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3 Steps to Create a Strategic Roadmap for HR Technology

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Organizations need a clear strategic roadmap for HR technology to achieve business outcomes and navigate competing internal priorities and proliferating technology options. CHROs can use the three steps in this article to create this roadmap..

More than 50% of HR leaders say their HR technology solutions do not meet current and future business needs. [1] About 83% of HR software buyers experienced moderate or high regret following their HR technology purchase decision. [2]

Two key reasons why organizations struggle to achieve key outcomes and regret their purchase decisions are:

- **Competing internal priorities** — Organizations struggle to build consensus on the critical outcomes that HR technology must achieve for various stakeholders (HR, IT, finance, employees, managers and leaders).
- **Proliferating technology options** — Organizations struggle to analyze the complex and ever-changing HR technology market, and to assess potential options for their future-state technology portfolio.

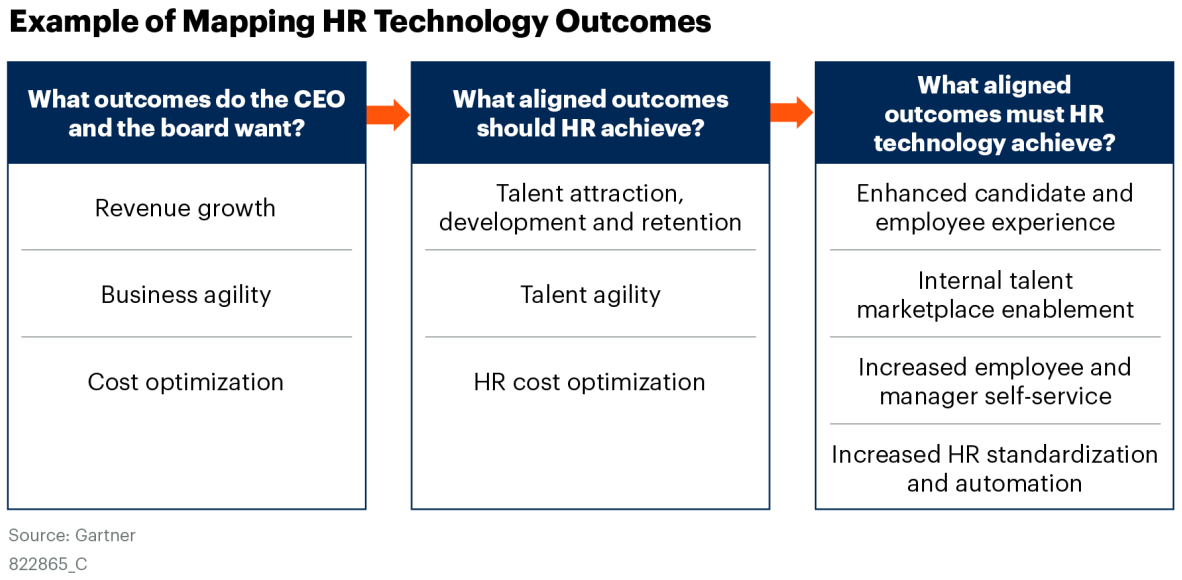
CHROs can overcome these challenges and ensure their HR technology portfolio is fit-for-purpose by taking these three steps to create an effective technology strategy and roadmap that can guide investment decisions toward critical business needs:

- Step 1: Craft a vision
- Step 2: Analyze technology options
- Step 3: Sequence transformation initiatives

Step 1: Craft a Vision

Aligning stakeholders on a vision is critical to overcome the barrier of competing internal priorities. The key is to tie business outcomes to HR outcomes and then to specific HR technology outcomes (see Figure 1 for an example that's amalgamated from several client inquiries).

Figure 1: Example of Mapping HR Technology Outcomes



Source: Gartner
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In this example, the CHRO and HRIT project team members:

- Reviewed strategy documents and interviewed stakeholders, including the HR center of excellence (CoE) leaders, CIO, CFO, operations leaders, and so on, to identify the business outcomes that matter.
- Conducted targeted group discussions to discuss trade-offs, identify conflicts and build alignment on business outcomes to prioritize.
- Linked HR outcomes to those business outcomes.
- Prioritized the HR technology outcomes that best supported the desired business and HR outcomes.

