

Chapter 9

Conceptual E-HRM Solutions for Enhancing Employee Focus in Human-centric Organizations



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9.1. Introduction

In previous chapter 8, the focus was on the IT sector in the face of current employee expectations. In this chapter, attention is turned to the use of selected products of this sector in the area of HRM. Interest in this issue is driven by the increasing relevance of electronic human resources management (E-HRM), which is observed both in academia and in business practice.

Human resource management, like other functional areas of enterprises, is subject to strong pressure from many changes occurring in the organization's environment. These are related, among other factors, to competition for talented employees (Tarique et al., 2022), modifications in employees' attitudes towards work, or the structure of employees available on the labor market (age, competencies, etc.), the permanent evolution of employer-employee relations (Sessa and Bowling, 2021), or the rapid development of information and communication technologies (Zhou et al., 2022). In particular, the latter factor poses a major challenge for HR managers, since under its influence the way of carrying out human resources management tasks is undergoing a complex transformation. This, in turn, requires the acquisition of not only digital competencies necessary for functioning in a computerized

environment, but also knowledge of IT solutions available on the market, the determination of requirements for these solutions or, ultimately, methods of their selection (Nyathi and Kekwaletswe, 2024). These issues form the broader emerging concept of E-HRM mentioned at the beginning.

The subject of E-HRM holds particular significance to the overarching theme of this monograph, which focuses on placing humans at the heart of the organization. As we navigate through the rapid advancements in technology and shifting work environments, such as remote and hybrid models (Wells et al., 2023), the integration of electronic systems in human resource management becomes imperative. E-HRM tools not only streamline processes but also enhance the ability of organizations to respond to the diverse needs and well-being of employees (Bondarouk et al., 2017). This approach aligns with the evolving demand for workplaces that prioritize personal growth, inclusivity, and well-being, ensuring that technology serves to support and augment the human aspect of organizational operations, rather than overshadow it (Nyathi and Kekwaletswe, 2024). This strategic alignment underlines the critical role that technology plays in reinforcing the human-centered approach in contemporary organizational management.

Hence, **the main goal of this chapter** is to discuss the basic components of E-HRM and to propose, based on them, an E-HRM matrix as a starting point for the selection of information and communication technologies. These components and the E-HRM matrix will be discussed in the context of their role in supporting dynamic, inclusive work environments that prioritize personal growth and well-being, aligning technology with the human-centric goals of the organization. This perspective will ensure that E-HRM tools are viewed as enhancers of human potential within the framework of modern organizational management.

9.2. The Concept of Electronic Human Resources Management

The dynamic development of information and communication technologies (ICT) – which process, collect, and transmit information in electronic form – caused rapid changes in the functioning of individuals, groups, or entire societies. These changes are also observed at the level of organizations. The way we perform tasks or manage employees nowadays is filled with various solutions from the ICT area (Zhou et al., 2022). Similarly, in HRM, information and communication technologies have become indispensable tools of work, supporting HR employees in the implementation of tasks of various levels of complexity (Stor, 2020). This has led to the emergence of a new concept known as electronic human resource management (E-HRM), which can be tentatively read as a combination of traditional HRM with various information and communication technologies. These technologies significantly influence how organizations attract talented employees, implement selection processes for job candidates, shape the level of commitment and satisfaction of their employees, or manage job performance (Ma, 2023).

When attempting to define E-HRM, it should be noted that this term has been used in the literature for more than two decades (Gardner et al., 2003; Ruel et al., 2004). In its sample definitions presented in Table 20, particular attention is drawn to the emphasis placed on various ICT technologies which, when used in HRM processes, form a kind of foundation for the emerging concept. Without entering into a detailed discussion of the definitions presented, one should agree with T. V. Bondarouk and H. J. M. Ruël that E-HRM should be regarded as a kind of “umbrella” term covering all possible mechanisms that integrate HRM with IT, the purpose of which is to create value to the inside and outside of the organization for the target group of employees and managers (2009).

Table 20. Exemplary definitions of electronic human resource management

Author/authors	Definition
S. Stroehmeier (2007)	E-HRM – planning, implementation, and application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individuals or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities.
M. Voermans, M. Veldhoven J. (2007)	E-HRM refers to the application of Internet technologies to administratively support the HR function.
H. J. Ruel, T. V. Bondarouk, M. Van der Velde (2007)	E-HRM is the integration of plans, strategies, and methods used in human resource management with online platforms to increase the efficiency of an organization’s operations.
J. H. Marler, E. Parry (2016)	E-HRM – configurations of computer hardware, software and electronic networking resources that enable intended or actual HRM activities (e.g., policies, practices, and services) through coordinating and controlling individual and group-level data capture and information creation, and communication within and across organizational boundaries.

