

# Club Director

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# AN INTEGRATED HR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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In today's highly volatile employment market with a national unemployment rate of 3.7 percent in October 2018, there are significant benefits to modernizing the club's human resources and payroll processes using a contemporary human capital management (HCM) system. Chief among them is the ability to promote positions online and screen and respond to applicants in real time. This has become a necessity in this tight labor market in order to remain competitive and attract and retain great talent.

At Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y., we embarked on this modernization journey in 2010. We realized that many of our manual processes—from hiring to management of records and payroll—could be streamlined and automated to shorten cycle times, eliminate paperwork, enhance the employee experience and provide greater legal compliance. Our business model is highly cyclical and transactional with a core employee base of 350 employees, to which we add 300 employees seasonally. This quick ramp up of seasonal employees takes place over a few weeks every spring. Conversely, we have a similar wave of intense work to offboard these seasonal employees in September-October. This high velocity and repetition of key HR processes over a very short duration created the perfect conditions to leverage technology to help us automate, streamline and accelerate the onboard and offboard processes.

Last year, while attending a human resources conference, I realized that the technology landscape had rapidly changed and that new players had joined the market. Concurrently, our previous vendor was going through a large merger and we

had the opportunity to either upgrade to their new platform or move to a new vendor. This prompted us to pause to and review several HCM technology solutions in 2017.

## Finding the Right System

Our mission was clear. We were looking for a fully integrated HR solution that would make the applicant and employee experience simple and engaging while ensuring optimized and seamless human resources and payroll functionality. First, we identified the key requirements and vision for what the HR/payroll experience should be. We tackled this exercise as a team: our human resources, payroll and finance staff met to discuss and compile the list of “needs to have” versus “nice to have” requirements. This led to a number of vendor meetings and system demos.

In the discovery process, we realized that many vendors offer solutions that encompass various functionality—from applicant tracking, time and attendance, scheduling and HR management to payroll, performance management and learning management. Some systems can be standalone while others may require buying the fully integrated solution. For clubs that may not be able to afford the full suite, there are a number of vendors that will offer paired down solutions adapted to various budget levels.

We ultimately decided to partner with SyncHR, a newer vendor. Unlike the more generic software, SyncHR's solution is designed for high-velocity companies with fast-changing and dynamic workforces from 500 to 5,000 employees—a good fit for us, given the cyclical

nature of our business. We also liked that their solution was designed and built utilizing the latest technologies, including a unique time tracking capability. It allowed us to transact within the system across time—past, present or future. For example, this allowed us to enter new hires into the SyncHR system before they started and set a future start date.

In addition, SyncHR gave us agile organizational charts that would update automatically. The platform's employee and manager portals were also user-friendly and accessible 24/7 by computer or smartphone. These elements were critical to ensure a positive adoption rate by department leaders, hiring managers and employees alike.

### Managing the Hiring Process

The applicant tracking feature was one of the determining factors in our selection process. We wanted the ability to post jobs easily with a few clicks and maintain a simple application form that we could customize based on position or latest legal requirements. User-friendliness was critical as we needed to get our hiring managers trained and engaged rapidly. We found SyncHR's technology easy to customize to our own hiring process and flow, with steps unique to us. It also provides us with tagging capabilities to manage, organize and filter requisitions and applicants. This facilitates the review and screening of qualified candidates. We are also able to customize and automate offer letters and document attachments with e-signature and standardize our messages to applicants based on where they are in the hiring process. Many of these features have saved both our HR and operational teams' tremendous time.

Another key function is the ability to easily advertise our positions to a number of online sites free while ensuring all applications would stay within our portal, for easy management and compliance purposes. We now receive numerous applicants from Indeed, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter and Monster to name a few at no cost to us. We have successfully been able to attract a better and larger pool of candidates this year versus past years.

The functionality seamlessly ties into I-9 management and E-Verify, an added feature. It also ensures a simple and efficient onboarding process, as the applicant's information once hired, carries over to our human resources system effortlessly.

One of the pleasant surprises has been that some of the repetitive data entry work that was previously done by Human Resources is done by the newly hired applicant before their start date. Prior to attending onsite orientation, every new hire receives auto-generated emails to complete their pre-hire I-9 form and onboarding steps. This allows them to validate their personal information, set up direct deposit, add emergency contacts and review and sign off electronically on key company documents from the convenience of



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their home. It has reduced our hiring and onboarding cycle time, the potential for data entry errors and allowed for a very transparent and customer centric onboarding experience.

### Investing in HR

Any club looking to optimize its HCM processes has tremendous resources to choose from as the technology vendor space is vast and ever-changing. Deciding where to spend your HR dollars is a critical decision for any club. The key is doing a deep assessment of your critical needs and documenting them. That way you can easily compare them against the vendors you consider, helping you identify gaps and making the best decision possible. Conducting a thorough request for proposal with due diligence prior to committing to a partner is also of critical importance. What a vendor claims they can do and what they actually do can sometimes be different. So, make sure each vendor shows you their system doing what you need done.

Finally, your club's readiness for change and willingness to adapt to new processes as well as the timing of the implementation are important factors to consider to be successful. In our experience, our transition and modernization journey with SyncHR has fostered great team and individual engagement and limited our potential for liability, while keeping our hiring process transparent and compliant. We have also found that investing in an agile applicant tracking system, as a strategic initiative, has given us a competitive advantage and reach beyond our local market by seamlessly opening us to a greater pool of candidates.

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