



Tech's Top 10

The world's "Most Powerful HR Technology Experts," as selected by the editors of *Human Resource Executive*®, offer HR leaders their thoughts and advice concerning today's and tomorrow's HR technology trends and challenges.

BY ANDREW R. MCILVAINE

In case you haven't been paying attention, these are very interesting times in the world of HR technology. Two major, innovative vendors—SuccessFactors and Taleo—were recently gobbled up by much-larger ERP providers (SAP and Oracle, respectively). Social-networking and mobile applications continue to change not just the way many HR departments do business, but the very look and feel of the applications they use. Cloud computing and Software-as-a-Service are on the path to render obsolete the old model of on-premise

software, with its expensive and time-consuming upgrades.

Amid this backdrop of change, we here at *HRE* felt it was time to recognize the people who typically stand out for the guidance they provide to thousands of companies with money to spend on technology, but little preparation or strategic planning under way. Inevitably, these are the people who often end up getting a call from harried HR leaders when projects blow past budgets and deadlines, things don't work as they should or—in some cases—at all, and line managers and vice presidents voice disgruntlement and dissatisfaction with the new HR "solutions" that, it turns out, do nothing but complicate their lives.

In selecting the "Most Powerful HR Technology Experts," we surveyed the field for those individuals who have demonstrated outstanding thought leadership and are having the greatest impact on organizations today. It wasn't easy, given that dozens and dozens of highly respected people work in this field. But ultimately, we believe the people featured in the following pages represent the crème de la crème of HR technologists.

In writing their profiles, we asked each expert the following questions: What should HR leaders be thinking about now (with respect to technology)? What are the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? What are the most overhyped HR tech trends and what sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in this space? In responding to our questions, these experts tended not to mince words.

Relying on technology to compensate for outmoded HR processes was a common "implementation mistake" many said they've witnessed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, mobile and social-networking applications were often cited as among the "most overhyped trends," but plenty of others were as well, including "fear"—as in, irrational fear of vendor consolidation where none is warranted, according to Jason Averbok.

We couldn't fit everything they had to say in our print edition, so go to HREOnline.com to read a fuller account of their thoughts on these developments, as well as extended bios of each expert and links to their organizations' websites.

Many of the issues raised in this article will be explored at the 2012 HR Technology® Conference and Exposition, to be held Oct. 8 through 10 at McCormick Place in Chicago. For more information about the event, visit www.HRTechnologyConference.com.

Technology

Jason Averbook, CEO and co-founder of Knowledge Infusion, Minneapolis

As CEO, Averbook works closely with clients as the executive lead on strategic consulting engagements. Prior to co-founding Knowledge Infusion, Averbook held senior-management positions at PeopleSoft and Ceridian.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? They need to understand how the HR-service-delivery model has to change, because the workforce is completely different than before in terms of how they like to use and consume technology. They should realize that the days of IT owning technology are over—IT can provide support, but HR must own human capital management technology now. And



they need to be focusing on breaking down the walls within the HR organization. At a lot of companies, HR has done a better job of integrating itself with the finance function than it has of integrating the HR function within itself. If I was an HR leader, I'd be breaking down those internal silos, building

processes that go across the functions within HR and making sure my HR technology matches that.

Most overhyped trends? Mobile is one of the most overhyped because, even though it makes it easier to put technology in the hands of more people, the HR functions aren't changing to actually take advantage of this new technology. Social is also overhyped—not the concept of social, but the fear of what people are going to post is overhyped. People felt the same way when email was introduced. Another thing that's overhyped is the fear of consolidation. We tend to overreact and end up making stupid decisions to switch vendors when it isn't necessary.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? Lifting and shifting. If all you're doing is digitizing old processes, then you're not adding value. Another mistake I see is going live on a new product without highlighting its capabilities to the end-users. Don't just let people do the same thing they could do on the old platform; give them access to the cool new features that add value.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? We in HR think buying new technology or going with the best vendor in the world is going to change the HR function, to make us strategic. It has nothing to do with technology. I'd love to see the HR function realize it's our job to figure out how best to use this technology, rather than counting on the vendor to change the way HR's perceived.

Josh Bersin, founder and CEO of Bersin & Associates, Oakland, Calif.