Source: own elaboration.

Changes that occurred in the field of HRM under the influence of the widespread use of modern ICT solutions changed not only the way basic tasks are carried out, but also the perception of the role that HR departments play in modern organizations (Table 21). It should be emphasized that the primary determinant of these new roles is the mindset of employees at managerial levels regarding the possibility of using the aforementioned technologies in the day-to-day functioning of the organization. This is because their implementation will change the way employees communicate, collaborate, or manage their own careers (Sienkiewicz and Sidor-Rządowska, 2023). This means that HR departments can increase their prestige within the organization, as properly selected and implemented modern technologies will be reflected in the organization’s economic performance (Obeidat, 2016). And as for HRM itself, as empirical research shows, new technologies can support each of its diverse subfunctions and bring measurable benefits to various areas of an organization’s operations (*c.f.* Stor, 2023).

Table 21. Traditional and new HRM practices

Old rules	New rules
The HR department focuses on process design and harmonization to create standard HR processes.	HR department optimizes employers' productivity, teamwork, engagement, and career development.
HR selects a cloud-based vendor and implements out-of-the-box practices to create scale.	HR builds innovative, company-specific programs and leverages the platform for scale.
HR center of excellence focuses on process design and process excellence.	HR center focuses on leverage, AI, Chat, APPs, and other advanced technology.
HR focuses on self-service to scale service and support.	HR focuses on enablement to help people get work done more effectively.
HR programs are designed for scale and consistency around the world.	HR programs target employee segments, personas, and specific groups.

Source: (Varadaraj and Wadi, 2021).

The discussion thus far on E-HRM underscores its transformative role in evolving HR from a traditional administrative function to a strategic entity within organizations. By integrating technology into HR practices, E-HRM enhances the ability to address individual employee needs and aspirations, supporting dynamic, inclusive work environments. This shift is crucial for organizations aiming to foster a culture of employee engagement and empowerment, positioning HR to effectively contribute to organizational strategy and adapt to contemporary challenges.

9.3. The Key Components of E-HRM

The literature provides a number of proposals for model approaches to E-HRM (Bondarouk, 2020; Ruel et al., 2004). An analysis of the relationships and components adopted in them indicates that, in the most general terms, they are based on the pattern shown in Figure 11, which includes the strategy, goals, types, and effects of E-HRM. The starting point is the organization's overall strategy, which sets the basic directions for development in specific areas like production, marketing, or HRM. The overall strategy is reflected in functional strategies. In the case of HRM, it can refer to the full use of various IT solutions to support the work of HR employees, which means implementing the concept of electronic human resource management.

Another element in the E-HRM model approach are goals. Their origins can be found in an article by Lepak and Snell (1998). The researchers noted four reasons why organizations choose to implement IT solutions in the area of HRM. These include:

- 1) focusing more attention on strategic issues, in which the HR department becomes a business partner that supports the organization's overall strategy;
- 2) increasing flexibility in the HR policies and practices implemented;
- 3) reducing the cost of operating the HR department; and
- 4) changing the approach to senior managers or other employees from a model of continuous collaboration to a model of providing services to internal stakeholders.

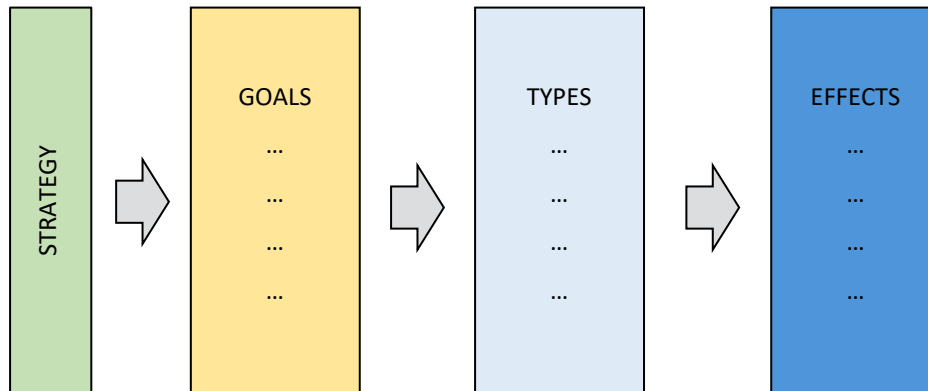


Figure 11. Components of the electronic human resource management models

Source: own work.

