

VCU Health System: A Transformation of HR Services and Support



The healthcare industry is in flux with an aging population, rising costs, healthcare reform and policy uncertainties, emerging technologies, changing workforce models, and a shortage of healthcare professionals.

While the demand for healthcare services will continue to increase over the next decade, the supply of healthcare providers will substantially decrease. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges' Center for Workforce Studies, there will be a deficiency of 45,000 primary care physicians—and a lack of 46,000 surgeons and medical specialists—by 2020. A Georgetown University School of Nursing & Health Studies report states the East and West Coasts will have nursing shortages by 2025. Arizona will have the largest scarcity with 28,100 fewer registered nurses than necessary; North Carolina and Colorado will each need 12,900 nurses followed by Maryland, which will require 12,100 registered nurses.

Healthcare organizations are faced with numerous human resources-related challenges, including talent acquisition, retention, and employee engagement that are currently heightened issues in their industry. They also must address an extensive list of guidelines by The Joint Commission to ensure safe, high-quality care and service, in addition to complying with an enormous number of regulations to verify staff qualifications, provide orientation and ongoing training, and ensure staff sensitivity to cultural diversity.

ScottMadden is the leader in assisting healthcare organizations address these challenges. The outcomes from our engagements resolve issues but also transform and position human resources to increase effectiveness and drive value for the organization. This article relays one such experience.

Introduction

The Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Health System is one such health organization facing these aforementioned challenges. The VCU Health System includes the VCU Medical Center (the region's only academic medical center and Level I trauma center), VCU Community Memorial Hospital, the Children's Hospital of Richmond, and Medical College of Virginia (MCV) Physicians. With more than 12,000 employees and more than 16,000 non-employees, including university staff, visiting physicians, contractors, agency staff, and volunteers, VCU Health System's human resources department needed a transformation.

"We wanted to explore new options for improving internal support and communications with our workforce, streamlining and standardizing processes, reducing administration and human errors, and managing increasing workloads," said Deborah Slayden, Director of HR Operations at VCU Health System.

VCU Health System had invested in human resources technologies, such as a core human capital management system, but adoption

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of technology capabilities was often low, and manual processes remained especially cumbersome. The human resources team and their internal clients were growing frustrated with the unnecessary, tedious processes and what often seemed to be repetitive requests to respond to questions and complete tasks.

To improve their employees' and managers' experiences by providing easier access to accurate information in a more timely manner, maximizing support efficiency, and responding to a high volume of transactions without increasing human capital operating cost, VCU Health System turned to ScottMadden for assistance. ScottMadden's expertise was desired to design and implement a new Human Resources Solution Center, define where services would be delivered within human resources, train the team on the new delivery model, design and deploy supporting technologies, and support the organization-wide implementation and change management.



1. The Challenge

For VCU Health System's human resources organization to focus on its most pertinent talent acquisition, development, retention, administrative, and compliance challenges, they required several things:

- Streamlined processes to identify, interview, and onboard qualified candidates
- Prioritized support for managers to develop and retain top talent through learning and development
- Competitive benefit and compensation programs to fit evolving needs of both the employees and the growing organization

But that is not the full story.

Among their many tasks, VCU Health System's human resources department on-boards nearly 4,000 new hires each year, including 2,000 nurses. They manage and track annual medical licenses and certification renewals. They handle thousands of phone calls, website inquiries, emails, and in-person questions daily. They comply with unexpected annual and random audits. And they strive to fill such tough positions as operating room clinical nurses, specialty nurse managers, surgical technicians, perfusionists, and cardiac sonographers—some of which typically take organizations many months or years to acquire.



2. How We Helped

VCU Health System went live with its new Human Resources Solution Center, which included a physical service and contact center. Direct phone access to human resources representatives is now available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, whereas reaching the busy human resources team was previously not a guarantee.

The Solution Center features new customer care technology integrated with the human capital management and telephony systems. The customer care technology is a cloud-based Software-as-a-Service solution, which includes a dynamic case management tool and a web-based user portal, supported by a robust, searchable knowledgebase that targets content to specific

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employee groups throughout the organization. The robust Solution Center is supported by:

- Clearly defined HR services, roles, and responsibilities
- More than 50 harmonized policies
- Nearly 100 documented standard operating procedures
- A tiered service delivery model
- Extensive work flow definitions
- Automated email system notifications
- Almost 300 portal knowledge articles
- 15 eForms
- Integration of process activities across other departments, such as payroll

ScottMadden involved more than 50 human resources team members and leaders throughout the organization to help determine which of more than 100 high-volume processes needed to be redesigned and documented. In addition, ScottMadden’s team of shared services healthcare experts developed training materials and instructed in excess of 500 people—including those internal to human resources, departmental managers, key staff members, and executive leadership—to enhance their understanding of VCU Health System’s business goals, promote organizational change and encourage business adoption of the new Human Resources Solution Center, and educate them on processes, tools, and technologies.

The team stayed on site for nearly two months following the Center’s launch to ensure a seamless implementation, provide post-go-live training to newcomers, offer coaching and resolution as needed, and continue to manage key stakeholder reports. A full-time dedicated ScottMadden resource remained at VCU Health System for another month to continue to guide efforts and manage the daily work flow cadence to ensure a seamless final transition.

Throughout the process, ScottMadden also worked closely with ServiceNow, the customer care technology solution. This included support to define the joint scope of services, but also coordinating with the ServiceNow service provider team—the technology provider that configured the comprehensive case management system and end-user portal—to detail requirements for each process. Collaboration was key on project plans, testing, development of the general intake request form, and customization of the portal to suit VCU Health System’s user environment. During the implementation, ServiceNow also met integration requirements with third-party providers—UltiPro to populate employee data; Avaya for telephony incorporation; and Ping to simplify sign-on credentials from VCU Health System computers and mobile devices.

In addition, ScottMadden established key performance indicators and reports for the Human Resources Solution Center supervisors

to track the number of incoming, resolved, and backlogged requests and adherence to service level indicators across various human resources services.



3. Results

The Human Resources Solution Center provided impressive results for VCU Health System, automating procedures, ensuring process consistency and compliance with mandated policies, improving accessibility, and reducing response times.

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During the first seven months of implementation, the Human Resources Solution Center addressed nearly 35,000 queries that would have previously been handled manually by various human resources representatives in the form of phone calls, web inquiries, email messages, paper forms, and in-person requests. The Solution Center is now handling a volume of approximately 100 calls per day and knowledgebase articles have received more than 55,000 views.

The activity handled by the Human Resources Solution Center is allowing the rest of the human resources organization to focus on their core, value-add roles. The HR field representatives are able to focus on the constant talent equation within the organization and to assist and advise employees and managers. Members of the human resources centers of expertise, like benefits and compensation, have more time to invest in programs that address organizational and talent challenges. Human resources leaders noticed the benefits quickly and are continuing to look at ways to leverage the Human Resources Solution Center further.

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“What an improvement! I was actually able to get in touch with a live human being who answered my questions. Not only that, but you also sent me the follow-up email. I am loving this HR4U (HR solution center). I cannot express how frustrated I have been in the past not being able to get anyone to answer the phone and having to trek up to HR Express from [offsite location].” – VCU Health Team Member

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