



Benefits of employee 'Self Service HR' realised at...



HPS is a full service marketing agency dealing with corporate identity; brand development; advertising; literature, on screen applications and Point of Sale (POS). They have long standing relationships with a range of clients including BMW, Ferrari, Mazda, Harley-Davidson and Virgin Active to name a few.

HPS have more than doubled in size during the last 2 years, to current numbers of around 75.

The culture of HPS is strong. People work well together, take pride in their work and equally importantly enjoy it too. Caroline Lewis is Office Manager for HPS, and responsible for human resources in addition to Facilities Management and other office management tasks.

Objective

As a small organisation with no full time dedicated HR resource, HPS was looking for a cost effective personnel system to achieve the straightforward but key objective of improving the organisation of employee information.

Having recognised that their HR processes were not as efficient as they could be, they set out to look for a system that could store all their HR information in one place so that it was easy to store, retrieve and report on, as the starting point for increasing the efficiency of their people management procedures.

HPS was not specifically looking for a self service solution. However when the HPS team saw in a demonstration of Octopus that self service was integral, incurred no extra cost and was simple to use, it seemed obvious that they should consider the extra advantages of using this feature.





Octopus has significantly improved the efficiency of HR administration and management.

Results

Octopus has been used within HPS for over 2 years and has significantly improved the efficiency of HR administration and management. Whilst initially wary of whether people across the business would use the self service features, in fact they were introduced and accepted easily. People like the access to information and the ease of actioning routine processes such as leave requests.

Added benefits, beyond the improvements to general organisation that they originally sought, have been gained by other areas of the business. Cost savings achieved as a result of using Octopus, and the overall business benefits it delivers have more than justified the investment in the monthly subscriptions to Octopus. The business has grown to 75 people and continues to expand, and Octopus has helped them easily manage this growth.

Story

HPS had recognised they would benefit from more structure and organisation in the way they manage information about their people. With originally 35 employees in the business, there was already a sizeable amount of information to control, dates to track and processes and events that had to be managed and monitored. As they were planning to grow the business, it was important to get people management on track in preparation for expansion.

Caroline Lewis, Office Manager for HPS was the only person in the business responsible for HR administration and was involved in recording and tracking holidays and sickness, ensuring appraisals took place and keeping track of people's records. As her time was shared with other responsibilities including Facilities Management, it was important that the HR administration was achieved efficiently in order to fit in with her busy workload.





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Efficient HR administration

It was important to HPS that they took on a system that could be quickly implemented and easily used to meet their objective of improving efficiency.

Caroline comments, “We had not been as efficient as we could have been in HR and we wanted to improve that by centralising everything. We had instances where people’s holidays clashed for example, and needed easy access to information so that such issues simply did not arise.”

“The documents area, where we can store copies of everyone’s documentation alongside their individual employee record is particularly useful when it comes to saving time and being organised. We use it for contracts, appraisals and disciplinary action notes. It is even useful when people have left, as we can attach a document containing information we may want to use if a reference is requested, and all leavers details are kept in a leaver area so we can easily retrieve this information.”

All employees at HPS have access to the company handbook on line. This means they can look up information on policies and procedures without having to submit their query to someone else and wait for an answer. Standard forms such as expenses are kept in this area, which helps individual efficiency as people don’t need to be distracted from their work by searching for paperwork.

Caroline still has responsibility for ensuring HR processes are carried out but finds Octopus speeds up and simplifies the task. Octopus has the ability to automatically flag up key dates and this has a major impact on efficiency.

“We like to recognise when people have achieved long service with us and Octopus helps me make sure we don’t miss the chance to reward people, and to celebrate.”

Reminder flags are also used for such dates as appraisals and end of probations which helps her ensure the right processes are carried out.





“Managers are also very enthusiastic....”

Employee Self Service

A self service solution was not on the initial wish list for HPS, as their requirements to organise HR information were quite straightforward. However when Caroline had a demonstration of Octopus in order to see how it might meet their needs, it became clear that offering everyone access to their own information and allowing them to update their own details would offer time savings to her and the individuals involved.