Mapping outcomes in the order described above is important to ensure business outcomes, not HR technology outcomes, are the driving force behind the strategy.

After compiling this outcome mapping, use these insights to articulate a vision statement for the desired future state, which then will guide all HR tech investments. The vision statement must capture the top two or three prioritized outcomes to be achieved.

In general, Gartner typically sees two main types of HR technology vision statements (see Table 1):

Table 1: Types of HR Technology Transformation Visions

Type of vision	Description	Hypothetical Example
Process-led visions	These visions focus on process excellence. User experience for employees, managers and other users is important, but process efficiency, standardization, and cost optimization are most heavily weighted.	"We enable HR operations to deliver streamlined and standardized services to our customers — employees, managers and leaders — in a timely and cost-effective manner."
Experience-led visions	These visions focus on end-user experience. Process efficiency continues to be critical, but the overarching focus is on offering a smooth, engaging, cross-process, journey-like experience for employees and managers.	"We create a seamless and soulful digital experience for our people that makes everyday work easier and achieves the right balance between human and machine in all the moments that matter."

Source: Gartner

Organizations are increasingly aspiring to be experience-led, considering the role of employee experience in driving retention and discretionary effort (currently Garner estimates approximately one-quarter of organizations are creating experience-led visions). However, there are still organizations that would be better off with process-led visions due to high cost and efficiency pressures, a need to standardize in the aftermath of merger/acquisition, and other factors.

Step 2: Analyze Technology Options

This step is critical to overcome the challenge of proliferating technology options. Begin by assessing your current state in terms of vision and execution.

Organizations sometimes fail to develop a clear vision before making technology decisions but end up realizing some outcomes nevertheless. Even in such cases, CHROs should determine what those outcomes are and which type of "vision" (see Table 1) the organization has inadvertently pursued.

Along with the two types of visions there are two types of HR technology execution:

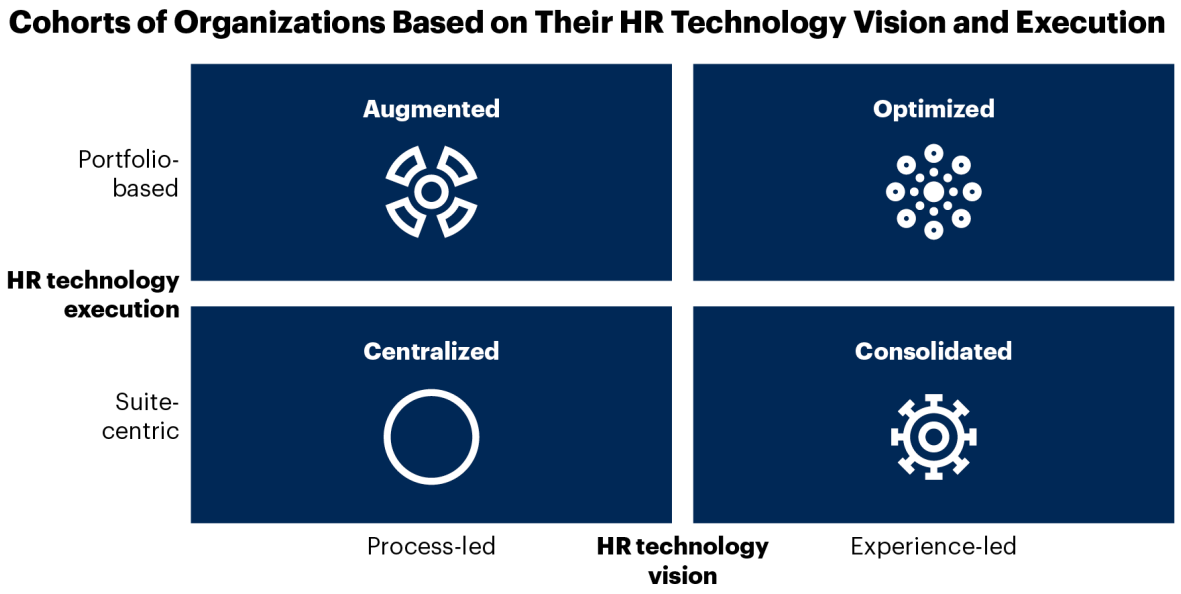
- **Suite-centric** — Organizations pursuing this type of execution need very strong justification to use any system other than their human capital management (HCM; see Note 1) suite. They view all HR technology investment decisions through a "suite-first" lens. Often, there are no more than five solutions outside of the suite.
- **Portfolio-based** — Organizations pursuing this type of execution look for solutions with the best functionality for any HR area, irrespective of whether it is delivered by the HCM suite or a point solution. This often means tens or even hundreds of systems besides the HCM suite in the HR technology portfolio.

