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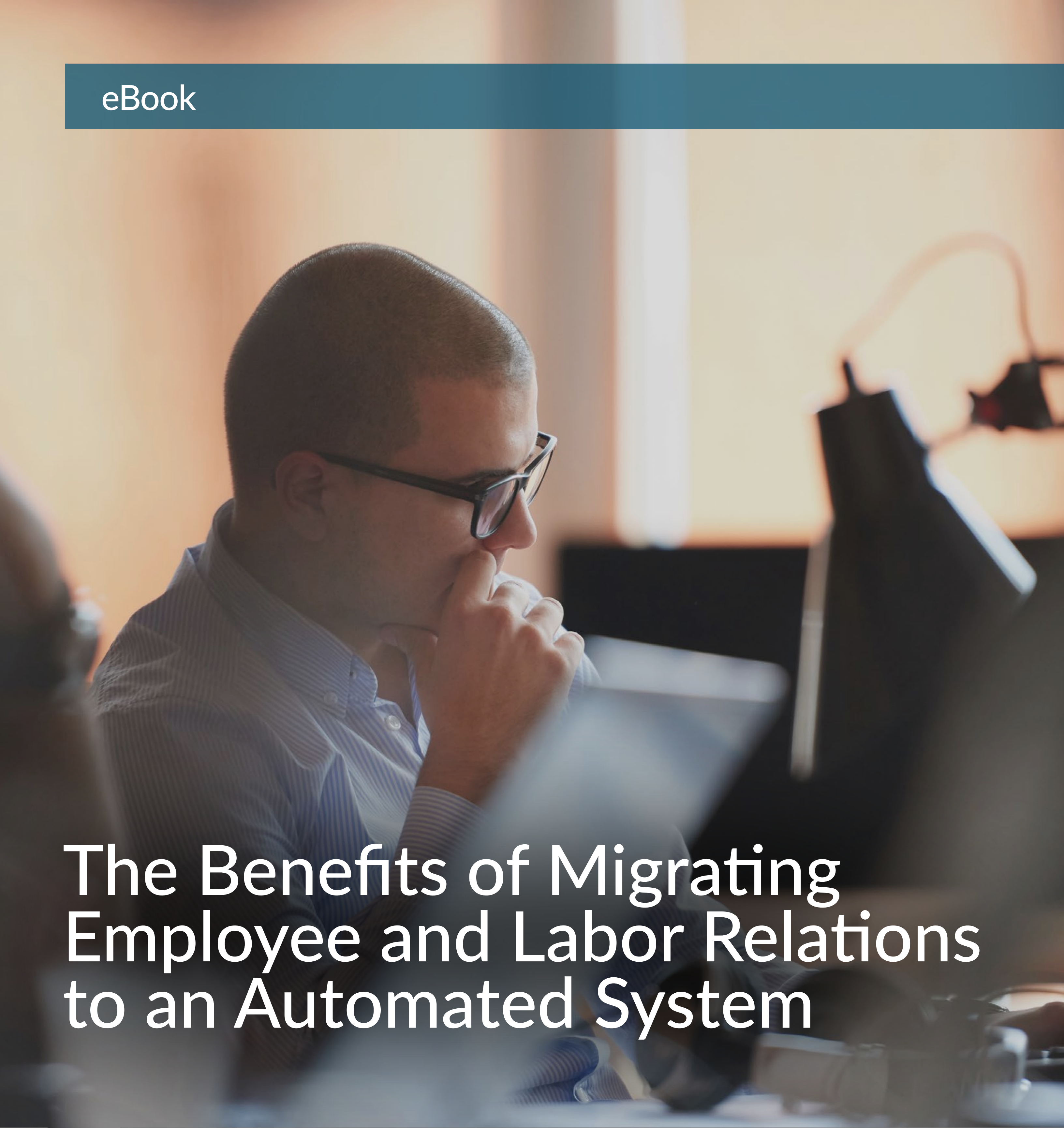

