THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF HRM ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: For enterprises involved in market competition, information - whether it is commercial, technological or financial, of internal or external origin - has become increasingly important in recent decades, deeply marked by the rapid development of information technology (IT).
This urgent need of pertinent information has imposed the organization of informational resources management on systemic principles, by creating, maintaining and exploring some adequate information systems. The informational technologies – that ultimately created the need – obviously offer the means for satisfying this need.

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INTRODUCTION

An information system is an ordered ensemble of resources (personnel, equipments, procedures and methods) used to collect, transmit, store and process data, as well as to analyze, store, disseminate and exploit information and knowledge.

As defined by Bondarouk, T.V., and Ruel, H.J.M. (2009), an information system for human resources is a "fully integrated network of human resources used in data processing, storing information, providing services, creating databases, tools and operations." Such a system could be called e-HR, in the sense of "application of conventional technologies, web and audio in improving governance, conduct and performance of human resources activities". Some favorable arguments in adopting e-HR systems are:

- Improvement of HR services;
- Reducing costs and increasing functional efficiency;
- Promoting the objective of the HR function regarding its relations with employees and managers;
- Contributes to the development of a HR function focused on the client and receptive to its needs;
- Provides services adequate for the new era, and at the same time appealing to the current and future users.
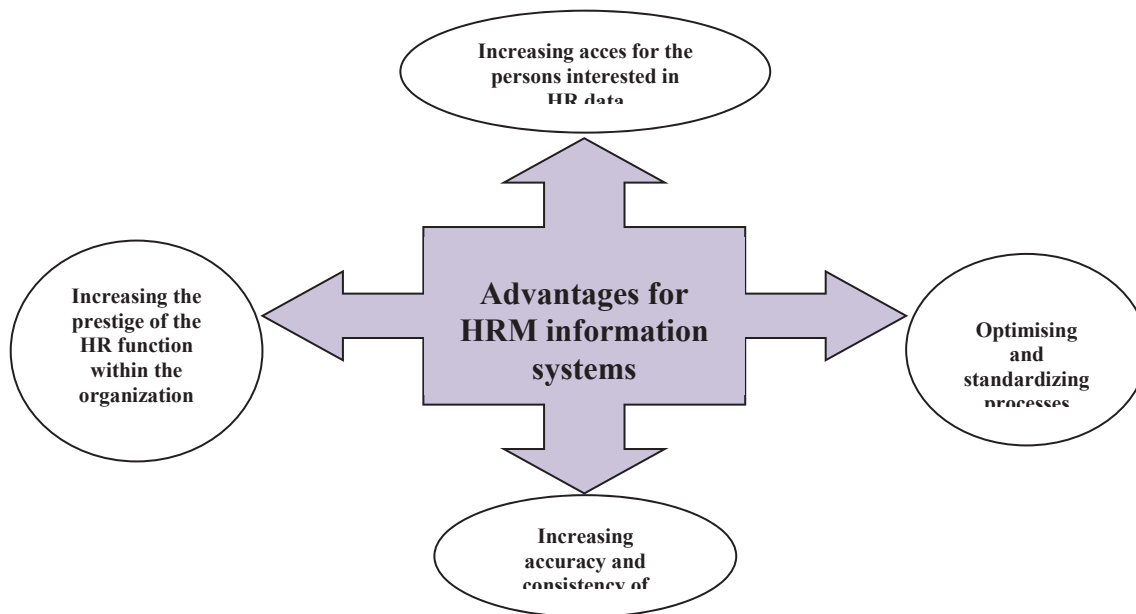
Figure 1. Advantages of using HRM information systems
Source: Projection made by authors

STRATEGIES REGARDING HUMAN RESOURCES INFORMATION

The organization's HR strategy considers, primarily the computerized data for making major decisions, secondly the range of applications included in the system, and finally ensuring managers a direct access to HR data they might need for managing the collective activities for which they are responsible within the hierarchical structure of the organization.

