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

SAP Jam Adds the Human Element to HR Transformation



Source: SAP, 2017

For the HR department specifically, there are several benefits to collaboration that is supported by technology:

- **Recruiting:** Reduce recruiting cycles, shorten time to hire, and identify internal candidates – key functions that can contribute to competitive advantage and lower costs.
- **Onboarding:** Reduce time to contribution for new hires, transitions, and relocations.
- **Performance management:** Engage employees in goal setting and performance recognition, thereby enhancing employee satisfaction.
- **Learning:** Bring together formal and informal learning options, and provide self-paced and convenient options.

Collaborative functions can increase alignment between HR and business units and maximize employee engagement throughout the employee life cycle. In particular, engagement is critical as companies embark on digital transformation or HR transformation initiatives. In these situations, it is important to ensure that employees fully understand the strategy so that transformation efforts become relevant to their daily work. Collaboration integrated into communications can aid problem solving by identifying experts and facilitating the creation of knowledge bases.

SAP Jam is designed to be flexible, allowing organizations to customize work patterns and business processes, to integrate with third-party data and applications, and to extend by adding new capabilities and incorporating gamification.

Case Study: Regions Bank in Birmingham, Alabama

Several years ago, the learning department at Regions Bank began to look at using enterprise social technology. Regions Financial Corporation is a bank and financial services company headquartered in the Regions Center in Birmingham, Alabama. "At that time," says John Quesenberry, vice president and manager of learning technologies, "the learning management system (LMS) and other formal technology tools then deployed weren't meeting all the needs of the Birmingham, Alabama-based bank." The goal was to use technology to foster a learning culture while giving employees some degree of self-direction in terms of career development. "We were looking at a number of platforms, and we were close to a deal," says Quesenberry. "Then for financial reasons – the big credit crunch was going on – we had to back off."

As Quesenberry recalls, Regions Bank began to revisit the issue of enterprise social technology about a year after the idea first emerged. It was then that "we started looking at SAP Jam because we already had a relationship with SuccessFactors," he says. (SAP SuccessFactors is a human capital management software provider.)

Of course, SAP Jam also had to meet the needs of Regions Bank, and Quesenberry says that the software had enough of the features the company was looking for; at the end of 2012, Regions Bank decided to implement SAP Jam.

Initially, admits Quesenberry, Regions Bank really didn't know how to utilize the software. "We had this set of tools, but we didn't have any expertise at all." He says a consultant recommended by SuccessFactors came to help with the planning and strategy, and a few pilot programs were launched in 2013 and 2014. It wasn't until 2015 that the software was rolled out more fully to the organization.

Today, SAP Jam is available to the bank's 22,000+ employees and supports the move away from transactional-based training to more of a bottom-up approach, "allowing more control in the hands of the associates in terms of their careers and progression," Quesenberry explains. One of the ways the bank is using SAP Jam is as a home base of sorts for learning initiatives, with collections of related content and training linked and available in one place. For example, a new product or system introduction may require employees to be well versed in an involved process – through SAP Jam, various lessons, tutorials, tips, and advice available. The material is both formal and informal and blends the two to provide employees with a level of continuity that wasn't possible with the previous technologies. Learners are also able to collaborate and ask questions in a space that allows all to benefit from the exchanges.

Operational Risk Support Manager Tim Ames describes SAP Jam as particularly valuable during a departmental reorganization. "SAM Jam allowed us to communicate any new changes or updates instantly through the group notification function," Ames says. "The discussion board feature was the most useful component for us – *associates* could ask questions and get answers back the same day."

SAP Jam also allows Regions Bank to centralize subject matter expertise online. Experts in specific areas record videos that are available for learning and development initiatives. More recently, the HR department has begun using SAP Jam to share best practices and disseminate HR-related information. All communication around projects – such as a recent move to a new recruiting system – is facilitated using SAP Jam as the hub.

Project management is greatly improved when using SAP Jam. Gone are the email chains for project management, which led to confusion regarding project status and individual responsibilities. "SAP Jam has smoothed out a lot of the rough edges in terms of project management," Quesenberry says. Business leaders check SAP Jam periodically and know how a project is going without sifting through emails. "SAP Jam provided an excellent platform for collaboration between our team and learning and development as we refined materials for training delivery," says Carolyn Hull, settlement risk manager. "It eliminated the need to email versions and revisions to one another or set up shared drives for access. All versions of our development were captured, including comments, in a closed team until we were ready to publish the materials."

As for the effect of SAP Jam on employees, anecdotal evidence indicates employee engagement and collaboration have increased since the software's implementation. In addition, Quesenberry says that SAP Jam facilitates a level of communication and collaboration that didn't happen easily before. "It's allowing folks who are not necessarily technical to share content in an online way," he says. Most people who are comfortable with Microsoft Office can readily pick up SAP Jam tools.

Now that SAP Jam is online, Quesenberry will be looking to add analytics and facilitate onboarding processes. As for advice to others, Quesenberry offers up one lesson based on Regions Bank's experience. "If you don't have the expertise, be willing to take the time and spend the money," he says. "Don't just look at the technology but partner with somebody, bring in consultants, do whatever you need to do ... to do this right."

Challenges/Opportunities

There is a disconnect between HR and lines of business when it comes to ownership of HR processes and subsequently responsibility for implementing systems. Given there are numerous different buyers of collaborative technology in the enterprise, SAP Jam needs to present a full complement of use cases spanning all functions.

Legacy systems may also present a challenge, as different departments within a single organization may rely on a preferred vendor or system for collaboration, ranging from email to dedicated collaboration tools. Trying to replace such technologies without a central mandate may hit internal roadblocks, thereby inhibiting collaboration on an organizationwide scale. Clients of SAP HCM solutions that have already standardized on a collaboration platform other than SAP Jam may find it difficult to move to SAP Jam. If they do not move, however, they will not be able to take advantage of the same seamless capabilities offered to those that opt for SAP Jam.

CONCLUSION

For many organizations, effectively managing talent – spanning recruitment, hiring, training, and retaining – is the key to competitive advantage. As social technologies become pervasive, HR departments can use social tools as a means to increase collaboration throughout the employee life cycle.

Through collaboration via social technologies, many important functions can be enhanced and significant benefits realized; at the beginning of the employee life cycle, organizations can streamline recruiting, identify internal candidates faster, and reduce time to hire. As employees progress in their

careers, collaboration can enhance both formal and informal learning. And within HR itself, collaboration can streamline and standardize policy rollouts and enable better HR/business alignment.

SAP Jam is a social collaboration tool designed to enhance collaboration throughout an organization – including the HR department. If SAP can address the challenges highlighted in this white paper, SAP Jam can succeed in the important market for social collaboration tools.

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