The Benefits of Migrating Employee and Labor Relations to an Automated System

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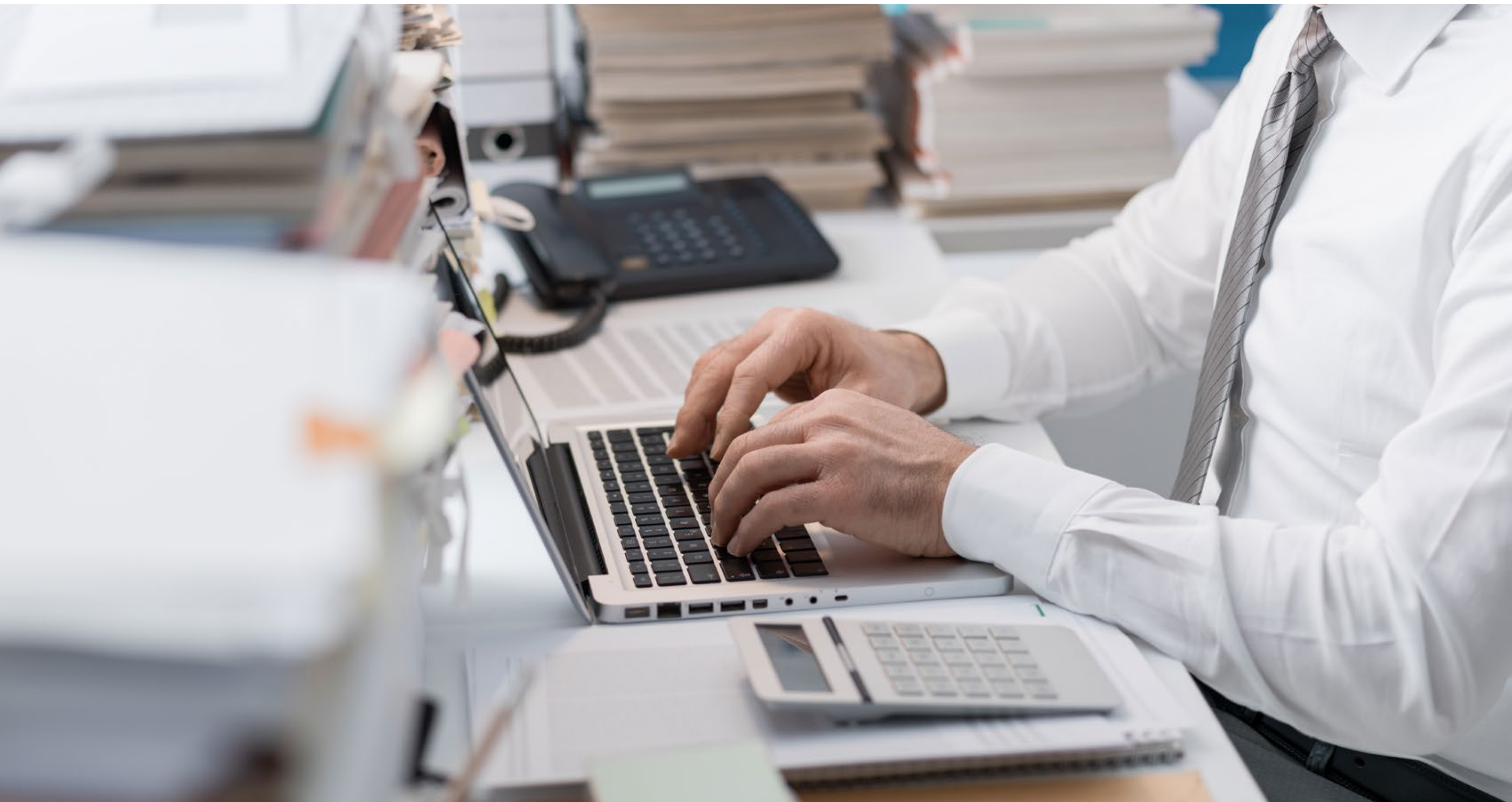
Technology empowers human resources to provide better services in a more efficient manner, but for many employee and labor relations divisions, resources are limited. For this reason, a high number of employee and labor relations operations in the Federal Government are still paper-based, using Excel spreadsheets and templates for tracking telework, worker's compensation, employee relation, labor relation and reasonable accommodations cases.