In general, the larger, more complex and more global the organization is, the more likely it is to pursue portfolio-based execution, because the HCM suite modules beyond core administrative HR are less likely to meet requirements. Single-country, midsize organizations, and those in certain industries such as higher education and healthcare, are more likely to prefer a suite-centric approach, especially when paired with a cloud ERP implementation.

HR leaders must assess whether their organization's vision is process-led or experience-led using feedback from administrators, employees and managers, as well as metrics such as HR process efficiency, employee Net Promoter Score with HR technology interactions, and so on. They must then assess whether their organization's execution is suite-centric or portfolio-based by checking the number and types of HR technology systems in use.

Based on their vision and execution, organizations belong to one of four cohorts (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Cohorts of Organizations Based on Their HR Technology Vision and Execution



Source: Gartner
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Centralized Cohort

Organizations in this cohort have a process-led vision and pursue suite-centric execution. They rely heavily on their HCM suite. They may have a few additional, specialized point solutions, typically for local payroll and HR administrative requirements. Integrations are minimal.

The outcomes that organizations in this cohort typically realize are:

- **Streamlined but limited tech enablement** — Technology solutions almost exclusively stay within the HCM suite capabilities' standard configurations. These organizations avoid costly extensions and customization unless absolutely required.
- **Simple but limited employee experience** — Employees' experience of HR technology is based on what the chosen suite provides, as the organization tends to focus more on efficient HR processes and automation and less on critical employee experience needs.
- **Simpler tech maintenance** — Reliance on the suite, with as few integrations to specialist point solutions as possible, avoids complex and costly maintenance requirements.

- **Limited access to innovation** — Improvements over time are mostly based on the enhancement roadmap of their chosen suite.

Consolidated Cohort

Organizations in this cohort have an experience-led vision and pursue suite-centric execution. This cohort again relies on the HCM suite. But they often use suite extensibility or platform as a service (PaaS) to build integrations or create their own workflows within the HCM suite.

Apart from extensions and a low number of additional point solutions, organizations may also buy employee experience capabilities from their suite vendor. Such capabilities include modern portals, HR virtual assistants, help desks, knowledge management and workflows. These capabilities can provide employees a smooth, intuitive, journey-like experience.

The outcomes that organizations in this cohort typically realize are:

- **Streamlined tech enablement** — Enablement is based on deploying the suite's functional modules as they mature.
- **Simpler employee experience** — With most HR processes in the suite, employees and managers have fewer places to go.
- **More complex tech due to extensions** — What an organization extends via PaaS it must maintain until the vendor enhancement roadmap incorporates those configurations and features. This adds to the solution maintenance burden.
- **Limited access to innovation** — Organizations predominantly depend on the suite vendor to deliver innovation via enhancements to existing modules or by building new capabilities.

Augmented Cohort

Organizations in this cohort have a process-led vision and pursue portfolio-based execution. In pursuit of specialized tech capabilities, they usually have tens or even hundreds of additional point solutions, many often acquired reactively. The typical areas outside of the suite are recruiting, learning, global payroll and workforce management, employee listening and analytics, and workforce planning.

The outcomes that organizations in this cohort typically realize are:

- **Deep but siloed tech enablement** — Integrations are often limited, resulting in challenges to consolidating data for reporting and analytics, fragmented HR process support, and more.
- **Disjointed employee experience** — With many point solutions in play, employees and managers encounter divergent user interfaces, which is often challenging to the desire for a seamless experience.
- **Complex tech maintenance** — Keeping multiple point solutions (each with their own update cycle) in sync with the core HR system of record adds complexity (and thus resource requirements) to the HR technology roadmap.
- **Higher access to innovation** — Point solutions by necessity focus on deeper functionality and shorter time to innovation to stay ahead of the HCM suites. Augmented orgs believe that this is worth the cost of increased integration and ongoing maintenance.

