

Raising the bar: a brewing company evolves its processes



The human resources (HR) department is a vital component of most companies, and yet too often, HR employees find themselves juggling mundane administrative tasks rather than tackling crucial strategic issues. But that's quickly changing with evolving employee self-service technologies, like Workday.

What has made Anheuser-Busch InBev (AB InBev) a global leader in the brewing and beverage industry is its ability to tap into markets around the world. Yet, that growth is not necessarily easy when it comes to managing multiple locations that were vastly spread out. AB InBev was operating a fragmented landscape, with different ways of running localized systems—including within the HR function. When looking at its global scope, the company realized that a lack of standardization within its systems was hurting the collaboration between teams and impacting efficiency.

"AB InBev is the result of global mergers and acquisitions over the years," says Marcello Maffei, Vice President of People Transformation at AB InBev. "So after 1 major changes, we realized that our operational and people landscape was fragmented."

Maffei continues: "We had a lot of good teams doing great work but operating in a decentralized fashion without leveraging any synergies or best practices from other teams. We had a little of everything and had different capabilities due to different systems, teams and processes. We had contrasting operating models, which led to a different outcome as a whole."

Reduction in hours

Empowers and improves the employee experience and reduces administrative hours

1 consolidated system

Consolidated multiple structures into 1 standard system

One example of differing localized processes was how people changed jobs within AB InBev: the process varied across the company and resulted in a lot of paperwork. And each HR department had different levels of automation, requirements and participants in the process.

"We saw opportunities for us to evolve our function into a people area and support people in the business as a whole," adds Cristina Suéscum, Global People Transformation Manager at AB InBev. "We strongly believe in letting people drive their careers and be owners in the company. At the same time, we need to ensure that we are providing that experience and bring in the correct tools for them."

AB InBev didn't want this new digital environment in place to impact its ability to scale in some regions of the business. The company was ready to take the journey to improve its people organization across its global locations. AB InBev's objective was to roll out the ABI People Transformation program for its near 170,000 employees, focusing on enhancing their experience,

reducing administrative work, reinvesting in more value-added services and operating more cost-effectively.

“We wanted to create new ways of operating that put employees and managers at the center of our transformation. ”

Cristina SuéscumGlobal People Transformation ManagerAB InBevAdopting a self-service mindset with Workday

Enter the idea for employee self-service. AB InBev wanted to streamline its complicated HR landscape by implementing a singular global solution to support employees and improve their experience, and it selected Workday as its human capital management (HCM) software. Working with a team from IBM® Workday consulting services, part of IBM Consulting™, AB InBev worked with IBM to remediate the integration between the legacy HR applications and the HCM software.

Due to COVID-19 having boots on the ground during implementation was no longer an option, and connecting locations in different time zones became an added blocker. The two teams needed to create and manage all the methodology remotely, forcing them to readjust plans and reorganize design sessions. Adapting to the new virtual way of working seemed intimidating at first. Still, everyone’s ability to become agile throughout the process had AB InBev up and running—even during a pandemic.

“We know connecting in person makes a completely different level of engagement, but when COVID-19 hit us, we had to become flexible in terms of adaptation,” says Guilherme Isidoro, Global Director/People Tech at AB InBev. “We had a common objective and were able to glue a network together.”

IBM Consulting overcame the challenges of working with six different geographical zones and fragmented legacy applications to successfully complete data catch-up and perform end-to-end testing, delivering a 100% pass rate.

With Workday in place, the new modernized system has become a one-stop shop for employees to own more career-related processes, like finding roles, navigating organizational charts and connecting with colleagues in different spaces. The system also provides a place for capturing personal goals and receiving feedback. For managers, Workday has become a universal spot for doing things for themselves and their teams. They can look at the members of their team and see compensation, competency appraisals and career aspirations. This new line of sight allows managers to further understand and connect with employees in ways they couldn’t before.

What was once a multi-system tool with unorganized data has become a single source of truth, enabling AB InBev to run analytics for initiatives like examining employee turnover at a local scale. Workday provides AB InBev with a streamlined path for managing and analyzing data, ultimately helping the company execute on objectives and improve HR processes across the entire organization.

“What we’ve done so far is to work into a standard way of operating a single system that could allow us free access to data we can continue our data analytic journey,” adds Isidoro. “Also, by having the same process, systems and learnings from data and analytics, we start generating a better experience for our employees.”

“We are an organization that used to manage multiple, different structures, and now we have one single system—one single organization. ”

Marcello MaffeiVice President of People TransformationAB InBevEmpowered employees are successful employees

For AB InBev, gone are the days of a scattered, multi-structured system. It took some time for HR solutions to outgrow the

fragmented, manual processes in use for decades. Still, that arena is rapidly shifting toward a more productive and efficient system, and HR self-service is a key player.

“When we launched Workday at AB InBev, it was a huge shift for our teams, in terms of process and ways of working,” says Maffei. “I would say that we are still adapting and still have a lot of opportunities. We’ve been successfully measuring some important KPIs such as NPS and Experience metrics.”

AB InBev has built an adaptive foundation that can flex into future business trends and innovation. Additionally, the company found ways to reinvest in more value-added services and operate more cost-effectively. The organization was able to hit its markers using Workday and to enable its global team to:

Adopt a self-service mindset, allowing employees to initiate different processes, such as booking holidays and time off in the system.

Embrace its culture of evaluation, enabling employees to give and receive feedback to foster their professional development.

Plan for the future, encouraging employees to regularly set goals that enable them to realize their ambitions within AB InBev.

“These changes have already helped us incorporate systematic changes and build toward a better experience for our team,” says Suéscum. “With the right tools and the right processes in place, it’s an engaging experience, and our colleagues are happy to have everything in one place to take ownership of their own people process.”

The foundation has been laid with the ABI People Transformation program and its new self-service features. However, there’s still more to do, and Maffei is excited about the company’s future capabilities.

“We have a big dream, and you need great partners to help get it right. We still have a lot of different avenues and possibilities laid out and that’s where IBM can continue to play a big role in that pursuit,” says Maffei. “It’s a journey and we still have a lot to deliver, but we are on the right path to deliver that.”

About Anheuser-Busch InBev (AB InBev)

AB InBev (link resides outside of ibm.com) is the world’s leading brewer based in Leuven, Belgium and employs nearly 170,000 people globally. With a portfolio bustling with 500 brands, AB InBev builds iconic brands and creates meaningful experiences.

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