There are many reasons why paper-based employee and labor relations is problematic. Not only is it inefficient, increasing the amount of time spent by HR specialists in managing each case, but it limits the visibility of supervisors into key metrics, including specialist workload, communication bottlenecks, and resolution rates.

With an web-based system, many of these issues can be resolved. External processes can be logged in the same interface as previously manual steps, with automated workflows providing the transparency needed by management to better evaluate performance and specialist workload.

If your agency still relies on manual employee and labor relations processing, there are several things to consider about the move to automation, both in terms of the benefits it can offer and the act of switching over.



Addressing Employee and Labor Relations Needs in Federal Agencies

Employee and labor divisions within federal agencies work in a closely-knit team, sharing a single workload across many HR specialists. This makes it important for supervisors to have as much transparency as possible into specialist workloads. Metrics that highlight availability of each specialist, the bottlenecks that most frequently slow down case processing, and automating recurring tasks is incredibly important.

There are several areas where employee and labor relations needs are most pronounced, including:

Eliminating Paper-Based Workflows

Paper-based tracking in Excel spreadsheets is extremely limiting and yet, is prevalent in many federal agencies.

Implementation of an automated system allows employee and labor relations divisions to consolidate many of these manual operations into a single interface. Documents can be uploaded alongside case tracking notes and communications logs. Automated workflows then make it possible to get much greater insight into how long a case spends in each stage of the process.

Providing Metrics and Visibility to Supervisors

Supervisors need greater visibility into the workload shared among employee and labor relations specialists. Without this insight, it is difficult to effectively balance that workload, and to adjust for slow points in the process.

Key metrics that can be seen all within a single application, without in-depth analysis of disparate spreadsheets, can be useful at both the individual case and agency-wide level.

Benefits of Automation

Not only does automation eliminate much of the paper-based processing that so many agencies now rely on and provide better visibility to management; it offers key benefits in day to day actions including:

- **Streamlining Every Day Tasks** – With the right data collection processes, employee and labor relations software can reduce the time needed to log different actions.

- **Tracking Communication with External Parties** – Communication with external parties including the Office of General Counsel, the federal employees' union or IMPASSE can be logged in an automated tool. This allows for reporting that accurately illustrates the duration of any communication with external parties.

- **Centralizing and Organizing Data Collection** – Data collection that captures additional information such as multiple dates within the workflow with associated documents attached to the record can greatly streamline the process.

Because of these improved processes, employee and labor relations can be improved at almost every level, ensuring better data and a better optimized workforce.

Best Practices for Workflows in an Automated System

When transitioning to an automated system, workflows offer a wealth of benefits. To ensure you receive these benefits, however, certain best practices need to be followed.

Be as Detailed as Possible within a Workflow

Because the steps in a workflow will ultimately influence the granularity of your reporting and will allow you to see how long a case remains in certain steps, detailed workflow steps are important.

To ensure your workflows match the visibility and metrics needed by your organization, spend time evaluating not only your current manual processes but the gaps you have. By understanding where gaps occur, you can better design a workflow that will address these problems and improve future reporting and visibility.

Use Short and Descriptive Language

Many tools have maximum character limits in the application for certain steps. This will vary depending on the combination of software solutions you use, but it is considered best practice to aim for short, descriptive verbiage that can be quickly understood.

