

How Unilever France Provides Unified HR Support to a Diverse Workforce

Challenge

In a typical year, half of Unilever France’s 2,200-strong workforce are located at the head office, while the rest are spread across six factories. Naturally, the needs of those working at HQ are a little different from those on the factory floor, presenting a challenge for the HR team. To ensure they could provide the same exceptional experience to all employees while also enabling more individualized support, the team turned to UKG HR Service Delivery, formerly PeopleDoc, for help moving their HR processes and files onto a unified digital platform.

“The digitization of HR processes had a first objective: to enable all employees to benefit from the same tools,” explains Frédéric Faure, Unilever’s VP of HR for France. “But we also wanted to significantly improve the quality of HR services and free up time for our teams to better support our employees in their development.”

Here’s how Unilever France’s HR team achieved a successful digital transformation by remaining focused on the people they serve.

Democratized access to HR — anytime, anywhere

Prior to implementing their new solution, employees at Unilever France could access some information via the organization's HR dashboards — but often, they would have to call or email to get an answer to their questions. None of these options were ideal for the factory workers, who had limited access to a computer and often worked nights and weekends when a call wouldn’t be answered. As such, the HR team knew that if they adopted a digital platform, it would need to be fully accessible by smartphone at any time of the day or night if the factory workers were ever going to use it.

“Digitizing the uses in the factory was a daring gamble,” reflects Nathalie Guerrier, HR operations and project manager at Unilever. “The high adoption rate from the first month pleasantly surprised us; 70% of the population in the factory and 95% at headquarters were already using UKG to find their personal documents, like their employment contract and payslip.”

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The team was also conscious of the fact that employees across the various locations would be using the platform in wildly different ways. Luckily, the solution could be closely tailored to an employee’s unique situation and needs.

“We had taken into account the heterogeneity of our population from the outset,” Faure says. “The tool was personalized according to each person’s situation: status, type of contract, place of work, and so on.”

A better experience for employees — and the HR team

While the platform enables seamless self-service, there are some instances when an employee needs to get in touch with HR. Previously, they often had to jump through hoops if they had a request like a leave of absence. Now, they can simply place the request and trigger an HR process through the case management tool, People Assist.

“I had the flu recently,” says Frédéric Parizot, a supply chain operator at the company. “I used to have to go to the post office when I needed to take sick leave. Now I just have to take a picture of my doctor’s note and send it in a few clicks through the platform.”

This has also made it easier for the HR team to provide rapid support. Since most employees can find answers to their questions in the knowledge base, the team receives far fewer requests than they used to — allowing them to guarantee a personalized response within 48 hours.

In cases where a question wasn’t covered online, the team will often supplement the knowledge base to ensure the next employee can quickly find the answer they’re looking for.

The intuitive UKG platform also allows HR to add and modify processes on their own. When Unilever France recently adopted a new company savings plan for employees, for example, HR managers were able to integrate it into the onboarding process for new hires in mere minutes. And by digitizing their HR documents and enabling automatic archiving, they no longer have to mail documents to different locations or spend entire days preparing for audits. Whatever documents they need are now right at their fingertips.

“The challenge for us was first of all to save time, but also to make document archiving reliable and secure,” says Faure, “especially in the context of new European legislation on the protection of personal data.”

“Now, we are more autonomous and, above all, much faster,” adds Marco Medrano, a talent advisor at the company. “UKG is integrated with all the HR tools within our group. We have a single entry point that allows us to manage all processes.”



More time for what matters

As a result of these improvements, Unilever France’s HR function now has more time to focus on critical initiatives like upskilling and internal mobility. And since the team no longer wastes valuable resources on menial tasks like managing filing cabinets, they’ve been able to create two new roles — people experience lead and data specialist — to better support their people.

“The HR team is no longer mobilized on tasks with low added value,” says Faure. “They can move away from administration, focus on strategy, and work better on developing training and preparing succession plans. Above all, this automation allows them to free up time to develop more human contact with employees.”

The implementation process took just four months, and before long, the team was reporting a 97% adoption rate among employees.

Their success hasn’t failed to catch the eye of the parent company.

“The HR team in France has been able to leverage the effectiveness of the project to improve its productivity and move toward new strategic missions supporting the group’s performance,” says Nicolas Liabeuf, president of Unilever France. “This is an accurate reflection of the direction we wish to give to our company.”

To learn more about how digitizing your HR processes can improve productivity and provide a better experience for employees, watch our on-demand webinar, Case Management: The Key to a Better Employee (and HR) Experience.

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