“At first I was wary about whether people would learn to use Octopus well enough to get the benefits of self service. In fact they quickly took to it as it is very easy to learn and to use. It’s easy to change details, check information and request holidays on screen rather than searching for paperwork, so it saves their time as well as mine.”

In the creative and fast moving environment of HPS, people do not want to spend time on bureaucracy and time consuming administration. By giving people open access to their own information and replacing paperwork with automated on screen processes, Octopus fits the culture well. They would not have used a system that was complex but have found Octopus straightforward to use.

Employees viewing and updating their own details and making on line holiday requests, is one layer of self service benefit.

“Managers throughout the business are also very enthusiastic about their ability to view information on people in their teams. It helps them to manage people better and more pro actively.”

Sales teams based in Manchester and Southampton, and individuals working flexibly including from home, benefit from being able to login to Octopus wherever they are working and as such can stay in touch with information and carry out administration without waiting for an office visit.

When HPS first looked for an HR solution they envisaged one which would speed up and automate the way HR worked already. In fact with self service HR processes have become an integral part of the business, directly carried out by the employees and managers involved.





Octopus helps with business management and decision making.

Company Wide Benefits

Although Octopus was taken on primarily to benefit the way HPS managed HR, it has helped in other areas of the business.

As an example, HPS are currently recording all vehicle details on Octopus which helps the Finance Director when he has to produce the P11Ds. The Finance Team also use information from Octopus to download for payroll purposes, saving time and helping with accuracy and consistency of information.

Benefits extend to the leadership team of HPS. Starting with monitoring sickness, they now gain a range of management information in the form of reports provided by the system. As time goes by the information builds, and they now have access to a range of management information that helps with business management and decision making.

Cost benefits from Octopus

The affordability of Octopus was attractive to HPS initially, especially as they were able to pay by manageable monthly subscriptions geared to the company size, rather than making a large initial investment. As support and upgrades are all included in the monthly subscription, it was also good to be able to see exactly what the solution would cost, and not be hit by unexpected implementation and service costs.

“We have never had any issue with the cost of Octopus. I believe it saves us money by being able to track many aspects of the business.”

One example of Octopus helping save costs is the equipment area. HPS uses Octopus to log all the equipment issued to people, including details like cables and carrying bags for their laptops and phones. “We know we keep better track of equipment now, and are clear who has what. This makes it easy to ensure that everything is returned before people leave.”

Time savings for employees and for HR administration is another clear cost saving, as is the better monitoring of absence rates, as all help to increase productivity billings and profitability.

“We also use Octopus to keep track of vehicle accidents and be aware of how well individuals look after company cars. There can be big cost savings by addressing issues in this area.”





“...Octopus has improved efficiency for everyone in the business.”

Employees Benefit from using Octopus

HPS took on Octopus to help them manage HR better which undoubtedly benefits employees.

However employees benefit more directly. An efficient centralised system saves them time on their own routine administration, and helps them complete mundane administration tasks quickly and efficiently.

Direct access to answer queries about their own information or company procedures is another advantage, as is the link to employee benefit information including details of the policies.

Employees with specific responsibilities gain improvements in their own efficiency and productivity by having direct access to relevant information. For example one team member can manage on screen the equipment allocated to everyone in the company, simplifying allocation, servicing and returns. She is also responsible for Health and Safety and can use the on line accident register to record and view accident information for everyone in the business. Tight security controls ensure all other information relating to employees remains confidential.

Octopus includes value added information such as tax tables and access to financial services information, which helps employees with key events like moving house or financial planning for retirement.

“We can make this value added information available just at limited times, but in fact have never needed to restrict access as people don’t tend to use these features at work. Of course with the ability to log in from home these features are always available to them, even outside working hours.”

Caroline Lewis summarises the experience of using Octopus:

“I have been very impressed. Octopus is easy to set up and easy for people to follow and the support we have had has been excellent. By using Octopus we have enhanced the way we work in HR, made valuable information available and improved efficiency not just for HR but for everyone in the business.”



Octopus
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