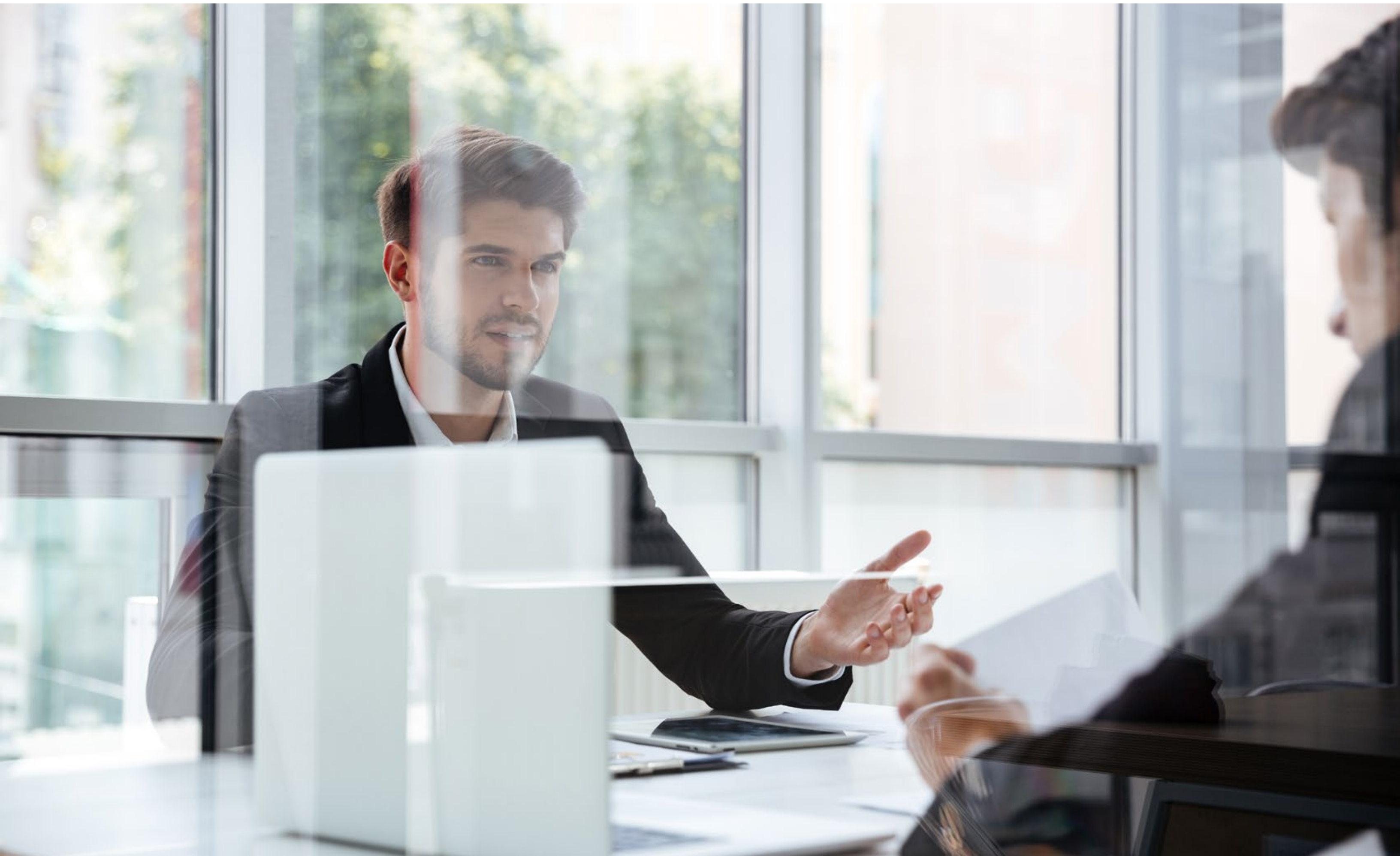
This is a fine line to balance. On one hand, the language needs to be detailed enough that anyone using the tool will know the purpose of an individual step. On the other hand, extensive detail that is not concise can run into character limits and slow down operations or lead to a misunderstanding if someone does not read all the text.

