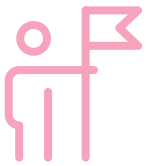
Use Cases:
How AI Can Supercharge HR Operations



Challenge: Keeping Up With Changing Requirements

As federal agencies look to modernize their infrastructure and automate processes, many key challenges are driving the focus on HR.

- **Budgets:** Federal agencies need to modernize their systems and processes within tight budget frameworks. Existing investments, meant to streamline interactions and reduce manual tasks, haven't been sufficient. Many processes still require extensive time and effort.

  "There's a budget crunch, and unfortunately some of the modernization efforts that were intended to help reduce these manual tasks for HR workers haven't achieved that," said Mike Chon, Vice President and Senior Partner, HR and Talent Transformation Services Leader for IBM Federal Consulting.

- **Complexity:** Too many HR systems are simply too hard to navigate. You can shift a promotions process into a self-service portal, for example, "but it's still extremely challenging for a manager to actually execute on that," Chon said.

  Agencies may look to modernization to simplify things, but they aren't always getting the intended benefit. Without actual process improvements, they're merely moving a complex process to a new platform, which doesn't solve the problem.

- **Aging out:** Antiquated technology compounds the problem. "In the federal government space, their solutions are aging, and at the same time, they're losing the people who know how to take care of those systems," Chon said.

  "You may have a system that's 30-plus years old, that's been completely custom-built. There are an army of HR people supporting it, but the core group of technicians are all retiring from the workforce," he said. Systems and their operators are aging out together. That's putting pressure on agencies to find new approaches as they seek to streamline and simplify their HR efforts.

- **Changing expectations:** Government employees, and their managers who need to interact with HR systems, come to the table with higher expectations now than in the past. They want interactions that are as seamless, intuitive and personalized as those that they increasingly encounter in their private lives.

  "There are new expectations among the younger workforce that they should be able to work anywhere and not be tied down to their terminal," Chon said. "They want to do things whenever they want, wherever they want, and they want it to be done easily. Prior technology didn't necessarily support that kind of self-service capability."

Solution: Less Grunt Work, More Insights

AI can deliver more personalized HR interactions with less human intervention. Several key use cases demonstrate how this technology can support a more effective HR operation.

- **Making routine transactions...routine:** When managers want to promote workers or take other personnel actions, things are anything but simple. "Even if they've been self-service-enabled, it's too complex of a transaction for them, so they end up going to their HR business partners anyway," Chon said.

  IBM had this problem internally and solved it with AI. Using a chatbot, "managers can now initiate a process without asking HR. They tell the AI, 'I want to transfer someone,' and it gives them the right prompts to simplify that process," he said.

- **Career development:** Federal workers look to HR to help them chart their career pathways, but the guidance they get is often generic. "Based on my current career trajectory and skills, it might tell me to become a cybersecurity analyst, but I don't really *want* to be cybersecurity analyst," Chon said.

  AI, on the other hand, can make meaningful, personalized recommendations. "The AI can tell me what my best-fit career path looks like based on *my* profile, *my* history, *my* skills," he said. "It will tell me about demand for a particular role within my organization and give me personalized recommendations on how to progress based on the trajectory I want."

- **Streamlining promotions:** It takes time and effort to promote workers in the complex federal system. In most cases, "it's a difficult process with lots of manual pieces for the managers to execute on," Chon said.

  AI can simplify that. "It can help someone walk through this fairly complex transaction process," giving them step-by-step guidance along the way, he said. Agencies can use a tool such as IBM's watsonx to orchestrate this effort, aligning the AI actions with the HR business processes. With orchestration, the AI doesn't just tell you how to do it: The AI gets in done for you.

Best Practices for AI in HR

1. Team AI with BPA

Business process automation (BPA) provides low-code tools to streamline and automate processes. AI makes it possible to automate increasingly complex tasks. Encourage end users to experiment with the technology and provide feedback to improve the models. Transformation requires the organization to force the cultural change.

2. AI comes first

Rather than reorganize data stores for some hypothetical AI need, stand up an AI application, then organize data and other resources in support of that. Ensure that the data used to train AI and generative AI models is high-quality, diverse and relevant to the task at hand. But don't let your data hold you back. Start with the use cases and focus only on the data elements necessary to achieve results.

3. Emphasize governance and transparency

AI demands strong governance to ensure equity and accuracy. Transparency helps business leaders to explain (and defend, if necessary) their AI-supported outputs. Governance should establish clear guidelines and policies for the use of AI and Generative AI within the organization, making intentional decisions around where AI should be used, and where it should not.

How IBM Helps

IBM watsonX Orchestrate offers a unique value proposition by providing a comprehensive, AI-powered talent management platform that streamlines HR processes, improves employee engagement, and drives business outcomes. It leverages AI and machine learning to provide personalized recommendations, predictive analytics, and data-driven insights, through a natural language interface, serving as a digital assistant to HR teams. With Orchestrate, HR teams can automate tasks and simplify complex processes by drawing upon a catalog of prebuilt skills, or training Orchestrate to create custom skills specific to their requirements.