

A silver laptop is shown from a three-quarter perspective, open. On its screen, the text "How to buy an HR system" is displayed in a bold, red, sans-serif font. A small, silver metal shopping cart with red handles is placed on the laptop's keyboard area. The background is a plain, light gray surface with a subtle reflection of the laptop.

How to buy an HR system

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Foreword from our CEO

The importance and complexity of HR are growing. That's why more and more HR leaders are seeking out technological solutions for automating routine tasks and, in return, having more time to support their colleagues in the areas where their expertise adds the most value.

To benefit from technology in the HR field, you need to choose the right HR system – and the right system provider.

That's why we've compiled this convenient guide to help you. It's a summary of the experience we've gained during the last decade by providing cutting edge HR technology to our clients.

In this ebook, we'll be looking into why modern HR requires a ground-breaking HR system, advising you on how to select the right one for your business and giving you an idea of what to expect in your first year with your new system.

We believe HR is local by nature and there are no two organisations exactly alike. That's why no good vendor should sell you a system that's not right for you. We hope you'll choose Sympa HR because it best meets your needs. If not, we're confident that this guide will still prove useful.

With all good wishes for your future success,



Keijo Karjalainen
CEO and Founder, Sympa



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10 reasons why you need an HR System

Let's get started!

Since you have come this far, we are confident that you already know that digitalising your HR with the right system can benefit your organisation. But do you truly know what a modern HR system can do for you?

Implementing an HR system should not only be about transferring current processes and making them digital, it should also challenge you to rethink and restructure the way you are working.

When considering the purchase of an HR system, it's good to take a step back and identify the benefits of a modern HR solution – and how your organisation in particular could benefit from one.

Here are ten good reasons that can help advance the change. Many of these are derived from our **HR in the Nordics survey** (2018).



1. Technology supports bigger changes in HR

The role of HR professionals has been changing for decades, and there is no sign of it slowing down. Technology is at the core of the transition to the next wave of HR, where Human Resources cements its indispensability to its organisations and stakes out seats at the top tables.

“ Technology is at the core of the transition to the next wave of HR.

The role of HR is increasingly moving towards delivering business success. HR professionals are no longer just the ‘people people’. Instead, they are taking seats at the top decision-making tables. This change is often supported by the ability to show the effects of HR work on both the bottom line and the organisation’s effectiveness.

As a result, HR systems are transforming as well. A modern HR system shouldn’t just be a simple application for reducing some of the burden of routine HR work. Instead it should be a dedicated technological solution that supports the full range of HR activities.

As an HR professional, you now have better tools than ever before to use your expertise to the fullest and ultimately contribute to the success of your organisation.

“ Technology is liberating HR Managers from paper pushing and giving them the right tools to make an impact to the success of their organisations.



2. The right system frees your time to do the work you rock at

According to **a study** by the Center for Effective Organizations at University of California, only a quarter of HR professionals time is spent on value-adding tasks like skills and career development as well as fulfilling their role as a strategic partner in the business.

Without an HR system, your current processes leave you spending more time than you'd like on the routine tasks and not enough on the value adding specialist work – the work where HR professionals really prove their worth.

3. Be a forerunner – not everybody is there yet

Some HR departments still use very little technology. They might have a disparate collection of software to do specific tasks, such as managing payroll or handling recruitments. Software systems might not speak with each other, creating obstacles in the flow, management and quality of data.

A survey we carried out in 2018 found that just over 74% of the organisations surveyed in the Nordic region had a comprehensive HR solution in place. Whether those solutions are future proof is open to question, as two thirds of those surveyed were intending to increase the automation of their HR data management within the next two years.



4. To make data-driven decisions, you need the right tools

These days we have an over-abundance of data. Moving from instinct-driven to data-driven decision making requires HR professionals to have the skills and the technology to make sense of data. Otherwise we're left with a continuously growing haystack of data looking for the needle hidden inside.