While there is no single character count recommendation for each step in your workflows, keep in mind the need for short and descriptive language that balances this line between immediate understanding and excessive text.

Structure Steps to Provide Visibility to Management

One of the most common concerns employee and labor relations management has is an inability to accurately establish and track key metrics for their division. No matter how organized your team is, if you are still using a manual process for case tracking, there will be gaps.

When transitioning to an automated system, structure steps with reporting goals in mind. Work with your team to determine what data needs to be collected, what currently is not visible in your system, and how your workflows steps can reflect those needs. Because reporting will be available for each step, the more detailed you are, the better you will be able to display the key metrics your management team needs.



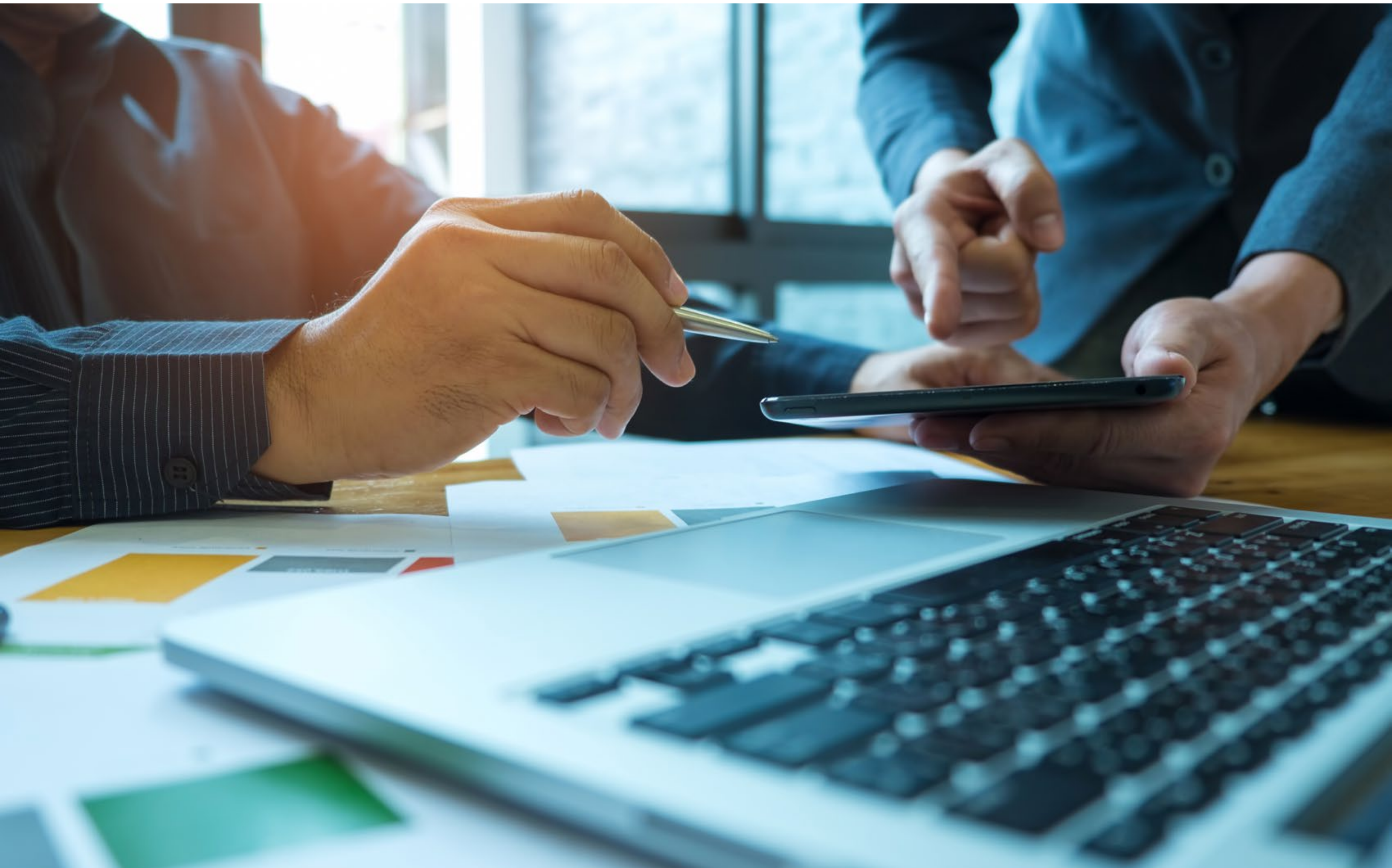
Transitioning from Manual to Automated Employee and Labor Relations

