

Workday empowers Cisco's people and communities

A future-proof architecture underpins the company's bold and visionary approach to HR services and workforce experiences





Call for change

Unleashing people's potential with a new vision for HR

Cisco Systems, Inc. is a worldwide leader in the technology that powers the Internet. The driving force behind the company's growth has been its bold mission: to inspire new possibilities for customers by reimagining their applications, securing their data, transforming their infrastructure, and empowering their teams. The company lives this mission every day—not only on behalf of its millions of customers, but also in service to its own workforce.

The effort to create a better and more innovative workplace began with Cisco leaders listening to their people and examining performance data. This exercise informed their decision to move away from traditional HR approaches and build a new, seamless, and fit-for-purpose environment. The goal? To create an environment in which Cisco's People and Communities could not only do their best work, but also assume more strategic and advisory roles in the business.

Call for change

While rethinking its delivery of HR services, Cisco zeroed in on the need to replace its existing Human Capital Management (HCM) system which was nearing the end of its life. It was difficult to navigate and offered only limited self-service capabilities. It reinforced siloed thinking and did not offer enterprise-wide visibility to inform decisions. And, it could not adequately support Cisco's desired transformation of its talent strategy, workforce experiences and digital HR capabilities.

To address these limitations, Cisco wanted to move to a scalable cloud-based solution that would enable simpler processes on a global scale. After reviewing its options, the company's leaders opted for Workday's cloud-based HCM platform. They were confident that the Workday solution would enable the scalability, agility, insights, and experiences needed to reimagine and "future-proof" HR service delivery.

Accenture was uniquely positioned to help. It not only brought expertise in Workday technologies and practices, but also the ability to help orchestrate design and deployment activities and seamlessly guide the Cisco workforce through the change.



When tech meets human ingenuity

A complete cultural shift, enabled by Workday

As Cisco and Accenture embarked on the HCM project, it became clear that while the technical deployment of Workday was a necessary step in the company's journey to a new human-centered approach to HR, more was needed. To improve efficiencies, better serve Cisco's diverse communities, and truly transform the workforce experience, the company needed new digital capabilities and a new mindset for aligning HR services to the needs of the workforce. The move from a static to dynamic HR paradigm was critical, since

it would ensure that Cisco had the right strategy, approach, processes, roles, and structure in place to optimally support the business and its people.

Accenture, with its deep knowledge and expertise in HR reinvention, quickly got to work helping Cisco navigate its technical and cultural changes at the same time. Resources from across Accenture collaborated with Cisco to create a single, unified team focused on creating a completely new HR capability.



When tech meets human ingenuity

In the reimagined view of HR, Workday serves as the critical enabler for new ways of working across HR, workforce services and HR IT. The team retired 16 existing tools and designed the suite of Workday cloud solutions—including core HR, time tracking, compensation planning, advanced compensation and more—to serve as the digital heart of HR and enable the agility needed in a work anywhere/anytime economy. This included replacing 1,400 custom integrations that tied previous systems together with 150 connections delivered via an integration hub. It also involved streamlining and reimagining processes to take maximum advantage of Workday’s capabilities.

The team also deployed and integrated Workday Prism Analytics, an industry-leading solution that unlocks insights about Cisco’s processes, people and operations, all presented intuitively through Workday’s reporting framework. This means faster, better, more intelligent business decisions in areas such as compensation, stock calculations and payouts. In tandem with designing and deploying the new technical architecture, Cisco worked closely with Accenture to reimagine the organization’s cultural evolution.

Through a series of collaborative workshops, the team defined new vision for HR. Together, they determined that the new HR environment needed to accomplish five things: expand HR services to drive inclusive growth; build expertise and new capabilities in areas such as research and innovation; drive an enterprise people strategy by shifting from client-centric teams to Cisco-centric teams; simplify processes and technologies; and drive dynamic and agile ways of working.