“HR needs to have the skills and the technology to take ownership of their data.”

The wealth of data raises other questions as well. As there is data about almost everything and everyone in the workforce, the urgency of data transparency and data privacy is growing. Having an HR data strategy that complies with modern privacy regulations requires giving HR professionals the tools to take ownership of their data. This is one of the most fundamental arguments in favour of having a functioning HR system in place.

5. Analytics – not just numbers

When you have your data in place, the next step is getting your HR analytics processes in order. According to our survey, 'HR analytics' still means 'reporting' to most HR professionals, an area where there's a relatively low degree of confidence (1.93). Confidence is even lower when it comes to predictive analytics (1.59). It's evident that both are talked about far more than they're actually used.

It's clear that without data there is no analytics. Collecting your people data into a unified HR system is the first step in building HR analytics capabilities and being able to benefit from everything the system has to offer.





6. Predictive analytics is an opportunity to be grasped

Few organisations make the most of HR analytics, even fewer make the most of predictive analytics. When supported by good data and proper use, predictive analytics can identify causal relationships between different events such as workplace relocation and retention.

Identifying the reasons your staff churns can help prevent people from leaving and reduce employee turnover, which typically saves costs for the whole organisation.

7. The right HR system supports development initiatives, such as competence management

The paradigm shift of HR means that the technology in use has to support different development initiatives and processes, not just administrative work.

Our survey identified competence management as one of the main areas of concern for HR professionals in the Nordics. Competence management is a hot topic as it feeds into skills gap analysis, succession planning as well as competency analysis and profiling.



In managing competence maps, connecting competencies to job roles and to business strategy, the average rating is two or below.

This implies that the majority of respondents feel they're struggling to meet the challenge despite the fact that it's one of the most common priority areas amongst those surveyed.

8. Tools for change management and supervision

Another area that our survey identified as problematic for many HR professionals is supervision, and the lack of tools to support that. 95% of those surveyed felt there was room for improvement when it comes to managing processes and transparency.

Likewise, processes and tools for team leaders are ready for improvement, especially those for managing change. Change management is a vital concern in many organisations and HR is increasingly expected to lead or play an active role in it.

9. Go mobile

Mobile devices rule our lives. However, only around one in three respondents of our HR in the Nordics survey used HR tools on mobile devices. Given the state of technology and the way we live and work, having the choice to access key HR tools wherever, whenever, is essential.

That's why any modern HR software should offer outstanding mobile tools.



10. Finding the right tech frees you to make expert decisions

To sum up, managing and developing HR processes requires the right technology. Humans simply can't process that much data effectively.

However, the information and the analysis provided by a good system allows HR people to do, even more effectively, what computers really can't – make expert decisions.

“Far from replacing HR professionals, an HR system liberates and empowers them.”

However, there's clearly a deal of concern about how to choose the right system. Implementing an HR system is not an easy (or fast) task. Both the purchase as well as the resulting implementation and change management are processes that should be carried out with absolute confidence and certainty.

So next we will look at the questions you should be asking vendors to ensure you get the tools you need and deserve.

TAKE ACTION

Take a moment to reflect upon your working week.

What are the key processes and routines you manage?

Which take most of your time?

Which tasks are supported by some kind of technology?

Rate each of your current tools on a scale from 1-5.



Buying process steps

1. Think about your organisation and your needs

Some of the things you can reflect on are:

- The size of the organisation
- The characteristics of HR operations
- What are your must-haves for a system?
- Which are the quick wins you can achieve with a new system? Which can wait?

It's good to start with the small things since implementing is a big project.

2. Write down a preliminary list of technical system requirements

Listing all the requirements for an HR system is definitely worth the effort. We've made the task a little easier by adding small exercises in this guide which will help you to lay out a plan for your system requirements.



3. Do your research and get familiar with the different options available

- Online: Read useful guides and materials.
- Offline: Talk to your networks, get recommendations and visit events.