The above goals were modified in the following years, e.g., in a proposal by H. Ruel, T. Bondarouk and J. K. Loaise. The emphasis on flexibility was dropped, but the other three goals remained (2004). Specifically, within the scope of the E-HRM goals, the following can be distinguished (Kaur, 2013):

- offering an adequate, comprehensive, and ongoing information system about people and jobs at a reasonable cost,
- providing support for future planning and policy formulation,
- automating employee-related information,
- facilitating monitoring of imbalances in demand and supply of human resources,
- enabling faster response to workforce-related services and faster workforce-related decision-making,
- offering data security and personal privacy.

Considering the types of E-HRM, the literature on the subject indicates operational, relational, and transformational E-HRM. The operational type refers to basic (administrative) tasks carried out by HR staff and includes collecting basic data on employees, concluding contracts, calculating salaries taking into account legal regulations on vacation days, sick leaves, etc. The relational type of E-HRM, also referred to as the traditional one, covers the basic areas of human resource management, namely human resource planning, employee acquisition, development, or performance management. The basic question at this level of E-HRM concerns the ability of information and communication technologies to support the tasks performed. The last type of E-HRM, also called the transformational type, is related to the issue of linking personnel strategy with the overall strategy of the organization. In doing so, it is emphasized that the implementation of the E-HRM concept should lead to the release of adequate organizational and human resources, which can be used at the strategic level of human resources management (Ruel et al., 2007).

The last element in the E-HRM model approach are the effects. The literature provides a number of examples of their classification. In the work of H. Ruël and van der Kaap, the analysis of the effects of implementing E-HRM in an organization was carried out from the point of view of creating value for stakeholders (2012). The authors of this analysis proposed grouping the effects according to three categories: productivity, efficiency, and quality of services provided by the HR department. In turn, in the proposal of G. Martin and M. Reddington, the classification of effects was based on the following criteria: expected and unexpected, and positive and negative (2010). Based on this approach, the following positive effects of E-HRM can be identified (Łukasiewicz, 2020):

- increasing the organization's ability to access, collect, and disseminate information,
- reducing the cost of operating the HR department,
- reducing administrative and office work,
- employees are able to participate in online discussions,
- supporting HRM processes through systems such as e-recruitment, e-selection, e-learning, e-training, etc.

In addition to the positive implications, the management of any organization must be aware of the potential negative effects of implementing modern IT solutions into the area of HRM. Examples of these include:

- reducing full-time positions in the HR department,
- lack of appropriate skills required to operate specialized software,
- illegal access to information and its use for various purposes,
- the disappearance of interpersonal contacts in favor of electronically transmitted information.

In summary, organizations implementing the E-HRM concept should have a perfect recognition of all the elements that determine the final shape of the concept. Their identification and analysis can be regarded as a preliminary stage to achieve the target state of the HRM system supported by information and communication technologies. This integrated approach enhances the strategic, operational, and transformational elements within HRM, aligning human resources practices with broader organizational strategies. The ability of E-HRM to streamline administrative tasks, support strategic HR planning, and improve service quality ensures that HR practices are not only efficient but also contribute significantly to organizational growth and employee satisfaction. Such strategic integration is essential for leveraging HR as a pivotal component in achieving business success and fostering a supportive, engaging, and adaptable work environment.

9.4. The Author’s Own Conceptual Proposal for the Matrix of E-HRM

The components of E-HRM described in the previous section should be applied to its basic areas, which in this approach take the prefix “e-”. These include e-planning of human resources, e-recruitment, e-performance management, e-remuneration, etc., as shown in Figure 12. This prefix emphasizes the saturation of these areas with information and communication technologies, but there is no precise guidance in the literature on how to set the threshold beyond which an organization is authorized to add that prefix. The situation is complicated by the fact that nowadays it is difficult to imagine an area of human resources management in which no information technology in the form of at least a spreadsheet or an e-mail is used. In this context, it would be useful to have a tool to assess the degree of use of ICT in the highlighted areas of human resource management.

