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Topic: Learning and Talent Management

Issue: Who are the Learning and Talent Management providers and how will they compete?

IBM Announces Open HR and Open Analytics Platforms; Expands Partner Ecosystem

Summary: On June 9, 2015, IBM announced its Open HR Platform and Open Analytics Platform, and new partners that will be able to work with IBM's existing software offerings.

Event: IBM made the announcement on its web site and at the Talent Analytics Summit in NYC. The new platforms are now generally available.

Analysis

Following on the heels of its May SAP partnership announcement, IBM announced the second and more strategic part of its strategy: to fully open up its Talent Management Platform with three announcements.

First, IBM's Open HR Platform will allow multiple software partners to integrate with its Talent Management Platform. Second, the company's Open Analytics Platform will allow enterprises to invoke Predictive and IBM Watson Cognitive Apps as SaaS applications, and extend the value of their analytics applications with Talent Insights. Talent Insights can quickly acquire data through pre-integrated connectors and templates. Third, IBM announced a managed beta program for Talent Insights Predictive.

Talent Insights is a cloud service that uses Watson Analytics as its cognitive computing platform. The cloud form factor lets IBM take advantage of Bluemix, which will allow future talent analytics services provided by partners to also be consumed within Talent Insights.

This means that making HR applications smarter faster is much closer to reality than many had realized.

IBM Announcements: SAP Partnership and Open HR

What is interesting about this announcement is that IBM chose to announce its relationship with SAP as the first evidence of its new approach (see Research Note 2015-FC03, [IBM and SAP Integrated Talent Management Offerings Will Disrupt the HCM Market](#)).

While that caught many in the industry off-guard, IBM's complete shift to a Platform approach in Talent Management is a strategic move and an endorsement of the new shift to Platforms.

The New Battle for HR Platforms

The Platform play will be the new battle cry in Human Resources, and the key issue will now be how many apps can be integrated with the core platform.

IBM is not alone in making this move. In recent weeks, Cornerstone OnDemand, Saba, and Salesforce all announced their own approaches to Talent Management Platforms.

Prediction: *The new era of enterprise computing will be about integration and cooperation among software providers. By YE 2017, a majority of HR technology vendors will offer HR Platforms that integrate with third-party applications.*

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IBM Open HR Talent Ecosystem and Partner Applications

IBM plans to introduce a large number of partners as part of its Open HR Platform. One of the first was Globoforce, a Social Recognition provider in Southborough MA. As a result of this integration, customers can add social recognition data to IBM's Kenexa Talent Insights, providing more comprehensive information to make talent decisions.

IBM said it would announce its other Platform Partners over the course of 2015.

HCM Market: Selecting a Platform vs. a Suite

With Cornerstone, IBM, Saba and Salesforce embracing their respective platforms, this marks a shift in the industry, away from closed suites and closed analytics services.

Clients have a real choice now between using technology like cognitive computing to do the heavy lifting around data integration, analytics, big data management, etc., vs. bringing those skills in-house with point applications that only have predictive capabilities for one problem domain such as retention.

There will now be a push for vendors to win at the platform level, but an enterprise's ability to innovate in HR by adding best-of-breed solutions to the Platform, means that HR is not what it was 2 years ago.

Making a shift to Platforms means opening up APIs. Vendors that will have to respond to this include Infor, Oracle, Peoplefluent, SAP, Skillsoft, Workday and others.

Aragon Advisory

- Enterprises should retire legacy RFP templates and take a new approach to Talent Management by evaluating platforms and the partner ecosystem that is part of the offering.
- Enterprises should ask their incumbent or new Talent Management suite vendors about their plans to integrate with other providers.
- Enterprises should evaluate IBM's Open Analytics platform and look at how the Cognitive Service can help them build new predictive applications.

Bottom Line

HR Platforms are the new battle cry. Closed suites are not the future. This will force technology providers to open up their architectures, which in the long term is a win for buyers. Enterprises should ask existing providers for specific roadmap plans for cloud-based integrations with other providers.

Related Aragon Research

- [The Aragon Research Globe for Enterprise Learning, 2015: The Race to Mobile First and Content Integration](#)
- [Aragon Research Technology Arc for Learning and Talent Management, 2015](#)
- [Video Learning On the Rise: Five Critical Elements You Need In Your Enterprise](#)
- [Predictive Hiring Can Help You Win the Talent War](#)