We need better performance management technology, but where do we begin?

At some point in any Talent leader's career it's likely they will be tasked with making a major change to any one of their Talent Management processes and systems ranging from talent acquisition to on-boarding through to succession planning, and the idea of making such a major change can be a daunting one! One particular process that is under a lot of scrutiny right now at many organizations is the performance management process and the systems that support them. With more and more buzz each day around major companies moving away from traditional performance review processes, many HR leaders are realizing they need to make a change but simply don't know how or where to begin. Changing the Performance Managing process in any organization is typically one of the more complicated processes to change as it has many moving parts such as goal setting, annual reviews, ties to rewards, and at least one or more technology systems supporting it which can make the change process complex and even overwhelming.

However, there are a few simple steps you can take to navigate through the selection process and ways in which you can leverage technology vendor relationships to support your strategic initiative and make your selection process easier.

Before you begin shopping for a system, you need to take a look at your overall performance management process and where your priorities are. List out or mind map all of the elements of your performance management process. For example, goal setting, ongoing feedback, reviews, performance ratings, rewards and compensation; indicate which elements are being done well and which are not. Also, add anything that may be missing altogether from your process such as ongoing coaching, or peer recognition and social collaboration.

Next, evaluate your technology and the tools within them to ensure that your system(s) SUPPORT your processes, not drive them. One of the most common pain points shared by HR leaders is the limitation of their existing technology platform to support a more agile approach to performance management. Many HR software platforms have been designed for functions other than Performance Management and therefore fall short in areas such as encouraging ongoing coaching and communication or engaging both employees and managers in the process. Look to see if there are tools within your system to support your more agile approach and if there are not, it is likely time to start looking for a new solution.

Pick your priorities and create a list to ask vendors (both new and existing). Think outside the box and create a wish list of items that will improve the performance management process in your company. Begin evaluating software options that have been developed to support engagement, ongoing coaching/communication, and team collaboration instead of just searching for performance management systems.

Many of the more "traditional" performance management, HRIS or Talent Management systems have been designed to be very one-directional, placing most of the responsibility on managers and HR administrators. With growing trends in adopting a more "agile" approach to performance management (which places emphasis on coaching and ongoing communication), it may be time to give your performance management system a complete overhaul with better technology that supports a more agile approach and encourages coaching.

Don't be afraid to ask both your existing and potential vendors for their ideas around improving performance management processes and implementing a more agile approach. They should be able to speak to effective performance management processes, not just about their technology.

Finally, tap into your network to see who else has gone through a performance management technology change or needs to. There is so much change in this space right now that a lot of other Talent and HR leaders can share experiences and best practices with you.

Have you gone through a performance management software change? Share your top tips for managing the selection process successfully!