4. Contact the System provider and set up a demo meeting

Once you have a clearer idea of what you want, it's time to drill into the details and start to get familiar with the different systems. Testing a demo can be useful at any stage, but it's good to make some homework before trying things out.

5. Discuss your needs with the vendor constantly

- Remember to have an active dialogue with the vendor well in advance and at all stages of the process.
- Your starting point and where you end up can look different and you might have to rethink your processes. Toss around ideas together with your vendor and be open to ideas.
- If your organisation is big and has little knowledge of implementation projects, hiring an external consultant can be beneficial to help you with the change management.

6. Involve the right people internally

- Make sure you know where you stand with the budget.
- Who is making the decisions? If it's more people than you, involve them early on and make sure to build up arguments / a business case for your purchase.
- Who are the stakeholders? Have a discussion with IT, CEO, CFO, and any other stakeholders of concern.
- Involve managers and other system users to make the implementation and change management easier once the system has been purchased.



How to choose the right HR System and system provider

No one wants to be stuck with the wrong system, or with the wrong system provider. Your choice of HR system essentially comes down to two things:

- Requirements for the system
- The relationship with your system vendor.

Let's think about the *system requirements* first.

One of the most important tasks of an HR system is to store, validate and update the data you have.

In other words, to create value-adding processes backed up by technology, you need to have your master data in place. You also need to be able to trust that your data will always be safe and updated automatically.

Don't lose sight of your priorities and get distracted by all the exciting but irrelevant options a new HR system might offer. Ensure that the system offers good tools that support the most important processes you need to manage. Focus on the essential.

Beyond that, keep an eye out for the future. Choose a system that not only manages today's challenges but will support you in the coming years. The system should grow together with your organisation, both in terms of headcount and the development of your organisations HR processes.



Answer these five questions when choosing an HR system:

1. **How does the system ensure that the most important HR data is always available for the right people at the right time?**

Your system should support the embedding of analytics into almost every aspect of HR. Data should be gathered, processed and made available in an actionable format in real time in the system. A good option to look at is the possibility to present data in a dashboard to ensure the key metrics are available for the right people.

2. **Does the system support the design of HR process around the employee?**

Companies are increasingly focused on the employee experience. In a tough race for the best talent, offering a high salary alone is not enough. Organisations have to look at their operations from the employee perspective and your HR system should support that.

3. **Is the system supporting an agile employment culture?**

First employers started the push for greater flexibility, now employees expect flexibility too. People leave and return, others work seasonally, some work remotely, others as contractors. All that needs proper management.

4. **Can the system grow with you?**

Any HR system should support your company's changing needs. That's why flexible competence tracking and building are key features of a good HR system. You want to be ahead of the skills and competency curve – not behind it, right?

5. **Is the system being developed constantly, using agile methods?**

Look for solutions that are under constant development. You want your HR system to be readily adapted as circumstances and regulations change and technologies evolve. The keyword is agility. If every minor adaptation and change requires an army of consultants and engineers to be helicoptered, look at another solution.



TAKE ACTION

Make a list and outline what your current and future needs for a HR solution are.

That way you can ask vendors how they will meet those.

Read more on the technical properties of [Sympa HR](#)

As a buyer, you should be on top of system requirements. However, it's just as important to consider the traits and trustworthiness of the system vendor.

Consider these demands when you're choosing a system vendor:

1. **They act transparently.** You want a vendor that will act transparently at all times. Your vendor should demonstrate the benefits of their solution specifically to your business, both in financial terms and in the value it adds.
2. **They understand your budget.** The vendor will help you get the most effective solution possible within your budget and other constraints. If there are trade-offs, you want help in calculating which choices will benefit most.
3. **They understand your business.** You want a vendor that understand your business, your priorities and your needs.
4. **They have a strategic understanding of your future.** You want to benefit from your vendor's expertise as well as their technology. Collaborate with someone that can put themselves into your position and show better ways of working, better processes, new possibilities and new ideas to help you reach your goals.
5. **They have your best in mind.** Above all, you want to collaborate with a vendor that is prepared to say no to selling you an unsuitable system. No one system suits everyone.