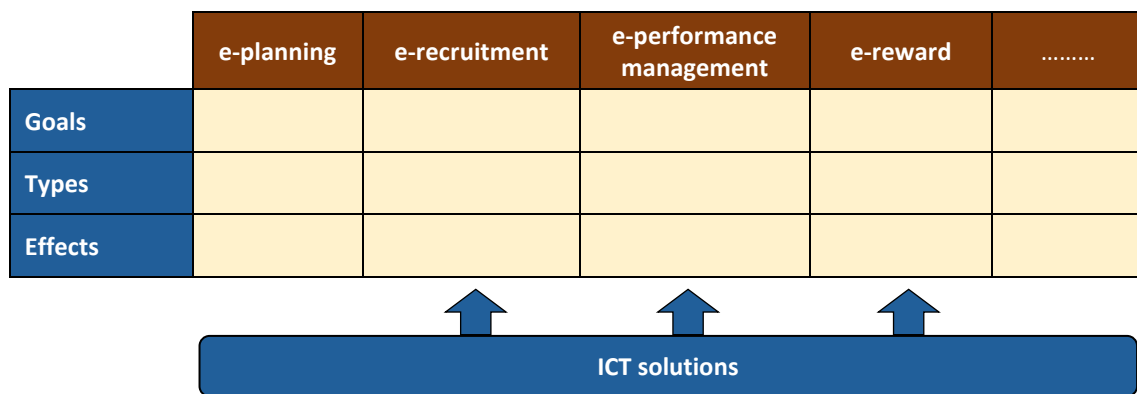


Figure 12. Target matrix for E-HRM

Source: own concept.

The computerization of the area of HRM depends on many factors. Most often, researchers point to three groups: (Bondarouk et al., 2017; Ruel and Bondarouk, 2014;):

- technological – data integrity, system usability, system integration, current information system architecture, systems produced within the organization versus systems purchased from external vendors.
- organizational – age, size, sector, organizational regulations, and policies on the use of information technology, IT projects planning and management, data privacy, organizational resources, and competencies.
- social – demographic characteristics of employees, communication competencies, attitudes of rank-and-file employees and senior managers, employees’ skills in using information systems, organizational culture, and leadership styles.

One of the most frequently analyzed areas of HRM in terms of the use of IT solutions is e-recruitment (Balcerak and Wozniak 2019; Solek-Borowska, 2019; Wolniak, 2019). Nowadays,

almost all the activities performed during the process of recruiting employees can be carried out with the use of information technology. Job vacancies are advertised on specialist portals, social media, or the organization's website. Candidate applications are collected and analyzed in dedicated ATS (Applicant Tracking System) systems, which streamline activities related to recruitment or the selection of candidates. Their use gives organizations many benefits in the form of, for example, reducing the time needed to find the right person for a vacant position, searching for candidates in different sources at the same time, automatically generating reports, managing subsequent stages of recruitment, organizing contacts with candidates, etc. Examples of ATS systems include eRecruiter, Traffiti, Hrlink and Elevato. Candidate selection can also be carried out based on IT solutions. Companies can use a variety of online testing tools to assess candidates' skills. These can be platforms that offer ready-made tests in various fields, or tools for creating and administering tests tailored to the specific needs of a company. With video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet, companies can conduct interviews online. There are also special video recruiting tools that allow candidates to record their answers to recruitment questions and make them available to recruiters for evaluation.

The assignment of goals, types, and effects to the distinguished areas of E-HRM allows the selection of the most appropriate ICT solutions for the described situation. They should allow to meet the reported needs on the part of HR staff, perfectly fit into the implementation of the overall strategy of the organization, which will consequently translate into an increase in the efficiency of the functioning of the entire organization. However, in the process of implementing the selected solutions, one should keep in mind the factors that determine their final effectiveness. These include (Naumova-Mihajlovska and Petkovski, 2023):

- Support of implementation projects by top management. Managers holding key positions in the organization decide on the direction of development and implementation of state-of-the-art ICT solutions, based on the available resources and the organization's environment. They are also responsible for determining the amount of the IT department's budget that can be spent on modern information technologies, assessing the impact of the technologies used on the functioning of the organization's various departments, including the HR department, or modifying the implemented strategy for comprehensive informatization.
- Investing in the right IT structure. Stakeholder expectations for improved business performance make it imperative for top management to stay up to date with the latest IT solutions available on the market. The latest operating systems or specialized software, computers, laptops, smartphones, and other communication devices, on the one hand, require high financial outlays, but, on the other hand, they contribute to the efficiency of the organization's operations, as well as to the increasing acceptance of organizational changes associated with ICT investments.
- Developing ICT competencies. Knowledge and skills regarding the operation and use of information technology play a very important role in decisions regarding their purchase, as well as the speed of their implementation and ultimate use. For this reason, organizations

invest in the development of employees' digital competencies, which consequently translates into an increase in their flexibility in the context of technological change.

