Helping Employees Adopt New HR Technology

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Introduction

Deploying a new HR software system brings with it a whole host of challenges from migrating data to managing any down time during the transition and, in the case of custom solutions, rectifying teething problems. But perhaps the most difficult challenge to overcome is ensuring the software system is adopted quickly and enthusiastically by employees. After all, there's no point in investing in a fantastic new software system if no one will use it!

Not all employees will feel the same way about the change in technology. Some will feel relief that their frustrations with the old system will be eased. Some will feel un-certain and have concerns about how it will impact their jobs – particularly if the technology is designed to digitise and automate their work. Some will be excited about the future possibilities that the system will bring. And some will be sceptical that the new software system will bring any benefits at all. These differing mindsets have a tremendous impact on how quickly and readily they will accept the new software.

Understanding these mindsets and putting in place mechanisms to support and involve employees throughout the decision-making process and implementation phase is the key to ensuring as many employees as possible are happily on-board with the new system. To that end, we've put together a list of ways to positively influence the adoption of new technology in your organisation.

Stage 1: Planning & Selection

Involve early adopters

Technology early adopters and innovators will have the most objections, so they are important stakeholders to include the decision-making process. Identify them by asking around about who uses the latest gadgets, and who is the 'go to' person to ask about IT issues and technology recommendations. They won't necessarily all be in your IT department, either! Get them on board and they'll be your strongest advocates within the organisation.

You might consider including them in an employee-led working party to allow them to have input into the software selection process.

If possible, give early adopters an opportunity play on a test site of the solution you are considering and ask them to identify potential problems and limitations. It's crucial to acknowledge their feedback and ideas and give reasons if they can't be implemented.

Consider your demographics

As of 2014 in Australia, 11.6 million people were employed. 1% of these were Traditionalists, while 27% were Baby Boomers and 37% of were Millennials. Furthermore, according to a study by EY, Millennials in Australia will make up three-quarters of the workforce by 2025. In any given workforce, there could be up to five different generations working together side by side.

This has led to interesting dynamics in organisations where there is as much as a half-century age gap between employees. Younger workers are supervising staff generations older than them, and older workers are required to use technology they weren't raised with.

Millennials and iGen have a distinct advantage in this climate, having never known a time before mobile technology, and in some cases, the internet. This generation were raised with phones that fit in their pocket and know floppy discs only as the 'save' logo on a Word document. Baby Boomers, however, may have had a childhood without television.

With such vast differences in age and life experiences in a workforce, its crucial to ensure that the HR technology you choose, and how you choose to implement, takes into account the following:

- Your employees possess a wide range of technological literacy and comfort. Not everyone is going to be comfortable doing everything on their iPhone, and many of your employees may never have used an online timesheet or employee self service programme before.
- Different generations have different needs and learning styles – one style of training and support that works for Millennials may not work for Baby Boomers, so be flexible!

For the reasons above, it is imperative that you consult with a wide range of ages and
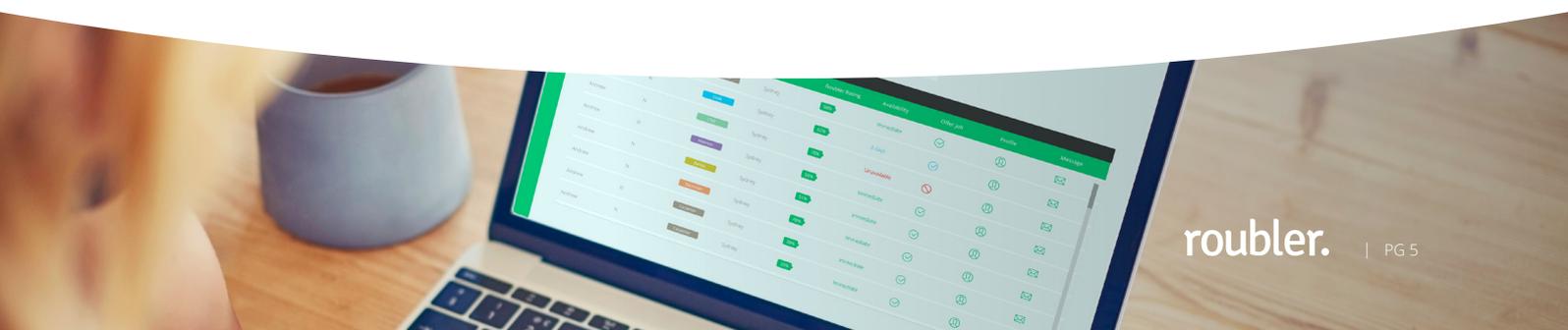
backgrounds during the planning and selection phases to ensure you purchase a solution and plan training that accommodates their needs as far as possible.

