



Deb Deters
CHRO
HUB International
Chicago, IL

The Future of HR is Here

The days of HR being responsible only for sick days and managing benefits are long gone. At HUB International, Deb Deters is using the latest digital solutions to help her department become an active business partner.

Words by JEFF SILVER ■ *Photos by* KRISTIN DEITRICH

To say HUB International has grown tremendously throughout the last several years would be an understatement. Much of that can be attributed to an aggressive mergers-and-acquisitions program that averages approximately forty acquisitions annually. For Deb Deters, chief human resources officer, this has amounted to onboarding up to about 1,000 people annually in recent years. It also includes everything from familiarizing new employees with the scope of their benefits and HUB's technology infrastructure to showing new team members how to access and integrate data systems from their formerly independent brokerages to supporting employees in their efforts to provide the highest levels of customer service.

On the surface, HUB International is an insurance brokerage that provides comprehensive property, casualty, risk management, life and health, employee benefits, investment, and wealth management products through 400 integrated brokerages throughout North America. At the same time, HUB's HR department, along with the rest of the organization, is also addressing the ongoing digitization of its markets. "Customers buy differently than they used to," Deters says. "We have to keep pace by broadening our reach with social media and digital marketing so we can do business with them in the ways they prefer. In HR, we have to do the same thing: communicate with employees in ways that they find to be the most meaningful and convenient."

To successfully take on that challenge, Deters has been leading HR technology initiatives that include three key solutions: Avature for applicant tracking, Kronos for time and attendance, and Workday for handling all aspects of the employee life cycle. She views technology as an important part of the company's approach to onboarding and overall workforce management. "Technology solutions make us more proactive so that new employees can handle something like routine paperwork ahead of time. Instead of filling out forms, they can spend more of their first day with managers and learn about resources that will help them become productive faster," Deters explains.

HUB launched Avature in 2016 as its recruiting and tracking solution. The program now feeds data into Workday, which was launched at the beginning of this year. For new hires, Workday presents welcoming videos, the employee handbook, and general information about the company (including details about its community support through HUB Gives), as well as policies,



Prior to joining HUB International, Deb Deters spent seventeen years with Bally Total Fitness, the largest operator in the fitness industry.

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applications, and an offer letter. By managing and delivering prepared informational packages, the technology presents a more consistent and satisfying experience for all incoming employees.

Deters recalls a time when a similar solution rolled out seven years ago. “More than 96 percent of users were very satisfied with it,” she says. “The onboarding module is the one piece of software I never get complaints about.”

HUB’s suite of HR technologies helps maintain an optimized balance between the centralized and decentralized components of its business. For instance, utilizing a single system throughout the company for payroll and onboarding is much more efficient than trying to coordinate different systems in each of its twenty-six regions. However, it also takes the organization’s decentralized approach to business into consideration. “It’s important to customize and support the ‘local feel’ of each office, since what works for employees in Manhattan will be different from what’s appropriate for employees in the middle of Montana,” she says.

The new systems are expected to eliminate duplication of effort, reduce processing time by 50 percent, and increase data accuracy, because the same information, now visible company-wide, will no longer need to be entered manually by multiple departments. Deters believes significant time will also be saved by having Workday automatically update organizational charts. Furthermore, onboard processing time is projected to drop by about 40 percent.

Another key benefit of the technology upgrade is the analytics capabilities provided by Workday. Human resources will be able to identify employees at risk for leaving the company and intervene with customized continuous education. The solutions will also be able to help identify regional employment trends and their causes, as well as assist with workforce planning during acquisitions to help determine needs for office space and identify local demographics.

HR data will ultimately be used to help support the rest of the business by automatically feeding into the customer information and broker management systems. For example, as HUB continues to grow, Deters and HR will be able to make better informed workforce planning decisions about sales staffing and about how many service people are needed to support a particular book of business. “We could accomplish some direct business support before, but it was a very cumbersome process,” she says. “Now, we have the information at our fingertips and can easily use it to make very useful, practical decisions.” Plans are in the works to use the visibility made possible by analytics to assess performance across the enterprise. These results will help develop best practices based on the highest-performing locations and ultimately provide HR with a variety of approaches to help optimize the workforce.

As the digital transformation continues and the current upgrades are completed, Deters continues to look for additional improvements and enhancements. For example, she points to the need for a unified document management system and the consolidation of three existing learning management systems. For her, the underlying theme is always trying to identify new capabilities that will help make the business more effective.

“We’ll be looking at using analytics to advance the business, but also to help HR become a more active partner along the way,” she explains. “That’s the future of HR: helping fuel our success based on the extensive information and insights that we can share about our people.” ■

“Congratulations to Deb Deters! We’re honored to partner with HUB International, a progressive company who is on the forefront of the workplace well-being movement!” Heather Provino, Provant CEO, says. “Employees thrive and companies flourish when a culture of well-being is built and supported. HUB International is truly an industry leader.”

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