Bersin founded Bersin & Associates in 2001 to provide research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. Today, the firm consults with clients on enterprise learning and talent management. Earlier in his career, Bersin spent 25 years in product development and marketing at companies including DigitalThink (now Convergys), Arista Knowledge Systems, Sybase and IBM.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? These days, the focus is on buying well-tested products that will integrate easily, rather than having the latest and greatest new features. Second, the internal HR folks need to be savvy enough to use all the new tools that

are out there. LinkedIn offers one of the most powerful set of recruiting tools ever created, but recruiters have to learn how to use it properly. HR leaders have to encourage and force their people to become comfortable with these tools. Finally, HR has to focus on keeping new tools so simple and easy to use that no training is required. Vendors aren't good at this; they tend to want to make things as complicated as possible.

Most overhyped trends? I think mobile is not nearly as far along as people think. I think the word "analytics" is overused. All the core HR vendors talk about analytics, but they haven't delivered when it comes to products that are easy to use. I think the use of Facebook and Twitter in recruiting is a bit overhyped—I'm not so sure it's transforming recruiting. I also think the vendors are overhyping how integrated their solutions supposedly are.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? I'd say the biggest issue companies trip up on is change management around the process itself. Using the software is a training issue that must be addressed, but the bigger issue is showing people how the company wants to implement its performance processes, recruiting, etc., and this takes top-down change management, communications, training, and getting all the HR generalists and support staff to understand the process.

When a manager uses the system but doesn't understand how to do performance management, for example, there need to be tools, training and local people to help. So the system team needs a whole change-management team to support the rollout. And this means executive support and continual communications about the value, for starters.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? I think ease of use and the consumerization of HR technology is really important and one of the biggest things vendors face. The really big, successful Internet companies like Google and Facebook have defined how people use the web. If HR tools don't shift in that direction, it's going to be harder to get people to use them. Also,



the old-fashioned HR systems were systems of record. Now, what we need are systems of engagement, systems that people want to use and get use out of every day.

What do I expect to see in the next few years? Integration would be No. 1. Oracle and SAP decided they wanted to be end-to-end cloud-based software vendors, so they've decided to integrate their core HR systems—which are a big mess in most companies—with talent management. So HR buyers are going to have higher expectations for their niche vendors and force them to integrate better or go away. No. 2 is innovation, driven by the fact that this is a very large, disparate market with companies that have greatly varying needs. Also, the financial markets have seen what SAP and Oracle paid for their recent acquisitions and so there will be lots of venture-capital money available for innovation. No. 3, there will be new tools to help human resources mine and analyze all the "big data" out there to detect trends.

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Naomi Bloom, managing partner of Bloom & Wallace, Fort Myers, Fla.

At Bloom & Wallace, Bloom has served as an adviser and consultant to numerous corporate and government clients in the areas of HR technology and outsourcing for the past 24 years. She previously served as a senior analyst at AMS, director of research computing at the American Institutes for Research and payroll manager for Polaroid Corp. She has been a longtime panelist on the HR Technology® Conference's Industry Analyst Panel.

What should HR leaders be thinking about?

When and how and how fast can they get their core HR systems to true Software-as-a-Service? They should not be investing one new dime into on-premise software. And by SaaS, I mean true SaaS, not fake SaaS. True SaaS is a multi-tenant architecture, with all of them on the same release.

All customers should be getting new functionality several times a year pushed out to them. True SaaS is subscription-based, with the vendor taking responsibility for upgrades and infrastructure, and the customer deciding when to turn on new, opt-in functionality.

What are the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? Reincarnation



and cloning. In cloning, I want a complete replication of what I currently have, even if it doesn't make sense, it's outdated or it's archaic. I want the new thing to look like my old thing. That is truly stupid. Even more stupid, albeit subtle, is reincarnation: Customers come up with this wish list

that is incremental. They want an incremental set of improvements, lots of "Fix things I don't like today." This is not the right way to look at technology; the right way is to look at the business outcomes you want to achieve and to think about how we can redesign our work today, given the tools that are now available, to achieve those outcomes.

Most overhyped trends? I strongly believe in social for collaboration. That's very different from sharing with everyone that your cat is sick. The hype is less about the technology and more about whether the use of it is purposeful or just "let's play." I feel the same way about gamification.

Gamification has great potential in learning, in project planning, in a whole range of areas around performance management, recruitment, onboarding and wellness.

Or it can be a toy that's distracting, annoying and stupid. Hypeing the tech without the attachment of purposeful intent is what annoys me to death.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? I would welcome the next generation of HRT thought leaders. A large group of people who are deeply knowledgeable and who are fearless advocates for what's important to, and needed by, customers.

I do see this generation emerging, with folks like Jarret Pazahanick, who goes by SAP Jarret, and Thomas Otter, who has a deep knowledge and understanding of HR software and the function itself. Finally, people like Dave Ulrich have written that one of the new required competencies for HR leaders is to be tech-savvy.