Focus on user experience

Employees are most concerned with simplicity in using their software according to a survey by HR.com.

Don't choose software simply because it has all the latest technological bells and whistles. Introducing employees, especially those not particularly comfortable with technology, to new software can be difficult. Many will put it in the 'too hard' basket if it seems too daunting to use.

**When researching your options, find out:**

- How easy is it to use? (HR technology review sites are a great source of information here.)
- Can it be used from all types of phones and computers?
- Does the one login access everything the employee needs, or will they need multiple logins to get to all data?
- How easy is it to access data in a timely fashion? E.g. does the product include reporting dashboards?
- Do you need to hop in and out of systems to complete tasks?
- How much training do you need to use it?

Seek out engaging HR technology

HR technology can do so much more than just take care of day to day business – it can improve communication, influence employee engagement, and facilitate learning. HR technology that answers the 'How will this make life better for me?' question and offers more than just administrative function can help foster positive feelings towards the new technology.

For example:

- An employee self service app that includes an 'inbox' or notifications function can be used to connect employees to a video of the CEO announcing successes or send out alerts when someone achieves a milestone or goes above and beyond. With a bit of thought you can ensure employees feel valued, even in a company where screens are the primary form of communication.

- The easiest way to know if something is working is to ask. In this way, HR technology can make things significantly easier. It can be a struggle to speak up when something isn't going so well, so confidential surveys or quick online polls distributed via an employee self service App can help you engage with employees on their terms.

- E-learning programmes can be created to resemble games that can be played on desktop or mobile, facilitating greater engagement and better learning outcomes for Millenials, iGen, and those who don't learn well in group training sessions.
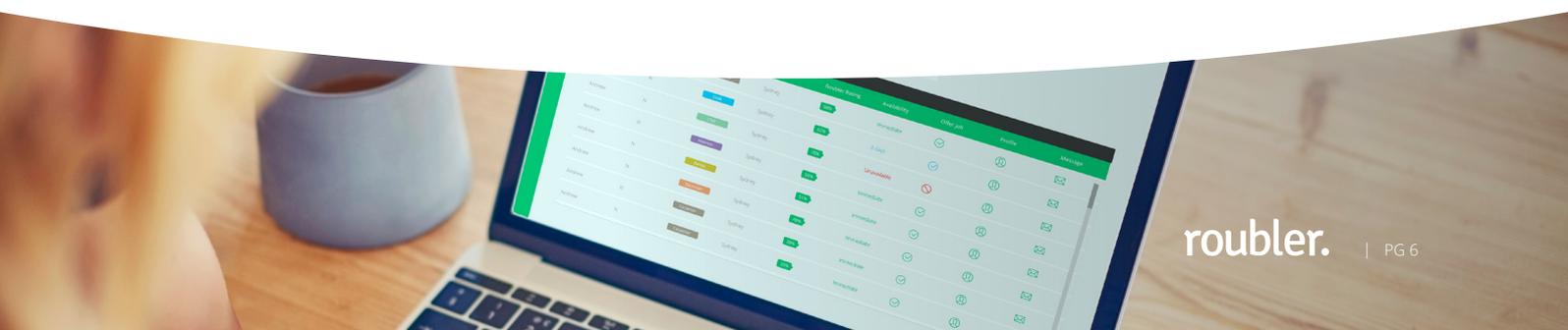
Stage 2: Implementation

Establish an implementation team

Selecting a specific group of employees in charge of rolling out the software makes the process a lot easier for everyone. This group should be chosen with care: the leader of the implementation team should have qualifications fit for the role and a good understanding of HR technology, and the members of the team should comprise of employees who have different roles, demographics and different needs from the software.

This team must also decide, on behalf of the employees they represent, whether a phased or full roll-out is most appropriate. This can depend on whether the new software has multiple functions or features, or whether it is only for one purpose and how much training is required.

Put communications at the heart of implementation

Nothing fuels fear and uncertainty more than silence from management, so every employee should be briefed on the changes that are happening. Sit down and plan out key milestones for the project and consider how you can communicate how the project is progressing and when.

Anticipating concerns ahead of time will help you to develop the right messages and keep people positive about the change. And remember: not all employees will respond to every type of communication so include a range of mediums such as email, intranet, kitchen bulletin boards and town-hall style meetings.