Optimized Cohort

Organizations in this cohort have an experience-led vision and pursue portfolio-based execution. They typically have suite extensions alongside point solutions that are typically partners of the suite, enabling smoother integrations.

For employee experience capabilities, these organizations typically prefer specialist employee experience solutions rather than using the suite itself. These specialists, in general, have deeper experience capabilities than the suite which further indicates the experience-led investment philosophy of these orgs.

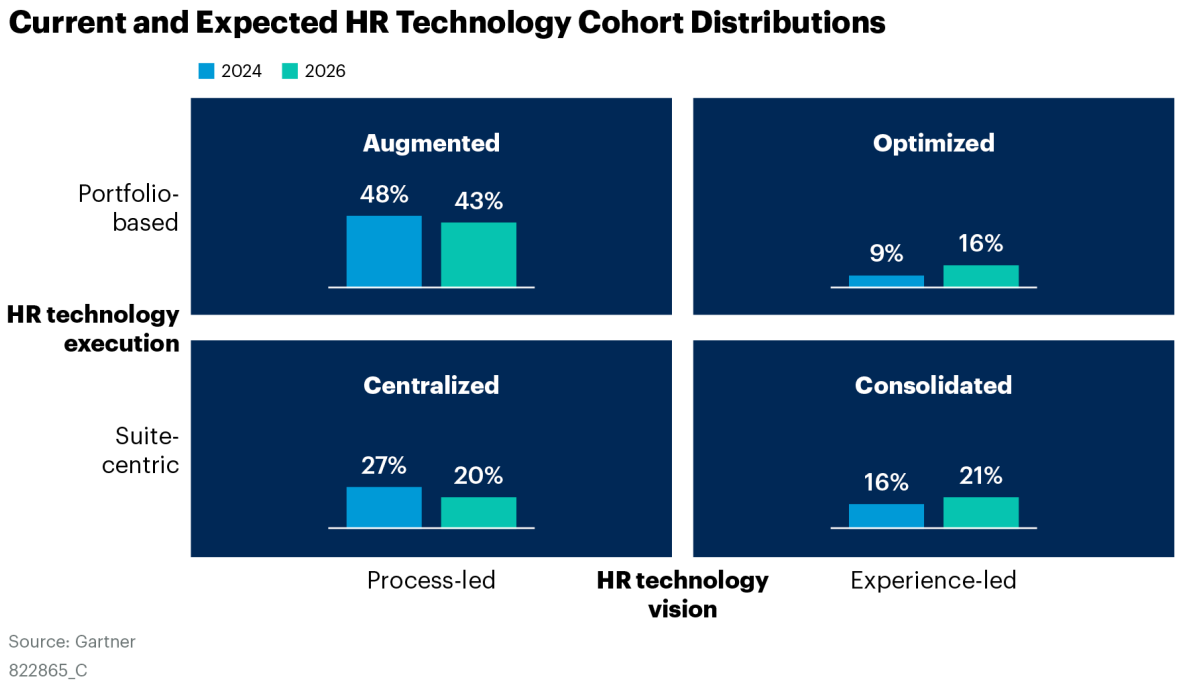
The outcomes that organizations in this cohort typically realize are:

- **Deep and orchestrated tech enablement** — Enablement is tailored to the organization's needs through a smoothly integrated tech portfolio.
- **Journey-like employee experience** — The deployment of various employee and manager journeys to provide embedded value-added content, guidance and decision support enriches the employee experience.
- **Complex tech maintenance** — This cohort's portfolio is the most complex of the cohorts due to the need to support a broad set of HCM suite extensions, point solutions and custom apps and maintaining a cohesive experience. These enterprises believe the results are worth the higher cost.

- **Higher access to innovation** — Organizations in this cohort are pushing the boundaries of innovation and are always experimenting with leading edge providers to gain any possible advantage.

There is no one best cohort, as each has its own pros and cons. Figure 3 shows the distribution of organizations that fall into each of these cohorts currently, and how we expect this distribution to change in the next two years.

Figure 3: Current and Expected HR Technology Cohort Distributions



After CHROs determine their current state on this matrix, they can choose their future state by:

- Prioritizing HR business capabilities by considering the role of business capability in driving key outcomes and the level of gaps.
- Creating three to five potential future state technology portfolios that may align to one or more of the cohorts described above
- Assessing these options based on functional fit, technical fit, organizational fit and relative cost, and choosing the best-fit one.