Yet I still encounter human resource people who don't know what I'm talking about when I use terms like "SaaS"—we just can't afford [such people] anymore.

Technology

Yvette Cameron, vice president and principal analyst at Constellation Research, Calif.

At Constellation Research, Cameron focuses on next-generation HCM processes and technologies, and is the founder of NextGen Insights, an independent consulting and marketing-communications firm. Cameron previously held senior-management positions at Saba Software, Oracle, PeopleSoft, SAP and JD Edwards. She also spent 10 years as an HR practitioner.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? One thing is integration. It's still the biggest pain point for customers. Ease of integration means that in a cloud environment, customers will be better able



to assemble different software packages into a package that best meets their needs.

Most overhyped trends?

The activity streams that many vendors are offering in social-based products. Let's say I create a goal for myself and then publish it—that then creates an entry into an activity

stream that a broader audience of other people can see and comment on. If I were to implement all these tools, I could easily have six or more activity streams to manage. It's supposed to foster transparency across the organization and, in many ways, it does, but after a fashion, how do you manage all this information? We're going to need really intelligent filtering tools for all these streams of information and I'm not seeing enough of those today.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? I know it sounds trite, but the root causes of the mistakes I see have consistently been the people processes and strategies that follow the adoption of new technology. It seems so fundamental, but a lot of organizations have a general concept in mind of what they want to do but they haven't thought of an end-to-end strategy for getting there. So they chase the shiny object, acquire it, deploy it and then try to make it fit their business processes. Then they complain the technology isn't meeting their needs, but it's really because they didn't define beforehand how success was going to be measured.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? I'd like to see vendors move beyond plugging in social capabilities to making it part of the DNA of their platform. As we leverage social capabilities more and more, I should not only be able to easily find experts within my organization, but the system itself should recognize patterns and begin recommending people I should meet and documents I should read. At this point, we've moved beyond transactional systems to systems of engagement and now we should be moving toward "systems of fulfillment" that deliver the content and context that users expect when they're engaging with technology.

Paul Hamerman, vice president and principal analyst for Forrester Research, Cambridge, Mass.

At Forrester, Hamerman's coverage includes the ERP market and human resource management systems and business processes. Hamerman came to Forrester through its 2003 acquisition of Giga Information Group. He has been an industry analyst for nine years and has more than 27 years of overall experience in research and advisory services, management consulting and systems integration.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? One of the biggest challenges that hasn't been talked about much by vendors is managing employee master data—not just for employees, but for non-employees such as contingent workers. It's a huge problem. I talk to companies all the time that are struggling with this—there are so many disparate systems where employee data resides and the interfaces to tie these systems together are batch interfaces or manual and sometimes the data gets out of sync. This can be solved by single systems of record and orchestrating real-time integration and master data governance around these systems. Doing this will drive process efficiency and data integrity because your employee information will be continually up-to-date and it will give you the opportunity to build up a treasure chest of analytical data about your workforce.

Most overhyped trends? Social technology. I think it has great potential, and we're starting to see it used effectively in sourcing and recruiting. But inside the enterprise, it really hasn't taken hold in terms of HR processes.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? The biggest one is customization. Once you customize, it becomes very difficult to upgrade, so then the system becomes obsolete. Some of the new systems can be configured but not customized, and that puts you on a path to continuous upgrades. That's why SaaS is gaining so much traction.



Another mistake I've seen is when IT is in charge of managing HR systems. HR systems usually aren't IT's top priority. At Forrester, we've seen the trend of business units taking ownership of HR technology and working with IT as a partner and also using third-party partners. It's not happening at most organizations yet, but it will.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? At most organizations, a lot of time and energy are being wasted on the outdated annual assessment process. New systems and mechanisms are needed to keep employees continually focused on their goals and performance metrics, and provide continual status updates on their achievements. This is starting to happen, but it's still in the early stages. The entire candidate-recruitment experience also has to change. The recruiting systems we have today are still designed primarily for recruiters at the expense of an engaging candidate experience. This is slowly starting to change as well, but most vendors haven't innovated quickly enough in this area.