Computerized data and the elements resulted from their analysis support the core activities that aim the fundamental objectives of the organization, quality and use of human resources, employees training and organizational development. This data is useful for:

- Organizational development – how the organizational structure must adapt to future need and the possibilities offered by information systems in facilitating structural changes, for example: organizing work on high performance teams;
- Human resource planning – especially developing planes that „prefigure" the need of qualified and specialized personnel, and diversification of professional skills;
- Determining the future need of training and professional development of employees;
- Defining the level of performance and personal qualities, based on which the organization's personnel is promoted;
- Evaluating the organization's „health" through attitude surveys and analysis of staff fluctuation and statistical reports regarding absenteeism in order to increase motivation and adopt strategies to combat absenteeism and to avoid staff fluctuation;
- Analysis of labor productivity in order to develop programs to optimize its level;
- Analysis of the possibilities to reduce the number of employees to the minimum acceptable level and eliminating the useless costs that interfere with the organization's activity.

FUNCTIONS OF AN INFORMATION HR SYSTEM

An information HR system performs the following functions:

- Manages employees' personal data regarding their professional development, skills and qualifications, evidence of holydays and absences;
- Manages data on employee's positions, including classification, remuneration and incentives, worked hours , work locations, job description;
- Prepares summary reports on various forms of these elements.

The system can be equipped with additional features that allow:

- Registering and analyzing absences, presence at work and labor productivity, making comparisons between tasks and positions and data processing in order to identify trends.
- Coordination of personnel recruitting and training;
- Job evaluation;
- Modeling, through complex means, some activities such as human resource planning and reward management that facilitate the use of the system in fundamenting strategic decissions;
- Internet connection (for example, as a component of an on-line recruiting system) or to an intranet system.

We have to make the distinction between transactional applications (like human resources processes such as records keeping records, recruiting and e-learning) and relational applications (communication, knowledge management and improving the employer brand).

The existing systems can include payrolls or can maintain a direct link with their activity. Some systems can operate completely independent. Users can choose to use a single software package that includes all applications, or they may choose specialized software, such as tracking presence at work or for evaluating positions.

Even in the most computerized organizations, the computerized part of the human resource information system coexists with a manual part of that system. The last two decades have shown an ongoing increasing trend of the informational components, so that the use of computers in human resource information systems has become almost a standard.

Regardless of the usage degree of computers and modern communication technologies, human resource information systems can be structured in various components or subsystems.

A useful way to distinguish these subsystems is the operational (information systems for personnel records, information systems for employment records, information systems for the selection of candidates, information systems for performance management, information systems for tracking working time, informational systems for external reporting), tactical (information systems for job analysis and design, recruitment information systems, information systems for professional training) or strategic (information systems to support workforce planning, information systems to support negotiations with employees) character of HRM decisions which they support.
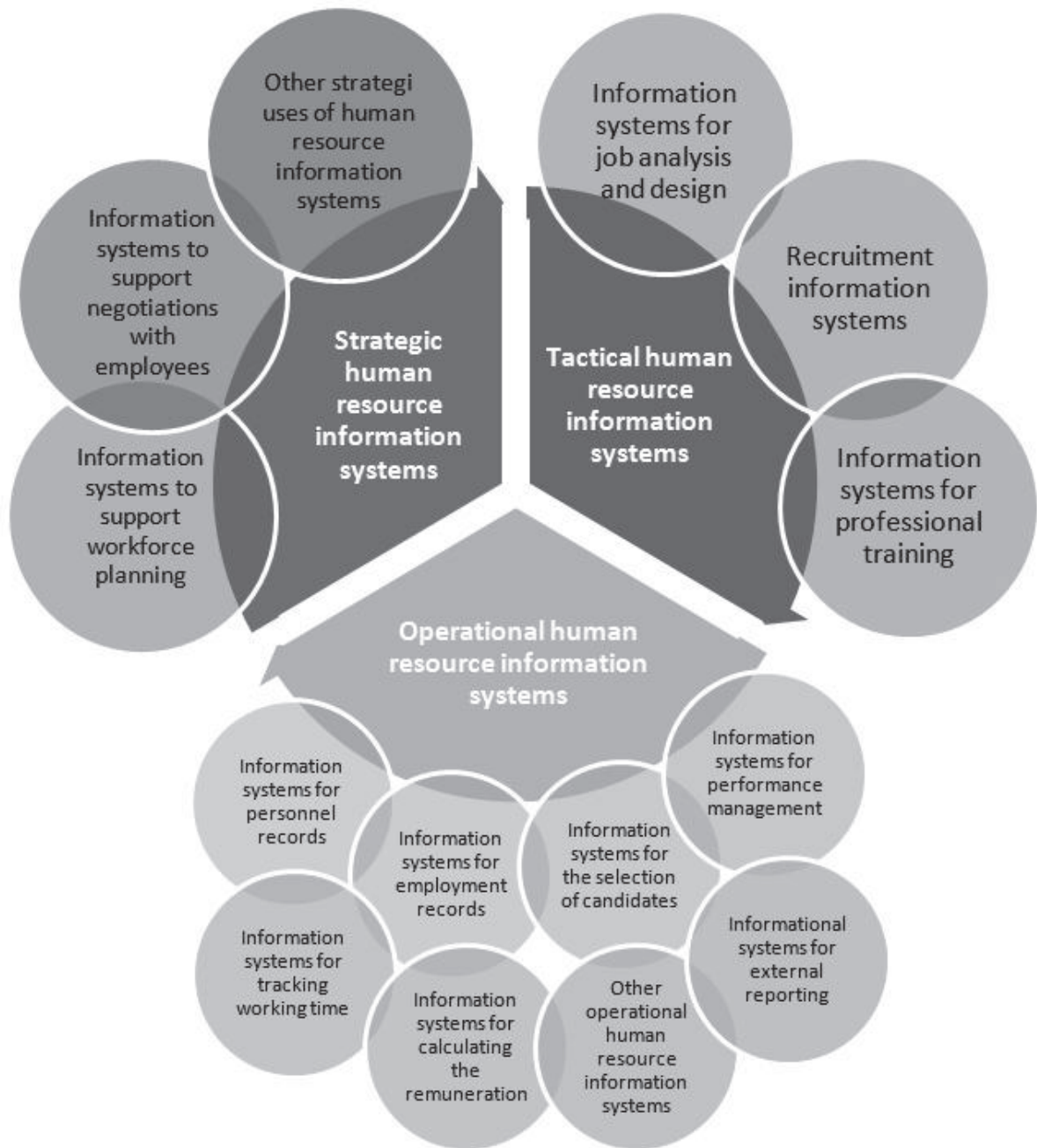
Figure 2. Human resource information systems
Source: Projection made by authors