Step 3: Sequence Transformation Initiatives

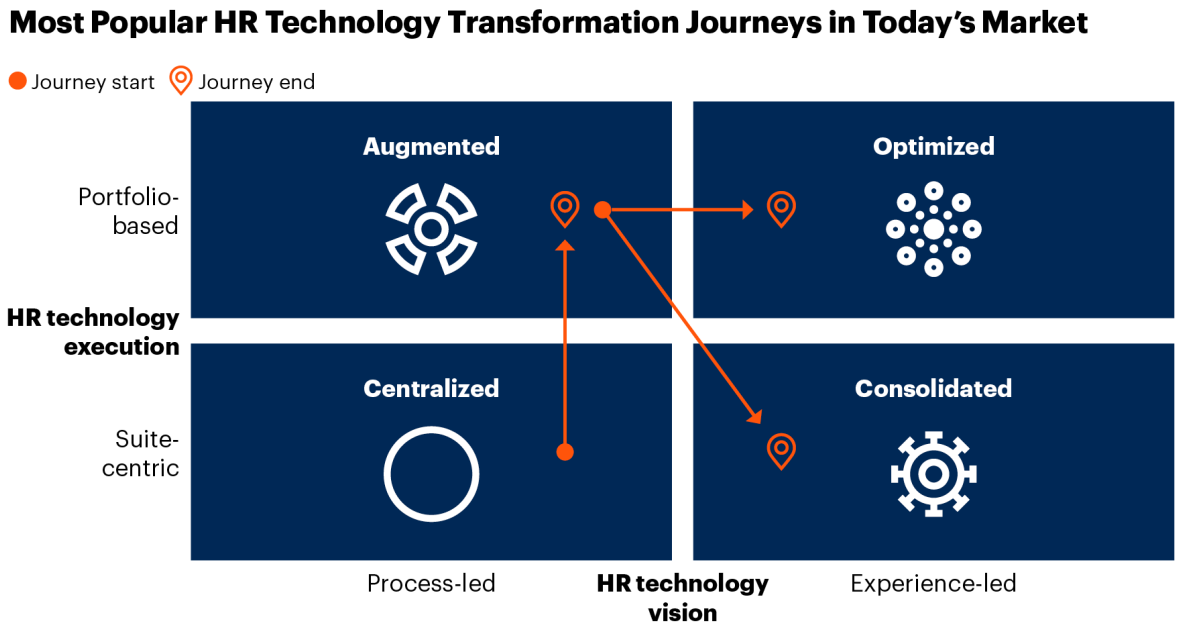
The next step after choosing the current and desired future states is to create a plan to move from one to the other.

> **The key here is to consider not only technology initiatives but also people, process, and data initiatives. Otherwise, organizations risk making significant investments in technologies that people fail to use fully.**

This applies no matter what journey CHROs and their organizations take from current to future states. Figure 4 shows the most common journeys in today's HR technology market, which include:

- **Augmented to consolidated**, typically because organizations are fed up with the complexity of a multitude of different systems and want to consolidate.
- **Augmented to optimized**, typically to enhance employee experience while continuing to take advantage of innovations in the market.
- **Centralized to augmented**, typically because organizations want deeper functional capability beyond just the HCM suite. This includes the move from on-premises to cloud.

