



Cornell's Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies

Targeted Benchmarking on HR on-the-floor Accessibility



CAHRS Partners have the opportunity to benchmark with other partner companies on HR topics of interest. The benchmarking is typically conducted with 5-7 other CAHRS Partners selected by the company that initiated the request. The CAHRS office identifies the appropriate connections at selected companies, and the benchmarking company then schedules 1:1 phone calls to explore their questions.

Examples of recent requests include: Sponsorship Initiatives, Organization Designs and Structures, Diversity Metrics, Talent Management Practices, Competency Models, and a variety of HR Policy Questions (e.g., Relocation, Cost of Living, Airline Mileage Usage).

CAHRS partners find this qualitative approach to benchmarking highly valuable for revealing novel insights and practices, as well as for building their networks. At the conclusion of the process, the benchmarking company shares an anonymized summary of its findings with the participating companies and CAHRS, who then make it available to all partners to benefit from the learning.



Purpose

Manufacturing sites face unique workforce access challenges: many employees lack individual company email or regular computer access, work multiple shifts, and operate in environments where time and privacy for HR interactions are limited. The objective of this outreach was to document what peer companies are doing to increase HR visibility and accessibility on the floor, understand the operational choices behind those approaches (physical design, staffing models, hours, tools, and training), and identify practical best practices that can be applied across sites.

Executive summary

Peer companies generally converge on a model that centralizes routine, transactional HR work via a shared/contact center and self service portal while preserving onsite HR for site specific, complex, or non digital needs. One peer is building a Shared Services/Help Center, another implemented a centralized Contact Center + portal with extended live hours and measurable satisfaction gains, and a third continues with standard onsite HR assignment only. A fourth organization focuses on placing an HR Service Center at most sites or deploying HR “on the go” carts / HR hubs to improve visibility and floor accessibility.

Participants (anonymized)

- *Company A:* Onsite HR is currently focused on transactional tasks. Establishing a Shared Services/Help Center as a centralized hotline for employees to reduce transactional demand and free Onsite HR to concentrate on strategic priorities.
- *Company B:* Centralized Contact Center + employee self service portal in production; onsite HR focuses on navigation assistance and local coaching.
- *Company C:* Standard practice only — HR assigned to sites with no additional floor accessibility initiatives.
- *Company D:* Emphasis on installing HR Service Centers at most sites or using HR on the go carts/HR hubs to have centralized, accessible locations that deliver routine HR services, support, and timely guidance to employees and managers, and can serve as the primary point of contact for common, immediate in-person HR needs.
- *Company E:* Does not have a traditional HR Service Center. After a 2021 Workday-driven shift to self-service, 75% of their shared services were eliminated, leaving mainly event-triggered payroll/time-tracking support and compliance tasks rather than employee/manager-facing intake and metrics.

Key findings and themes

- *Service model and rationale*
 - Centralize routine transactions (pay, promotions, name changes, life events) into Shared Services/Contact Center + portal for consistency, scalability, and quality.
 - Retain onsite HR for hands on assistance, site specific policies, union dynamics, and complex/sensitive cases.
 - Augment onsite presence with dedicated HR Service Centers or mobile HR hubs to bring HR closer to the workforce where needed.

- *Physical access and design*
 - Multiple access channels for manufacturing employees lacking personal company email/devices: shop floor computers, dedicated kiosks, walk in employment offices, and mobile HR hubs.
 - Onsite HR or mobile hubs should guide employees to digital channels and provide hands on assistance for portal transactions.
- *Hours of operation and coverage*
 - Extended live support hours are useful to cover multiple shifts/time zones. Example benchmark: 8:00 AM–8:00 PM EST.
 - Mobile hubs benefit from predictable scheduling (e.g., daily morning rounds, weekly line visits) so employees learn availability.
- *Tools, systems, and metrics*
 - Core tools: employee self service portal, searchable knowledge base, ticketing/case management, phone/chat routing, kiosk/shared terminals, and scheduling tools for appointments or hub visits.
 - Tracking data:
 - Company B: Tracks operational and quality metrics across live channels and tickets—First Contact Resolution, post-interaction satisfaction, First Time Right, ticket timeliness (80% closed within 5 days), HR-initiated requests, and channel mix. These measures assess real-time support effectiveness, employee experience, case quality, SLA adherence, and the goal of reducing HR handoffs by shifting volume to live channels.
 - Company D: Uses an employee visit tracker to monitor the types of traffic coming into the service center, enabling data-driven decisions to better serve the employee population. The tracker captures volume, employee type, inquiry category, resolution status, and referral destination when applicable, providing a comprehensive view of demand and outcomes.
- *Training, knowledge management, and escalation*
 - Onboarding and recurring training for contact center and onsite/mobile HR staff; culture/context training for outsourced agents to understand manufacturing realities.
 - Maintain an up to date searchable knowledge base; refresh for cyclical events.
 - Define Tier 1 → Tier 2 escalation flows and specialist pools for sensitive areas (benefits, health).
- *Benefits, ROI, and outcomes for an HR on-the-floor accessibility approach*
 - Centralization plus accessible onsite presence (fixed centers or mobile hubs) can improve satisfaction, reduce escalations, standardize employee experience, and free HRBPs for strategic work.
 - One peer reported satisfaction increases from ~55% to sustained low 90% following centralization, training, and improved access to live help.
- *Implementation challenges and lessons learned*
 - Challenges: simultaneous system changes, high change volume, training scale, and extended hypercare needs. One peer required >6 months to stabilize.
 - Success factors: phased rollouts, strong site HR partnership, in person listening sessions, and regular cross site alignment forums (e.g., biweekly calls).
 - Advice: avoid launching multiple major changes at once; include structured, proactive site engagement from day one.