

Academic Key Note

From e-HRM to Fast HRM Opportunities for Research and Practice Innovation *Theresa M. Welbourne, Ph.D.*

Human resource management (HRM) is a field that historically has been inundated with paperwork and bureaucracy. Thus, the promise of e-HRM was to help streamline core HR process, reduce costs, and improve efficiency. The result of these improvements would be transforming HRM to take on a more strategic role in the organization. However, with all the improvements in technology and HRM, the reality of moving into a more strategic role has not ensued in many organizations. While there is agreement that e-HRM has helped the field progress, something remains missing.

One way to move forward is to study the negative consequences of eHRM. In one word, what we hear from leaders, managers, HR executives and the general employee population is “information overload.” And with too much data comes complexity and slowness, often the very things that e-HRM was implemented to reduce. The answer lies not in more technology but with innovative thinking about core HR systems. It is time to go beyond putting tried and true HR practices on the web and moving to creatively rethink how HR work can be done. In other words, the academic community can apply new thinking to suggest alternative ways to do HRM. Combining technology, theory and empirical research with innovative exploration and science, the field of HRM can let go of its past and move into a new realm.

New HRM systems should be fast and light because in today’s fast paced environment, if HRM does not keep up, practitioners will miss the opportunity to be strategic. Replacing manual HRM processes with heavy technology often creates more, rather than less, work for HR. Think about the many HR areas where we now have too much data and perhaps not better decisions (e.g. dashboards with HR metrics few know how to use; recruiting with more resumes than anyone can read; performance management systems that for efficiency went to annual programs that exhaust everyone involved).

If HRM is going to help organizations grow, it must not only add technology but also become fast and light. In this regard, academics are well equipped to help practitioners. To start, there is an abundant amount of well researched work from other areas of business that can be applied to HRM. One such area is agile or extreme programming. Over the last few years, through work at the Center for Effective Organizations, we have tapped into the agile and extreme programming research to speed up HRM. We are working with companies to alter the HRM strategy making process, reinvent

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employee surveys, and applying new theories to deploy a role-based, 3-minute 360 feedback tool. These experiments lead to innovation for practitioners and research for academics. Also, our team is working to speed up learning by blending social networking with traditional teaching, webinars, and real-time benchmarking. These Fast HRM™ tools and processes, using a development cycle based on extreme programming, are examples of moving from e-HRM to Fast HRM.

Evolving from e-HRM to Fast HRM requires innovation and high quality relationships. There is tremendous opportunity for the academic community to shape the transformation of e-HRM by applying new theories, tested empirical work, in-depth case studies and innovative technology to change core HR practices. Fast HRM goes beyond putting HRM on the web. Fast HRM is a lens that can be used to think differently, and it can be one more effort to take the somewhat abstract idea of “being strategic” and turning it into a reality.