Deutsche Telekom Europe's Sick-Note App Automates a Former Labor-Intensive Process

Deutsche Telekom Services Europe AG

Best Approach to HCM Innovation

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Company Background

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Company-at-a-Glance	Deutsche Telekom Services Europe AG
Headquarters	Bonn, Germany
Year Founded	2016
Revenue	$376.8 million
Employees	3,600 (international)
Global Scale	Western and Eastern Europe, operating in four countries (Germany, Slovakia, Romania and Czech Republic)
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Deutsche Telekom Services Europe AG provides financial and HR services to Deutsche Telekom and subsidiaries (i.e., product management, labor contracts, onboarding, education, cultural management, anniversaries, compensations and benefits, trainings, work attendance and time management)
Industry	Telecommunications
Stock Symbol	Subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom Group (DTE)
Website	www.telekom.com/de

Budget and Timeframe

Overall budget	Less than €150,000
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	10
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	10
Number of contractors involved with implementation	DT IT
Timeframe to implement	One year
Start date of the program	Early 2017

Value Proposition

Deutsche Telekom Services Europe AG's mission is to provide services for the group and put priority on customer satisfaction, quality and innovations. Automation and digitization are helpful in everyday work to combine efficiency with high-quality standards and to increase customer satisfaction. The developed sick-note app is a major step toward digitization and automation. This solution has been especially designed to support the working in a digital world. The app hugely simplifies the sickness-notification process and entails high-cost reduction and time-savings.

According to the applicable rules and legal regulations, an employee who is out due to illness must immediately report his incapacity to work to the employer. Additionally, from the fourth day of sick leave, the employee has to submit a sick certificate stating his incapacity to work and the probable duration of the sick leave. Formerly, the sick note to the employer could be made via telephone or email, and the transfer of the sick certificate involved a great deal of effort with many manual steps for both the employee and the HR processor. The employee sent the sick certificate by post to the responsible processing point so that the latter could enter and archive the sick note. This process caused a high volume of paper, high postage costs and long processing times.

Innovation

With the implementation of the app, employees can use the app to send their sick note, with or without a sick certificate, digitally to their employer. In the case of a sick note without a sick certificate, employees can enter their days of illness using the integrated calendar function. If the employee must submit a sick certificate, the certificate can be

photographed using the integrated photo function of the developed app. The data of the sick certificate is read out automatically by the software solution called optical character recognition (OCR). The data read out is then displayed to the employee, who can subsequent correct or supplement the data manually.

Once the entries have been confirmed, the employee's manager receives information about the sick note and the absence data is posted to SAP HR automatically. The sick certificate is also automatically archived in the electronic personnel file, taking into account the deletion periods. Data protection is ensured throughout the entire process of transmitting the sick note.

The app-based sick-leave notification service has been available to DTSE employees since February 2018. Employees can transmit their sick note to their superiors conveniently and quickly. The app-based sick note replaces the mandatory notification of the employer — no separate sick notification of the employer by telephone or email is required. This new app for sick notification is user-friendly, self-explanatory and simple operation, significantly enhancing the customer experience. Employees have all the information they need at a glance. In addition, the digital dispatch reduces the paper consumption and the transmission of the sick certificate can be guaranteed immediately. Furthermore, the workload of secretariats is reduced as they no longer have to manually enter and archive sick certificates.

Employees are highly satisfied with the new digital way of reporting their incapacity for work, and the app enables Deutsche Telekom to save money and time as well. With the implementation of the sick-note app, Deutsche Telekom is about to kick off the fully digital topic within Human Resources — with a product that has an appealing feel with corporate brand design, arouses curiosity and offers the capability to get along in a nascent digital world. The new app enables a simple, smart and fast process of sick notification with or without a sick certificate for all process participants.

Measurable Benefits

The sick-note app provides an efficient process for filing sick leave, automatic absence booking and information to supervisor, as well as archiving. The new sick-note app convinces with its user-friendly, self-explanatory and simple operation, significantly enhancing the customer experience. The sickness notification process is hugely simplified due to the app. A huge cost reduction and time-savings are achieved due to the digital dispatch — i.e., relief of the secretariats, no postage effort and no more paper processing. Employees have all the information they need at a glance and no longer have to spend a lot of time searching for the right forms.

Overall

The new sick-note app provides an efficient way for employees to call in sick. It enables automatic absence booking and archiving. Employees also gain more time for more valuable tasks as collisions and incidents; for example, they don't have to be processed by the responsible secretariat. Employees have all the information they need at a glance and don't have to spend a lot of time searching for the right forms. Additionally, the photo-scan function and automatic text recognition of the sick certification with options to manual input and correction further simplify the entire process of handing in a sick certificate.

Of course, data protection is ensured throughout the entire process of transmitting the sick note. And because of the excellent results the app has achieved, Telekom has decided to implement a rollout in its business units and subsidiaries.

With this type of project, it is important to include management boards and works councils and ensure data protection early on. This helps avoid unwanted surprises in the end of a project.

When using off-shore services, a seamless and comprehensive functional conception (including definition of the approval criteria) is a basic requirement to keep the risk of misconceptions as low as possible. High costs from misinterpretations and unnecessary cost drivers can be avoided if a regular exchange is ensured between the peers and IT to brainstorm solutions.

An especially big hurdle is the synchronization of the agile project methods (for app development) and waterfall (for changes in SAP) in connection with the content and time of the coordination. The waterfall project method is the traditional way of following a certain order. This means when a company first develops a concept, it then assesses this concept, develops it and tests it. On the other side stands the more flexible agile project methods where everyone involved, the project manager, developer and certain stakeholder will meet and discuss problems and hurdles and try to find solutions together. Bringing these together requires a strong project management on the side of the peers and IT that knows how to use these methods.

The success relies on a realistic risk assessment of influences surrounding the project and on the employed respective measures or evading actions (i.e., the influence of BYOD — "bring your own device").

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