Create a training plan that recognises different learning styles

An enormous barrier to adoption is not knowing how to use the software system properly. You may think you have this covered but remember: everyone learns differently. That one-off training session may not have worked quite as well as you'd hoped. Plan to use several learning methods such as:

- **Demonstrations**
- **One-to-one training**
- **Group training**
- **Webinars**
- **Videos**
- **Manuals & How To guides**

There will be people who learn best 'on the job' so ensure you have people they can turn to when they need help.

It's also wise to arrange demonstrations and training just prior to the 'go live' date – employees will inevitably want to get stuck in and play with the new system as soon as it is available.
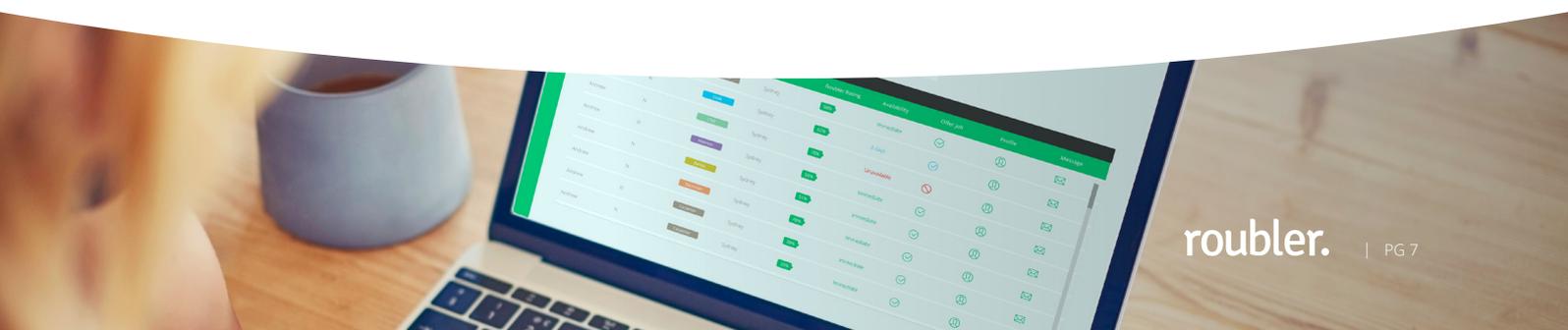
Stage 3: Use & Adoption

Provide ongoing support for employees

Implementing a new software system is not a 'set and forget' project. It's likely that even if your software is straightforward, your employees will still have questions over the first few months. Anything new is always daunting, so easing employees into the new system will go far in terms of their comfort with it.

Furthermore, new employees need training, and existing employees will need to learn to use new features as the system is updated so put together an ongoing training programme that includes regular training sessions and, if possible, on-demand video training.

You can further support employees by involving them in creating cheat-sheets for new staff based on their experiences using the system and by establishing an internal user forum where they can share tips and trouble-shoot issues together.

Your early adopters will be key stakeholders in this stage and can act as system 'champions'. A word of caution: if appointing system 'champions' to help others, ensure you appoint more than one person to avoid overburdening a single individual.

At team meetings, check-in with how everyone is going and provide answers to any queries. If you set up a working group or group of early adopters in the selection and/or implementation phase, suggest they still meet monthly after implementation so that you can get feedback on issues and ideas.

Seek feedback

Employees are always keen to give feedback on workplace changes, and the implementation of new HR software is no different so ensure there is a structure in place for this to occur. You may wish to nominate someone (perhaps the Implementation Team leader) as a single point of contact for feedback, and institute polls or online surveys three, six and twelve months into using the new system. These polls and surveys can be created easily with free online tools like SurveyMonkey.

It's important to listen to the feedback that employees give and address it appropriately. If they point out specific issues with the system, get in touch with your assigned Customer Success Manager and chat to them about it. If it's a technical issue, the Customer Success Manager should address this with their development team.