Jim Holincheck, managing vice president of Gartner Research, Chicago

At Gartner, Holincheck manages the team that covers finance, human capital management and procurement. He previously served as vice president of strategy at IQ4hire, a software and services vendor. Before that, he spent two years as an industry analyst at Giga Information Group and spent 10 years at Andersen Consulting (now Accenture), participating in the full lifecycle of projects around human resources and financial management.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? They should be thinking about doing an honest assessment of where they are in terms of how their current portfolio of technology meets their current needs and whether it will meet their future

needs. Here at Gartner, we believe systems come in three different layers: systems of record, systems of differentiation and systems of innovation. Systems of record tend not to change that frequently because the requirements tend to be pretty stable. Systems of differentiation are those that may provide you with competitive differentiation in the marketplace, while a system of innovation may be a leading-edge



type of practice that no one else is doing. Right now, lots of investments are being made in systems of record, but very little in systems of differentiation or innovation. But there are opportunities for turning systems of record into systems of differentiation or innovation. Think about time-

and-attendance: It's long been thought of as a system of record but now, with advances in mobile technology, you can capture more granular data as people go about their various activities, which means your ability to manage labor costs could be substantially improved.

Most overhyped trends? The cloud. "Overhyped" may be the wrong word, but the term gets so used and abused. Nearly everyone is calling almost everything they have today "cloud" in one shape or form, with the result being that some of the subtle differences of how the cloud is being used get lost in the mix.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? Where to start? A lot of organizations see technology as an answer without understanding the problems they're trying to solve and not having a strategy in place. There's also the expectation that technology alone is going to solve a problem. Lots of organizations will spend months selecting new technology and then spend very little time looking at the professional services they may engage to help implement the technology, even though those services may cost as much or even more than the technology and be critical in obtaining value from it.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? I think the way we select and implement solutions, and maintain them and evolve them over time, even with SaaS and the cloud, hasn't really changed that dramatically. SaaS has changed things a bit, but, by and large, we're still taking the same approach we've used for a couple decades or more. With the new technology we have, I think there's an opportunity to rethink the whole lifecycle of enterprise adoption.

Bill Kutik, president of Kutik Communications, Westport, Conn.

For 22 years, Kutik has been the technology columnist for *Human Resource Executive*® (six years for *HREOnline.com*), and has served as co-chairman of the magazine's annual HR Technology® Conference & Exposition since it began in 1998. In 2008, he started The Bill Kutik Radio Show®, a bi-weekly online talk show with industry leaders. For 20 years he was consulting editor of Esther Dyson's computer industry newsletter, *Release 1.0*. He also was a reporter for *The New York Times* and the *New York Daily News*.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? HR executives need to clean up their shops. Most large companies have multiple redundant systems due to their own acquisitions. Everyone agrees that HR executives need to be turning data into actionable info through metrics and analytics, but you can't do that when you've got dozens of disparate systems. This will require ripping out a lot of stuff and integrating a lot of stuff, which is not easy to do.

Most overhyped trends? I think mobile is the most overhyped trend because not enough vendors are thinking about the changes they need to make in their applications to exploit the particular qualities of mobile platforms. In other words, if vendors are simply throwing the whole damn application onto the iPad, there's no value-add there at all except that it's lighter to carry around. The second overhyped trend is the cloud. I define "the cloud" as a very large building with terrific air conditioning stuffed full of servers and other computer equipment, located near a source of cheap electricity. We used to call them data centers. Now, they're larger, usually owned by a third party and used by a variety of people—and there are lots of advantages to this development. But the fact that two applications are hosted on the same server in the same building does not mean anything about their ease of integration. Someone still needs to write the integration between those two apps.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? I'm not close to implementations. But in the last few years



I've come to understand the major reasons for customers' dissatisfaction with their software is that they've had a bad implementation. And even with SaaS, there is an implementation involved—sometimes quite complicated. So there are still hundreds of decisions to be made, especially

with SaaS, where you're configuring instead of customizing. And—either because the consultants are not very good or clients haven't rationalized their HR processes—there are often huge mistakes being made in those implementations.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? I would like to see every HR department adopt sophisticated analytics that can help every single corner of the company. Unfortunately, this requires some form of data warehouse, because you can't do it properly without financial data as well. Nothing would create more value for HR in today's modern company than for HR leaders to do that. HR has been nagged about it for years, but I'd like to see more people diving in. When you talk about aligning the workforce with corporate goals, you can't begin to do that without analytics.

Alexia (Lexy) Martin, director of research and analytics for CedarCrestone, Alpharetta, Ga.

As director of research and analytics at CedarCrestone, Martin is responsible for its annual HR Systems Survey. She also provides strategy, business-case, and metrics and analytics services, along with deep-dive benchmarking in all industries. Martin is also managing editor for the *IHRIM Workforce Solutions Review*.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? They should always be focused on what matters most to the organization—as in, "Are we using technology to attract and retain the best? Are we using it to do the basics right?" But HR also needs to be focused on creating a great work environment where employees feel that they're valued. HR should be looking at every single HR technology system in terms of whether it can impact employee engagement and business outcomes. HR should also have a long-term application portfolio strategy that looks at technology through the same lens of employee engagement and business outcomes.

