

Software Scenarios for Starters

AN ABC TO HELP HRO BUYERS FIND THE RIGHT SOFTWARE. BY NAOMI BLOOM

In my July/August column, I introduced scripted scenarios—what they are, how they are structured, and why they are needed. As part of the special technology feature in this issue, this column will provide more information on how they are structured along with a “starter kit” of potential scenario topics.

Let's recap for those of you who missed the first column on scenarios (or whose dogs ate their homework assignments.) First, you need to identify your own “starter kit” of scenario topics. Come up with a list of HRM business processes, business rules, and data that are a source of confusion, administrative complexity, or

high cost. Are there obvious groupings? Could some of these elements be standardized, simplified, or even eliminated under an HRM delivery system (HRMDS) overhaul? Once you have this list of “must change” HRM elements, you are ready to start developing scenarios.

One of the most valuable benefits of outsourcing (but only when it's done well, i.e. strategically), and one of the best ways of addressing your “must change” list, is making the transition to an outsourcer whose HRMDS platform and service level agreement enable or even require you to make those important changes.

A scripted scenarios package will be used internally and externally, but with certain details “hidden” in the external presentation (see sidebar). Wrapped around your scenario package will be the processes and additional materials you use to identify

potential providers, create your short list, orchestrate the scripted scenario demos, orchestrate your evaluation based on those demos, and then proceed through the rest of the provider evaluation process. However, whatever the rest of your process, an excellent scripted scenario package provides a solid foundation from which to compare offerings as well as to understand the strengths and limitations of specific offerings. It's easy to promise results; it's much harder to demonstrate them.

Scripted scenarios must be made specific to your organization and expanded as needed to hit your HRM “hot buttons.” They must also be fleshed out so that evaluators really understand what each scenario means and what you are expecting to see. But the time you spend putting your scenario package together is time very well spent, so let's get started. ■

Starter Topics

Here are some suggested topics for your scripted scenarios:

- Employee life cycle
- Position-seeker life cycle
- Payroll, from time-to-gross through gross-to-net to distribution and accounting
- Ongoing organization complexities, e.g. employees holding multiple part-time positions
- Total compensation, including cash and both traditional and non-traditional benefits
- Timekeeping, attendance management, and workforce/work scheduling
- Staffing process life cycle, including succession planning
- Competency-centered performance management and workforce development, including leadership development
- Environmental, safety, and health processes
- Work/workforce analytics and decision support for all “customers”
- Workforce and labor organization relations, including unionized processes
- Workforce and work planning, including outsourcing and contracting
- Mergers, acquisitions, and other discontinuous organizational change(s)
- Global and HRM processes, business rules
- Industry-specific workforce designs

Scripted Scenario Packages

Scenario Context

A short, written description of the organization that provides the context for all of the scenarios that follow. It's usually easier to write the scenarios first, and then collect the facts that you found yourself repeating, as well as all of the other information that an outsider would need to make sense of your scenarios.

Terms of Reference

A glossary for terms used in the scenarios, whether industry- or organization-specific, for which you've developed very precise definitions. It's best to define your terms rather than presume that every reader will understand them and how you intend them to be used. For example define what you mean by “employee,” “competency,” “business unit,” and “cost center.” If you're using Bloom & Wallace's HRM Business Model “Starter Kit” or the work of the HR-XML Consortium, you can include the relevant concepts and terminology here.

Scenario Elements

- Context — the business context specific to this scenario
- Scenario — the actual scenario
- Basic demonstration points, with the expected result by item or group — these are the specific points that the provider must demonstrate credibly
- Extended demonstration points, with the expected results by item or group — these are the specific points whose demonstration by a provider will help illuminate their competitive advantages
- Evaluation expectations (this section is to be shared only internally and with evaluator) describes how you will interpret what you see in the provider's demonstration. What are you hoping to see and why? Are there particular HRMDS behaviors, manual or automated, that you're trying to illuminate? Are there specific underlying data structures, service delivery models, or processes for which you're looking? What are the response times, elapsed times to closure, and response quality?
- Evaluation notes (to be completed during evaluations and shared only internally and with evaluators.)