Celebrate the wins (no matter how small)

Maintaining a positive vibe throughout the selection, implementation and day-to-day use phases of a new software programme can be difficult. Publicly celebrate wins at each stage – whether it's selecting the new programme that is going to make your employee's jobs easier, 'Go Live' and the first sales/hires/transactions that are successfully processed using the new system. This helps to reinforce the benefits of the new system and reassure employees that the transition was worthwhile.
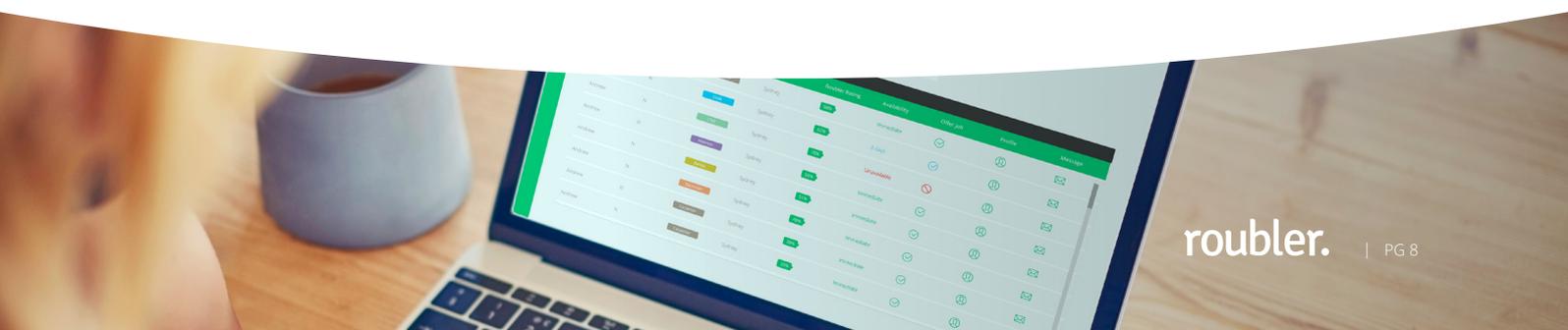
As the old saying goes "You can't please everyone". You will always have employees who simply refuse to accept the new system, and those who will voice their objections regularly despite knowing that the new software system is here to stay. All you can do is acknowledge their objections, attempt to understand where these concerns come from by encouraging deep and open conversations (perhaps a lack of confidence with technology or an inherent resistance to change of any sort), and help them in any little way you can.

The good news is that with plenty of thorough planning and empathy for your employees, you can ensure a speedy transition and adoption for your shiny new software system.

About Roubler

Welcome to the future of workforce management. Our all-in-one HR and Payroll software consolidates multiple workforce management functions into one easy to use, cloud-based system.

All Roubler features are connected by a single data source enabling you to manage employee information and HR tasks across the entire employee lifecycle on one platform.

The information you need to onboard employees, create rosters, approve and manage leave and run payroll is always up to date and ready to access wherever and whenever you need it.

"The biggest thing is how much time it has freed up for me, where staff can onboard themselves and create their own unavailability which, allows me to get out there and manage the business"

– Matt, Retail Store Manager, HG Retail

"The payroll is quick, accurate, and award-compliant without me being involved. The staff and management have engaged with Roubler really quickly."
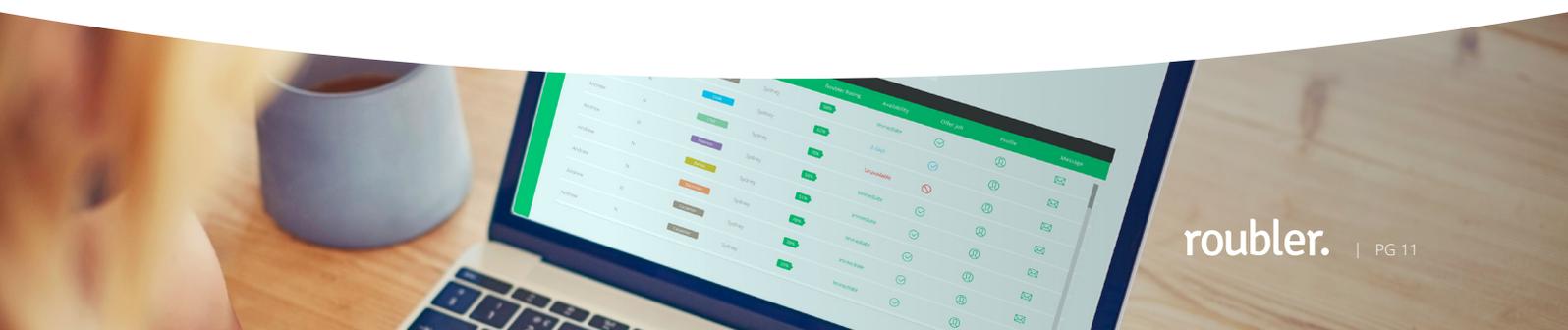
– Chris Joliffe, General Manager & Licensee, Potts Point Hotel

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