Overview of the CEO Research Program:
Impact of New HR Information Technology on Organizations and HR

A tremendous surge in the adoption of new Human Resource information technology (HRIT) is underway. These include both core HRIS products (payroll, organization structure, time keeping, etc.) and specific HCM solutions (compensation, recruiting, talent management, etc.). Most new implementations are for Software as a Service (SaaS) offerings such as Workday, SAP Success Factors, Oracle Fusion, ADP, or many others. There are three primary reasons that firms adopt them. First, these systems promise a better user experience via a modern user interface. Second, they promise a significantly lower cost of ownership. Finally, firms hope to transform the HR role by automating transactional work, facilitating process redesign and outsourcing non-core activities, and providing data and analytic capabilities about employee impact on the business.

The goals for new HRIT are ambitious, but it is unclear how to deliver on the promise of the new technology. The available data about HRIT impacts come from market research surveys. Companies are adopting new HRIT without guidance from independent academic research. The total investment in a new HRIT, including software, consulting fees, and training costs, can easily be $1 million, $10 million, or far more. The CEO research project on HRIT is intended to provide data that will help keep the implementation on track, determine the effectiveness of the HRIT, build a knowledge base about what works, and provide information about how different firms manage implementation.

Research on the effects of a new HRIT requires a familiarity with multiple streams of prior work. We must understand how the Human Resource function adds value to the business and what constitutes HR effectiveness. We must understand how technical systems interact with social systems, organization design, and work design. We also must understand how to manage large-scale organizational change. All of these are core topics in decades of research at the Center for Effective Organizations.

We propose to investigate the following topics in our research.

1. What are the positive and negative effects of the new HRIT on the organization?
2. What are the positive and negative effects of the new HRIT on the HR function?
3. What organizational factors are associated with which organizational outcomes?
4. What characteristics of the technology are associated with which outcomes?
5. What change management strategies have the most positive outcomes?

Our research approach will involve a series of longitudinal case studies on companies that are adopting a new HRIT. Studies will entail collecting interview, user survey, and archival data during a period of 12 to 18 months. CEO is committed to research that is useful for both theory and practice. We work with clients to provide research results rapidly and in a format that helps guide managerial action.

We will provide the following deliverables to companies participating in the project.

1. Executive summary. We will provide a summary of findings for your firm after each wave of data collection, suitable for use in communicating results of the study to senior managers.
2. Detailed summary report. A formal report will review our findings for your company based on
the analysis of all sources of data at the conclusion of the study.

3. **Survey feedback report.** We will provide a formal report with detail results from each survey.

4. **Research papers** based on the data from all participating companies. These are likely to be available to the participants as working papers years before research papers are published by academic journals.

5. **Collaborative exchange.** CEO will organize one or more conference calls and/or conferences of participating firms to share experiences in implementing performance management interventions, providing participants with an opportunity to learn from each other.

The CEO team will include several distinguished researchers, including Gerry Ledford, Senior Research Scientist at CEO; Ann Majchrzak, USC Professor of Information Systems; and Ed Lawler, Director and Founder, Center for Effective Organizations and Distinguished Professor of Business, USC.

A detailed prospectus for the study is available [here](#). Gerry Ledford will be the primary point of contact for the research program. Please contact him for more information about the study. He can be reached most easily at 310-318-6405 (office), 310-874-5971 (cell), or by email at gledford@marshall.usc.edu.