Clear Concepts
consulting group

The Big System vs. The App Approach

BEST PRACTICES IN HR TECHNOLOGY

For years, school districts across the nation have sought to implement one big technology system that can "do it all" for HR. Smaller districts often dismiss the idea of being able to take full advantage of technology simply because they believe it's too expensive. But is the "Big System" really the best way to go?

Too often, once they've made the jump to a big system, HR personnel end up just as unhappy as they were before spending the money on these new systems.

Once all the hype has vanished, there is plenty of dissatisfaction with these supposedly great systems – they are too hard to use, too hard to change and districts still find too many gaps in HR features and functionality. In addition, these systems require large up-front investments – both in time and in money. Sometimes, districts can't seem to get OUT of the implementation phase and actually put these large systems to use. And the cost demands don't disappear after implementation, either. Each little bit of added functionality and each additional "module" requires more time and more money.

Fiscal systems that are already in place can be the source of frustration and strife—this understandably leads many in the direction of the behemoth system. Yet, demands on school systems are increasing and there's not much money available. The good news is that you may not need to scrap your current system at all OR empty your pockets adding new functionality to it.

We often encourage our clients to take the "App Approach" to technology. Think of your current system as a payroll/fiscal reporting app. The most cost-effective way to get all the functionality you need is to attach focused, best-of-breed applications to your old system and breathe new life into it. They're out there - highly effective and affordable applications that focus on today's HR needs: benefit management systems, HR records software, job description builders, online job center and selection tools, online onboarding, verification of experience, automated contracts and even auto-generated total compensation statements. With the click of a button, these systems can readily interface with what you already have in place.

Not only are HR apps and tools functional, they'll cost several thousand dollars to implement and maintain – not hundreds of thousands (or millions). And, if one of these focused platforms does not keep up over time, it is easy to throw it out and get something better. This approach allows you take advantage of technology advances that make systems faster and cheaper all the time.

So, when strategic planning turns to technology, try abandoning the idea of the expensive, behemoth software package and take the app approach. We believe this is the best way for school districts to get exactly what they need – and get it sooner and less expensively.