

## The Road to Workforce-XML

Having spent the last 10 years in the workforce management space, I have seen the market develop from simple Time and Attendance delivered as a tactical point solution, to a strategic enterprise wide solution within an increasingly accepted and acknowledged market place. However, this maturation has been slow and hindered by, among other things, old technology, lack of standards and co-operation between vendors operating within this space.

Indeed, as the solution is driven further into the enterprise – delivering significant benefits for customers -, it is being treated as a mission critical application and CIO's are asking key questions about standards, stability and scalability. Whilst the later points remain areas for the individual vendors, together we can work on standards and learn from the successes of other endeavours such as [OAGi](#) and [HR-XML](#).

HR-XML in particular has helped address the issues of standards based integration between a myriad of applications within the HCM space. Such standards should not be underestimated. ***Integration remains a considerable cost and concern for CIO's.***

Without standards, organisations become handicapped with legacy applications that cannot be upgraded or replaced without considerable bespoke integration. This not only holds back the organisation, but also stifles innovation and development within the market place reducing opportunity for vendors not only in competing within the market place but also in their own customer base.

Lack of standards also hinders delivery, deployment and revenue models, e.g. SaaS/ASP, Hosting, Out Sourcing etc. Again this does not just impact on vendors and partners, but also reduces the choice for customers who increasingly want models to fit within their agile strategy. Clearly standards provide levels of security and agility that customers are starting to expect from solutions particularly where they impact on their competitive advantage.

No vendor or market are exempt and recent examples of Microsoft's huge effort to get its Open XML schema [approved as an ISO standard](#) and working towards the [OpenDocument standard](#) show that even Microsoft - with its almost total domination in the office productivity space – cannot afford to ignore the growing demand towards standardisation. This demand comes not just from the enterprise, but also from governments, the [European Union](#) and even the [United Nations](#). It is likely that in the future, European governments will mandate standards compliance as part of any tender.

Whilst all markets can make much of the need for standards, the issue is even more profound within the workforce management space as it not only covers a range of software applications, but also data collection devices as well. This is the challenge for workforce-xml and collectively for all those working in this market.

Launched in October 2007, workforce-xml has recruited members not just from Hardware and Software vendors, but also end users/customers. This along with recent standard ratifications, implementations and certifications represents a movement that is strongly supported and bodes well for the future innovation and development of our market. This is something that is worth working together to achieve.

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