Transitioning from manual to automated employee and labor relations processes requires a careful understanding of how you want your automated workflows to look, in what format data will be presented, and much more. That is why it is so important to spend enough time working with the data you collect to build these things.

Migrating Data from Spreadsheet to a Web-Based System

One of the first challenges in the migration process is transitioning your existing data into a new system. Because you are currently using spreadsheets and paper-based processes, you may have years of data stored in Excel spreadsheets that are not all formatted the same. Data migration requires a standardization of your data so that it can be used within a single, centralized system.

To do this, data needs to be mapped within a database structure matching the new tool you will be using. Take some time before the migration process starts to evaluate the current formats of your data and determine what changes or augmentation may be needed. This can speed up the transition process and reduce frustration when the transition begins.



Planning for a New Case Tracking Process

Manual processes tend to mean personalized processes for case tracking. Training may be standard, but data can be manipulated and managed in many ways within an open system. Automation software will require a new case tracking process that your team will need to be trained in.

While the benefits of such a transition will be substantial in the future, in the short term it can cause frustration and slow down performance if you do not have a plan in place. Early in the migration process, prepare a plan for training and transitioning your HR specialists into using the new system.

It will be starkly different, but because it centralizes so much of the case tracking process, it will ultimately save time and reduce frustration from missing documents, unforeseen work, and delays causes by external communication.

Centralizing Access to Important Documents

Another major benefit of an automated system is its ability to centrally store and append attachments to cases. Scanned PDFs of paper forms, old documents related to a case, or other paperwork or scanned items will all live in a single central interface, greatly reducing the amount of time spent tracking down documents when moving a case along.

Where forms and documents may have previously lived in desktop folders and email inboxes, they can now live in the cloud, where anyone with access can pull them down when needed. Start collating and organizing these documents early so that they can be appended as soon as the system is ready to launch.

Moving to a Fully Automated System for Employee and Labor Relations

Automation can be intimidating, especially for a team that has been using spreadsheets or legacy software until now. The benefits, however, are numerous. Being able to quickly and efficiently take a snapshot of any case to see where it currently sits, how long it has been in that stage, and what documents or resources are associated with it, can streamline the efficiency of case tracking, provide the support needed by HR specialists, and quantify the metrics needed by supervisors to better illustrate performance in their division.

If you are interested in learning more about how employee and labor relations automation can improve your performance, FedHR Navigator can help.

The FedHR Navigator Employee and Labor Relations module provides agencies with an automated tool for retention and management of Labor and Employee relations actions. This results in paperless case tracking and disciplinary documentation for both employee's actions and any actions that require union representation.

With FedHr Navigator's flexibility, your current workflows and documentation processes will be mirrored in a secure, reliable electronic format. The case records provide complete, accessible documentation with all notes, letters, and relevant attachments for later reference.

- Organize and store all notes, statements, and relevant documents electronically
- Replace tedious paper-based case management that can lead to misplaced or lost documents
- Access a library of document templates for every situation
- Track workload, case status, and case duration with greater reporting visibility

With FedHr Navigator's flexibility, your current workflows and documentation processes will be mirrored in a secure, reliable electronic format. The case records provide complete, accessible documentation with all notes, letters, and relevant attachments for later reference.

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