Potential problems and suggested solutions for an effective system

Whenever we are working with a human resource information system we must be prepared if we encounter a problem, and we have to act quickly to resolve that problem as soon as possible. Some of the problems that are frequently meet in practice, and of course some suggestions regarding the manner of solving them are:

Potential problem: The data entered is weak
Suggested solution: Pay more attention to the introduction of accurate data in the system through training and continuous monitoring
Potential problem: Users do not understand the system well enough

Suggested solution: Ensure specialized training for: data sources (who provides the data and in what form), collecting different data sets and the connections with other systems.

Potential problem: Incorrect coding of data, resulting in unnecessary compiling reports
Suggested solution: Develop a better coding system and training its users.

Potential problem: Unclear responsibilities regarding the use of the system for obtaining useful data

Suggested solution: Taking measures to allocate responsibility and to explain precisely how the information may be used by training and continuing education of personnel (a good example would be the establishment of a consultancy service through which the users would be able to contact a system or a network manager).

Potential problem: Providing incorrect information and failing to update them
Suggested solution: Reducing and simplifying the documentation, facilitating managers access to the system, the most indicated system would be, in our opinion, the intranet system

CONCLUSION
Due to the variable and somewhat unpredictable behaviour of people, in the same given conditions, the information that reflect the state and dynamics of human resources are often of a qualitative nature, with a vague expression and a doubtful relevance.

Moreover, for the multitude of participants to the establishment process and effective use of human resources (such as managers, specialists, and workers) the information doesn't always have the same meaning due to different perceptions.

These features of conveyed information make human resources information systems more difficult to automate than other functional systems of the enterprise (accounting, marketing and so on).

Most modern applications have facilities such as online access and data security options that allow data entry by employees and controlled access to this data by other concerned departments. Due to the volume of the data and cumbersome legal procedures, erroneous data collection can perpetuate, generating unjustified additional costs for a company.

The advantages in using information systems in human resource management are:
- cost effectiveness;
- risk management;
- error control for data collection;
- obtaining information processes in specific reports;
- improving communication between departments;
- availability of data;
- reducing the volume of documents;
- maintain a favorable climate, thus increasing professional performance.
- reducing the time allocated to administrative activities.

An indirect benefit, but equally important in our opinion, is the creation for the employees of a company of a climate of confidence and morality. The compliance with privacy rules, how this information are used and with what purpose, is a necessity. If this data is stored in a secure and controlled access system, the employee benefits of a climate that motivates and allows him to focus on its professional goals.

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