Figure 4: Most Popular HR Technology Transformation Journeys in Today's Market



Source: Gartner
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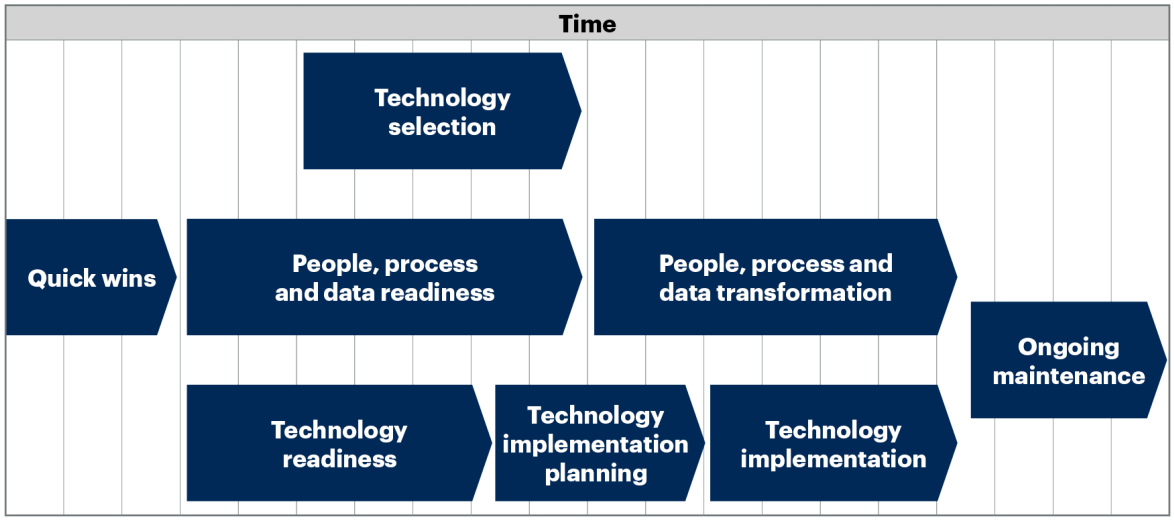
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No matter the journey, CHROs must consider key technology, people, process and data initiatives. Then conduct workshops with key stakeholders to prioritize these initiatives based on the value of the initiative, its complexity and its time-to-value.

Then sequence these initiatives on a timeline view to create a strategic roadmap. A simplified sample roadmap is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: A Simplified Sample HR Technology Transformation Roadmap

A Simplified Sample HR Technology Transformation Roadmap
Illustrative



Source: Gartner
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Conclusion

Adopting a structured approach to creating your HR technology roadmap will help you overcome competing internal priorities and proliferating technology options and achieve critical business outcomes. It will also help you make the most of the HR technology options available in the market and drive optimal adoption.

Notes

Note 1: Gartner defines cloud HCM suites for 1,000+ employee enterprises as cloud application suites that deliver functionality for attracting, developing, engaging, retaining and managing workers.

Evidence

[1] **2025 Gartner HR Priorities Survey**. This survey was conducted to understand senior HR leader perspectives on their priorities and challenges for the coming 12-18 months. The survey was conducted online from 13 June 2024 through 15 July 2024 and contains responses from 1,403 HR leaders with representation from various regions and industries. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

[2] **2022 Gartner Functional Business Buyers Survey**. This survey was conducted to understand how functional business units within organizations approach large-scale software purchases to support their business function. The research was conducted online from September through mid-December 2022 among 3,048 respondents representing six different business functions: customer service and support (n = 508), finance (n = 518), human resources (n = 509), marketing (n = 513), sales (n = 499), and supply chain management (n = 501). All surveyed organizations had at least 250 employees and at least $50 million in annual revenue in fiscal 2021. All respondents resided in either North America (42%), Western Europe (37%) or Asia/Pacific (21%). The North American countries represented in the survey were the U.S. (30%) and Canada (12%). The European countries were France (11%), Germany (12%) and the U.K. (14%), and the Asia/Pacific countries were Australia (9%), Singapore (7%), India (3%) and New Zealand (2%). Respondents represented more than 15 Industries, including banking and investments, communication service providers, education, healthcare providers, insurance, manufacturing, media, natural resources, public sector, retail, services, technology service providers, transportation, utilities and energy, and wholesale. All but a handful of respondents were at the manager level or higher within their organizations and participated in the purchasing process for software specifically for their respective business function during the previous two years. Software purchases were either new, replacement or expansion purchases. At least 96% of the functional business unit software purchases reported by respondents had contract values of at least $50,000, and 43% were more than $1 million. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and organizations surveyed.

In this research we asked respondents to indicate to what extent they agreed with two specific statements:

“The (…) offering we ultimately purchased is failing (or failed) to meet our expectations.”

“We initially considered offerings that were much more ambitious than what we ultimately decided upon.”

For each question the responses available to the respondent ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree). A response of 4 represents a neutral position (neither agree nor disagree). When evaluating the responses, “high regret” buyers were considered to be those that scored 5-7 for both questions, leading to a net “high regret” response of 63% among the 509 respondents that completed the survey.

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Drive Your HR Technology Strategy With Gartner’s Strategic Roadmap

How to Create an HR Technology Strategy and Roadmap

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