

Answers to the “Why Aren’t We...?” Questions

Part two in the series on “If Your Only Tool Is A Hammer, Every Business Challenge Looks Like A Nail:” How to ask the right questions. **By Naomi Lee Bloom**



Naomi Lee Bloom,
Managing Partner Bloom
& Wallace, may be
reached at 239-454-7305
or naomibloom@
mindspring.com.

As promised last month, here are more zingers for evaluating any unsolicited outsourcing proposals that come at you, not as a byproduct of strategic HRM and HRMDS (human resources management delivery systems) planning—although they’re useful in that context as well—but as a response to the “Why aren’t we moving aggressively to comprehensive HRM BPO?” question often asked by a returnee from the latest provider briefing or sales event cloaked in thought leadership. Here we go:

- Who’s going to manage the financial aspects of this outsourcing proposal to ensure that we achieve the intended results? How? Do we have the people, processes, and technology to do this effectively? What would it take to put them in place? Has this been factored into the outsourcing idea or proposal?
- Who’s going to manage the implementation, including systems integration, aspects of this outsourcing proposal to ensure that we achieve the intended results? How? Do we have the people, processes, and technology to do this effectively? What would it take to put those people, processes, and technology in place? Has this been considered in the outsourcing proposal?
- Who’s going to manage the performance aspects of this outsourcing proposal to ensure that we achieve the intended results? How? Do we have the people, processes, and technology to do this effectively? What would it take to put those in place? Is this part of the business case for the outsourcing proposal?
- Has our lawyer negotiated at least as many HRM outsourcing contracts as the outsourcing provider’s lawyer? Do we have the legal and vendor management horsepower needed to make this work for our organization? What is that aspect of the arrangement going to cost?
- Where will our HR executive, CFO, CIO, or other executives be two years from now? Will they be as enthusiastic (or as unenthusiastic) about this proposal if they are going to be judged long-term on how well this strategy works for our organization?
- Where will our outsourcing provider’s account executive, operations executive, or other executives be two

years from now? Do they have as much at stake as we do professionally? What’s their track record for delivery? What’s their record for staying in place long enough to experience the reality of meeting their commitments?

- What if the outsourcing provider our organization likes and selects is then acquired by an outsourcing provider our organization rejected because of their management style, ethics, customer service track record, technology, geographic coverage, etc.? How easily can our company get out of the outsourcing contract?
- What if the outsourcing provider we like and selected decides to exit the business (for whatever reasons)? How easily can our organization find another provider, migrate to that provider, and absorb the costs and disruption of such a change?
- Frankly, how can our organization escape from any comprehensive HRM BPO provider, among many other considerations, when a full self-service rollout is part of the proposal and any change in that rollout, e.g. to another provider’s self-service software, would be visible and disruptive to our entire workforce?
- If we accept this outsourcing proposal, is there any going back once it’s implemented? If our company changes its mind in two or three years, what’s involved in bringing this activity, function, process, or integrated processes, along with the relevant HRMDS components, back in-house? What would it take to move to another provider once we have implemented with the first one? Is our company going down an irreversible path? Do we care?

As strongly as I support the use of HRM outsourcing—from gaining access to expertise via the use of expert resources to using business applications packages rather than “rolling our own” to every flavor of HRM and IT process outsourcing—there really are some outsourcing proposals that should be drowned at birth. Hopefully, the questions in last month’s and this month’s columns can be used, judiciously, as the cement shoes for that purpose. Next month’s column provides the final questions to be considered when anyone makes specific outsourcing suggestions. **HRO**