Most overhyped trends? I think social is overhyped, but that's because I don't think it's being implemented

strategically enough. It's still being used primarily in silos like recruiting and learning. Gamification and Big Data are also overhyped. I get the value of gamification, but I don't think it's as valuable at the enterprise level as it's



being hyped to be. As for Big Data, it keeps getting talked about as a technology solution and not why it's important in ultimately impacting business outcomes.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? Organizations just "going live" with new

technology and then walking away from the hard work of ensuring user utilization and change management. Too many people think the work ends once the technology is installed. But if people aren't using it, then there's no value gotten from it.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? I have a wish here that probably is not going to be met, which is that vendors start taking some responsibility for user adoption. Vendors want to sell their products and then walk away from the hard work of ensuring user adoption and integration. All of them do this, not just Oracle and SAP. It's good business for consultants like us. But I would like to see the vendors put more focus on services and support.

Lisa Rowan, program director for HR, learning and talent strategies for International Data Corp., Framingham, Mass.

At IDC, Rowan analyzes and consults on HR and talent-related process issues, business-process outsourcing and HR/IT services. For the 10 years prior to joining IDC, Rowan held business-development, product-management and marketing positions in the human resource software and services markets at Genesys and Digital Equipment Corp.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? Everyone thinks this vendor consolidation we've been seeing a lot of lately will be an ongoing trend. Therefore, HR leaders should be thinking about how they're positioned with respect to that—what they're using, what the long-term effect might be based on the mix of what they're using, and the odds of what they're using being melded into a bigger entity. They should also be thinking about having a contingency plan should things change with respect to their vendors.

Most overhyped trends? I think social falls into that category, unfortunately. Social is incredibly



important to technology as a whole, but in HR, I've seen it take hold only in recruiting and, to an extent, in learning. I also think the cloud is a bit overhyped. Lots of folks are still using on-premise solutions and coming off those quickly may not be in the cards. Instead, they may need to be thinking about how to go forward with a blended mix of cloud-based and on-premise solutions, and how to ensure they're integrated, even if the platforms differ.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? I think the most common mistake is failing to reassess your own processes before adopting new technology. If you look at new technology merely as a tool to get rid of Word documents or Excel spreadsheets, then you're most likely overlooking its new capabilities for doing things in a different way. In my experience, I've talked

with HR executives who used technology to simply automate old processes and they ended up with a bit of buyer's remorse. To me, adopting new systems should involve a good amount of time spent up-front with process redesign and process understanding.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? I'm starting to see the breaking down of the barriers between HR and the talent functions. HR users should be able to do things seamlessly, rather than, "I need to do that in performance management, or do this in compensation." Also, new technology should be less about what it does for HR and more about what it does for the rest of the enterprise. Everyone in the organization ought to be able to see "What's in it for me?"

Mark Smith, CEO and chief research officer at Ventana Research, Pleasanton, Calif.

Smith has held chief-marketing-officer, product-development and research roles at companies such as SAP, META Group, Oracle and IRI Software. He has experience across major industries including banking, insurance, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, and retail and consumer services.

What should HR leaders be thinking about right now? Given all the vendor consolidation that's going

on right now, I think HR really needs to have a good handle on who their vendors are and whether they have a good relationship with them. A vendor being acquired can be a good thing; on the other hand, it can also lead to certain products being discontinued, or staff being moved around or let go, so it's really important for HR to be keeping close tabs on vendors. HR leaders should also have better communication and engagement with the operational leaders in their organization and with finance.

Most overhyped trends? There's been a lot of hype around the cloud and social media. I think most HR leaders understand the cloud now, so now it's like, "Great, let's get back to what we were trying to



accomplish in the first place with respect to hiring and retaining talent." As for social media, it's being presented as some sort of magical pixie dust for human resources when, in reality, it only adds value when it's applied to a particular process, such as recruiting.

What are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen in HR technology implementations? A lot of times, people think their work is done once something is deployed or implemented, and that's wrong. You need to have regular reviews to ensure needs are being met.

What sorts of developments would you most like to see occur in the space? Ten years ago, the big focus was on employee and manager self-service. Now it's, "How do we make that manager/employee relationship as engaging and productive as possible for both parties?" To do that, we need to ensure managers are given the right tools so they can have an active set of goals and tasks they expect from workers and can have much more collaborative conversations with those workers. This would allow managers to know whether employees are keeping the accomplishments of these goals and tasks front and center, and whether those goals will be met. Traditional HR systems aren't designed to support this.

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