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Comerica Bank

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Transforming HR with a strategic business partner

Catherine Garrett, senior vice president of HR Operations, Technology and Compliance at Comerica Bank, one of the top 25 banks in the U.S., spoke with us about how their human resources outsourcing (HRO) solution with ADP's Comprehensive Outsource Services transformed the HR team into a strategic business partner. Read her interview below.



Business Challenges

Q. What are the business challenges facing Comerica Bank?

Garrett: When I joined the organization, they had a lot of problems with the prior vendor, particularly with payroll accuracy from the very start. There was an issue with everything they did – we received a W-2c every year because of errors made by the vendor; they gave incorrect data to our employees around payroll and they made payroll mistakes. Between the continuous issues and the fact that the system had been customized to the point where they didn't even know how it worked anymore, we knew we needed a partner that worked with us.

Q. What made you determined to find a better solution to your previous vendor?

Garrett: For us, outsourcing with ADP was the best approach. When we looked at the vendor community, ADP stood out heads above everyone else. When we talked to them, one of the things that impressed us the most was when they came in, [instead of] 'sales speak,' they told us what we could do to make us the most successful in our environment. That was what we were looking for, for somebody to be honest with us and tell us what we were doing that made our problems worse. That really appealed to us – the cultural fit was phenomenal. The honesty, the partnership and the approach was just what we were looking for from a comprehensive outsource services (COS) partner.



Business Solutions

Q. What are some of the improvements or benefits from partnering with ADP in the COS model?

Garrett: I am now able to spend the vast majority of my time on transformational projects where I can really add value. I couldn't have done that without the partnership with ADP. I spend maybe 10 hours a quarter responding to questions compared to what used to be more like 30 hours a week. They make sure that the behind-the-scenes, everyday things work seamlessly, so much so that I now have a reputation of being the genie-in-the-bottle who fixes things, because I have ADP fixing things for me.

Q. Would you say that ADP's partnership is an extension of your team?

Garrett: ADP's COS team is absolutely an extension of my team and that is the only way to be successful – you need to think of them as part of your team. I work with them and we treat them the same way that we do employees of the bank. We make sure they know what's going on. They're informed of things impacting our colleagues so that they can address those through the call center or through other platforms. If we're changing something, if we have a holiday that's coming up, we make sure they know because they need to know it as much as every employee in the organization here does. So they truly are not only a partnership, but part of our team.

Q. What impact has the partnership with ADP had on your team?

Garrett: We were already a lean team with six people in the payroll department for 10,000 employees. Since going with ADP's COS model, we reduced a head, which we hadn't thought was possible because we were already running an incredibly streamlined, small team. With the fully-outsourced solution, we've actually reduced heads further. The biggest thing we've seen is our ability to repurpose our team. Now we have a team of four, including a payroll accountant. That's a really small team for 10,000 employees.

Q. How has the ADP Recruiting Management solution helped improve your recruiting process?

Garrett: Having our payroll system integrate with our recruiting system ensures that our data is flowing seamlessly from one system to another and creates a system of checks and balances. In the past, if a recruiter entered the wrong start date for an employee it often didn't get caught. Now, we've reduced errors and can easily and efficiently move people from recruiting to onboarding and getting paid. We also don't worry about security because we know we can count on ADP's systems to be safe and compliant.

Q. What results have you seen from the recruiting management solution?

Garrett: The reporting tools and dashboards have been a huge help to our talent acquisition team. They can now have data-based conversations with managers as to why positions haven't been filled versus the anecdotal discussions they had in the past. We now can also better allocate team members since we can see how many recruiters we need in a specific region to fill a specific role. As a result, we've been able to reduce the time to close on some of our more complex roles from nine months to seven months. We've also converted our background check vendor to ADP Screening and Selection services. Being able to integrate with service providers and contingent worker vendors has been seamless on the ADP side. We use the system to track everything – it's been a big win for us.

Q: How has recruiting management exceeded your expectations?

Garrett: It's the approach, having the dedicated team as a resource. Many times, you're sold a tool without a service. ADP sold us a tool with a service. We're not alone trying to figure things out.

Q. How does having access to HR data have an impact on your business?

Garrett: ADP provides us access to our data like we never had before. The business leaders love the information that they can get. We can have reports sent to them. Our managers love being able to run reports. To see what your organization salary dollars spend is, what your PTO has been, to see who is taking time off and who isn't is especially important because, for example, in the state of California, you have to pay that out. Since we've been able to have employees and managers see how much time they have available and how much time they've taken, we've been able to reduce our PTO payout. And that is something that helps us reduce costs to the organization.

Q. What other costs have you been able to reduce?

Garrett: Through our partnership with ADP, we've also been able to reduce overtime. We were paying \$12-15,000 a year in overtime for this particular payroll team. Now, we average about \$1,000 in overtime over the last two years. That is because ADP's processes and the way they do things allows our team to be more efficient and focus on the work that they need to get done in the regular eight-hour day.

Q. What else would you say about the ADP partnership?

Garrett: Our partnership with ADP has just been phenomenal. They bring as much expertise as I could want. We have a great mutual respect for each other, so we not only reach out to them and ask them questions about how we can do something different and better, but they will bring things. When they see patterns or they see issues, they'll bring that to our attention as well. It is that mutual communication that back and forth that makes us so successful. ADP is absolutely an extension of my team. We work together to make things the best they can be for our employees.

Q. What about your ADP relationship manager?

Garrett: One of the benefits we've seen with our relationship manager is we can ask them a question about anything. Even if it's a service we don't have and we want to say, "We're thinking about changing a benefit, can you find out what your other customers might be doing in response to a change or in response to a law that might be coming up?" We can ask those questions and the relationship manager is another consultant that we have, that we can get information from. Even if it's not about a specific payroll question, we have that input and those ideas. They have such a large business that has so many clients in so many industries, they can bring ideas from places we wouldn't have access to.

Q. What is it about ADP's fully-outsourced model that works so well for you?

Garrett: For us, ADP's outsourced model was perfect because of how collaborative it is and how well they worked together. And what we found when we looked further is that ADP worked so well across their different responsibilities. The COS model is a great opportunity for us because it's all-inclusive. It's like going on vacation and going to an all-inclusive resort versus having to figure out where you're going to go to dinner every day. You go, you have everything you need, and it's all in one place. ADP is absolutely an end-to-end solution. We hadn't had that with the other vendor.

Q. What would you say to your peers that are looking for a similar solution to their HRIS needs?

Garrett: If you're looking for a solution and trying to decide how you're going to run payroll and HRIS on an ongoing basis, you really need to first take a look at what you're doing and what the most important things are for your organization. You may need to change things from how you're doing them today and go with a best-practice approach. So be thoughtful about that before you look for a vendor, don't just look for somebody to do it the way you do it today. Look for somebody who can do it the best way possible. For us, we found that with ADP's COS model. They've been able to bring all of their resources to make us the most efficient, effective and cost-effective group we can be.