- Shaping an organizational culture that supports investments in the modernization of information technologies. The organizational culture, i.e., a unique set of values, norms, beliefs, and symbols that determine how employees behave in certain situations, has a very strong impact on the functioning of modern organizations. Its effects become apparent not only in human resource management, but also in trust management processes, individual and team learning, innovation or, ultimately, in the organization's finances (Mazur 2021). In the case of information and communication technologies, the organizational culture influences their level of acceptance and thus reduces the time for employees to adapt to new solutions.
- Accepting the legal and regulatory framework. Despite the many benefits that information technology provides to organizations, it is important to point out some negative consequences of its use. Namely, it is about cybercrime, which for many organizations can be an argument for minimizing ICT investments. Therefore, an important role in this context is played by all legal regulations aimed at combating crime in the virtual space. However, this requires extensive support and pressure on policy makers not only from the public, but especially from managers at various levels of organizational management.

The above factors are not a closed list. However, they are an excellent starting point for a broader discussion, particularly in the context of implementing the concept of E-HRM. Changes in this area spread to the entire organization, not only to the HRM area. From this point of view, their scope should be comprehensively analyzed at the level of entire organizations.

The proposed matrix of E-HRM, integrating technological, organizational, and social factors, aligns seamlessly with the strategic objectives of the organization. This alignment not only enhances operational efficiency but also strengthens the strategic aspects of HRM. By effectively linking technology with organizational culture and dynamics, the E-HRM framework promotes a responsive and adaptable HR function. This approach is vital for creating dynamic and inclusive work environments that support personal growth and well-being, ensuring that E-HRM tools transcend administrative functions to become crucial enhancers of human potential, aligned with the human-centric goals of contemporary organizational management.

9.5. Summary and Final Conclusions

Considering the findings discussed in this chapter, it can be concluded that its **main goal has been achieved**. This goal was to discuss the basic components of E-HRM and to propose, based on them, an E-HRM matrix as a starting point for the selection of information and communication technologies. These components and the E-HRM matrix were explored within the context of supporting dynamic, inclusive work environments that prioritize personal growth and well-being, aligning technology with the human-centric goals of the organization.

The implementation of the concept of E-HRM poses challenges for modern HR managers. This is because it requires not only knowledge of the IT solutions available on the market, the cost of their purchase, implementation, and then maintenance, possession of appropriate digital competencies, but above all knowledge of the very idea behind the concept of E-HRM. The starting point in the development of a target E-HRM system that will best suit the needs of a given organization is the precise determination of the strategy for the digitalization of the HRM area, the goals, the types (levels) at which information and communication technologies play a key role, and the expected results. These four elements of E-HRM form the basis for the development of a system matrix that can serve as a reference in decision-making processes regarding the implementation of various information and communication technologies.

The integration of advanced ICT solutions within HRM practices as outlined through the matrix exemplifies a significant shift toward enhancing both operational efficiencies and strategic capabilities. This transition is crucial as it ensures that HR functions can better support organizational strategies and adapt more quickly to changes, reflecting the growing importance of agility in human resource management. Furthermore, the strategic alignment facilitated by the E-HRM matrix directly supports the creation of work environments that are not only dynamic and inclusive but also conducive to personal development and well-being. By aligning HRM practices with broader organizational goals through strategic use of technology, E-HRM tools serve as catalysts for enhancing human potential within the framework of modern organizational management. Moreover, the matrix's emphasis on selecting appropriate ICT based on a comprehensive understanding of E-HRM components underlines the importance of a thoughtful approach to technology integration. This careful consideration ensures that technology implementations are not just for administrative efficiency but are strategically deployed to bolster human-centric management practices, thereby fostering a culture of engagement and empowerment across the organization.

In summary, the discussion and proposals presented in this chapter reinforce the idea that E-HRM is a powerful enabler of organizational adaptation and human-focused development. By effectively integrating technology with strategic human resources practices, organizations are better positioned to respond to the complexities of the modern business environment while also supporting the well-being and growth of their employees.

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