With the new vision in place, Cisco’s leaders rebranded the new HR organization “[People and Communities, Policy and Purpose](#).” The new name more appropriately captured the remit of an organization committed to putting people at the center of Cisco’s growth agenda, engaging the workforce through new and satisfying experiences, and empowering workers to be true, strategic partners to the business.

When tech meets human ingenuity

The project team brought the new way of working to life with a comprehensive approach that reached all areas of the organization. Change management and communications programs were put in place to build trust, rewire mindsets around the new HR mandate, and ensure that Cisco's spirit of inclusivity and "Conscious Culture" was woven into all the organization does. New governance and accountability models were developed to encourage innovation and new ways of working, while also addressing Cisco's strategic priorities. The organization structure was assessed and

adapted to streamline operations, enable collaboration, eliminate functional barriers, and free workers to focus on more strategic activities. Services and roles were also redesigned to support a broader people ecosystem and ensure the voice of the customer was embedded in all solutions. Currently, the team is finalizing the transition to the new HR paradigm by introducing new learning and talent sourcing opportunities. This effort will ensure the workforce has the right mix of people, technology and commercial skills to sustain the new HR vision in the future.

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A valuable difference

Optimizing people experiences to optimize business results

With Accenture's help—and within just 21 months—Cisco successfully created an entirely new approach to HR services. The company's new People and Communities, Policy and Purpose organization is taking full advantage of the cloud-based Workday solution to drive operational efficiencies, meet regulatory compliance requirements, generate valuable organizational insights, and boost the workforce's productivity, collaboration and agility. The new, simplified processes and technologies make it possible for Cisco teams to activate new programs and capabilities in as little as three months—60% faster than under its old ways of working.

Importantly, the robust digital architecture also underpins a new culture of work that improves people's experiences and ignites their potential. According to Fran Katsoudas, Executive Vice President and Chief People

Officer at Cisco, "One of the principles that guided us through this transformation was the belief that digital can humanize the enterprise. A big part of our focus is eliminating tedious work, helping teams be their absolute best, and leveraging our technology to free up one of our most important resources, which is our time." New roles, structures and processes have accelerated innovation, changed the way HR delivers services and value to Cisco's people, and empowered the HR workforce to provide differentiated strategic advisory and offering support. Additionally, the new digital foundation provides data and insights to help Cisco customize its HR services and "meet our people where they are." Together, these solutions have ushered in a new era of people-first services and inclusive growth for all.

A valuable difference

By empowering workers to be more strategic and enabling cohesive personalized experiences for its people, Cisco has created a competitive differentiator in the talent marketplace. As Fran sees it, “We must do everything we can to be worthy of our best talent. Cisco and other companies can be differentiated in how they treat their people, how they see their people, and how they help their people to have really good experiences. We know that if we take care of our people, they're going to take care of the business.”¹

Cisco's people are clearly excited about the new HR direction. Within one month of launching the new Workday-enabled approach to HR, 40,000+ workers accessed information such as process guides and training to enable them to make the most of the new environment. Throughout the project, approximately two-thirds of the workforce was actively engaged in learning more about the changes and what they would mean for them.

Perhaps most tellingly, since launching its comprehensive HR transformation, Cisco has been named #1 on Fortune's list of the world's best workplaces two years in a row.²

According to Jason Phillips, Senior Vice President People Experiences, the success of Cisco's HR reinvention program was due to a confluence of three critical factors. “Cisco brought the vision and determination to create an entirely new approach to HR services—one that delivers unique and rewarding HR experiences not just for HR workers, but to all of Cisco's people. Accenture brought the deep technical and change management expertise to orchestrate the complex change required to bring our new vision to life. And together, we brought a shared commitment to work as a single team to create a future-proof architecture and culture that will enable Cisco to meet its business and talent needs for years to come.”

¹Feb 2021 Forbes article: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rasmushougaard/2021/02/15/the-superpowers-of-cisco-how-the-worlds-best-workplace-takes-care-of-its-employees/?sh=4255a5a646a6>

²<https://fortune.com/worlds-best-workplaces/2020/cisco/>



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Executive Vice President
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