“ *If the keyword for solutions is agility, the keyword for vendor-customer relationships would be **trust**.* ”

Good software developers thrive on the recommendations of happy customers. It's not in anyone's best interest to sell an unsuitable system. If you're a buyer, you should learn enough about HR systems to be able to evaluate the trustworthiness of a vendor's sales claims.

A vendor can choose to either exploit a customer's lack of knowledge or put itself in the position of the buyer. It all comes down to trust and the vendors ability to see how – and if – the solution provided could be the right match for the customer.



3

Could Sympa HR be the perfect choice for you?

From the very beginning, Sympa set out to create a software that makes the professional lives of people in HR smoother. Our solution, Sympa HR, takes care of mundane tasks and supports HR professionals in using their expertise to nurture their colleagues, develop their careers and help organisations reach strategic goals.

Crucially Sympa HR is designed to be highly adaptable; during the implementation we work with you to match our solution to your processes. When we sit down with a customer to plan their new solution, we try to keep all ideas in the mix. Quite often the process will prompt our customers to rethink their operations and adjust them to take advantage of opportunities provided by the new technology and/or because they realise there are more effective ways of working.

Following the implementation project, our customers routinely see a sharp jump in the satisfaction regarding different HR processes. Often, they also find themselves with hours or even days to spend on more value-adding tasks.

If you'd like a better indication of the sort of results we produce, then read on.



What happens when Sympa HR is implemented?

We're proud of how happy Sympa HR can make you.

According to a study conducted by Gartner, there was an immediate and sharp increase in satisfaction in almost every area handled by Sympa HR. Further improvements were seen one year after implementation.

Sympa HR saved hours of time. Supervisors in particular benefitted, saving around three hours a week or nearly two whole working days per month on routine tasks.

	Before Sympa HR	After Sympa HR
Recruitment personnel agreed that with Sympa HR 'it is quick and easy to create job advertisements and process and compare job applications'	0%	38%
Reporting	12%	52%
Handling of payroll	23%	54%
Managing holidays and absences	32%	61%

Numbers from our study conducted by Gartner in 2014/2015

For HR executives, satisfaction regarding processes for handling personal data went up by 26 per cent while positive feedback about competency tracking increased by 17 per cent.

Numbers from our study conducted by Gartner in 2014/2015 Every organisation has its own processes and benefits from an HR solution differently. Some results are not measured in numbers, and you can read more of the benefits of Sympa HR directly from our customers.

[Read the success stories from our clients](#)



What's next?

The case for a modern HR solution is strong – not in the least because the return on investment starts almost immediately. One concern is the implementation. What if it all goes horribly wrong?

Yes, implementations have the potential to be risky, costly and time-consuming. In less agile systems that require a small army of consultants – something common with legacy systems – the results of failed software implementations can be horrible.

The simple truth is that risks can be managed. By being aware of the pitfalls and proper planning, most issues can be avoided. With the right partner, any unforeseen issues can almost always be overcome. A successful implementation requires good teamwork, communication and a commitment to the customer's success.

Keys to a more efficient implementation project:

- **Clear ownership of the project**
- **Transparent goals**
- **Allocating the necessary resources**
- **Communication and collaboration with the vendor**

We're here to help you to prepare for the implementation process even before choosing a system. Our downloadable guide on the building blocks of a successful implementation process will hopefully help you get started.

Download our [Implementation eGuide here](#)





If you have any concerns or questions, we at Sympa are always here to talk.

And when you're ready to introduce HR-transforming technology, we can sit down and show you exactly what Sympa can do using your own data – so you'll have a sneak preview of how it would work in real life.

sympa.com