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# Beyond Policy: A Comprehensive Time Away From Work Gap Analysis Study

Marsh McLennan Agency- Absence, Disability and Life
Jim Jantz, JD
Tim O'Connor
Jennifer Skeeters
Sarah Tarnowski

# Today's Speakers



**Jim Jantz, J.D.**

**Compliance Director**

Specializes in TAFW strategy, program design, and compliance.



**Tim O'Connor**

**Senior Consultant**

Provides consultative guidance to clients in absence, disability, life and voluntary benefits.



**Jennifer Skeeters**

**Center of Excellence Leader**

Specializes in absence, disability, and life best practices and thought leadership.

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**Sarah Tarnowski**

**Senior Consultant**

Provides consultative guidance to clients in absence, disability, life and voluntary benefits.

# 5 Steps to Improving Process

| | |
|---|---|
| Identify | Identify the problem you are trying to solve |
| Understand | Understand the current workflow or process |
| Customer/Team Value | Start with value to the "customer"- identify bottlenecks and barriers |
| Create | Create a new process that addresses key issues and creates value to the customer and the team |
| Test and Iterate | Test and iterate until process is improved |



# End-to-End Gap Analysis

Methodology: A Five-Phased Approach

**Phase 1 Discovery** — **Data Gathering & Evaluation**

**Phase 2 Analysis** — **Administrative Process & Procedure Analysis**

**Phase 3 Technology** — **Technology Assessment**

**Phase 4 Compliance** — **Compliance Review**

**Phase 5 Outcomes** — **Findings and Roadmap**



- Set objectives and gather data (census, policies, process documentation, etc.)
- Perform stakeholder interview sessions
- Analyze current internal and external processes
- Identify technology ecosystem and desired integrations
- Assess technology workflows and capabilities
- Review plans, policies, processes and communications for compliance
- Synthesize findings and analyze cost
- Create roadmap for future activity

# Discovery

Phase 1



# Phase 1: Setting Objectives

## What are you looking to accomplish?

End-to-end reviews can be used to accomplish many things. Before embarking on the analysis, consider what you are trying to solve.

| Example Problem Statements | Example Objectives |
|---|---|
| Most of the organization is "in the dark" on how things get done- only 1 person or limited people are aware of what is required, and that is a business risk | Develop a comprehensive playbook of all internal and external processes and clear guidance on where to access supportive information |
| I am being asked to reduce (or not increase) my overhead costs but everyone on my team is completely underwater | Identify opportunities for efficiency in our processes and/or vendor ecosystem |
| I am constantly dealing with complaints about our vendor, but I am unclear of what the root cause is | Uncover common failure points and potential solutions to remediate |
| I want to change how things are done but I don't have the data to support the need for change | Build a comprehensive business case with qualitative and quantitative data |



# Phase 1: Data Collection

## What information do you need to get started?

Once you are clear on your objectives, you will have the foundation for what data you or your consultant need to complete the review. Keep in mind that some of this data may be hard to find, especially if one of the problems you are trying to solve is lack of formal documentation.

Common data needs:

1) Updated census with all benefit elections
2) Updated leave, disability and accommodations claims data
3) Current cost information- internal and external
4) Policy and plan documentation
5) Vendor contracts
6) Vendor process documentation
7) Vendor and internal communications
8) Internal desktop procedures- formal and informal



# Phase 1 Exercise

Using the provided worksheets on the tables, write down your problem statement(s) and what objective(s) you have in completing an end-to-end review.



# Analysis

Phase 2



# Phase 2: Analyze Current State Operations

## Take time to assess the "lay of the land"

Once you have the required data and a defined objective, the next step is to assess current-state operations:

- Host internal and external stakeholder interviews
- Review documented process flows to:
  - evaluate end-to-end procedures
  - identify gaps
  - pinpoint opportunities for simplification and efficiency gains.

  Note: Sometimes, if no documentation or inadequate documentation exists, it may be beneficial to create the process flows to aid in the project



# Phase 2: Stakeholder Interview Sessions

## Internal and External

Below is an example of who might be interviewed as part of the end-to-end analysis.:

| Internal | External |
|---|---|
| Leave of Absence Team | Vendor Account Team, if applicable |
| HRIS | Vendor Operations, if applicable |
| Payroll | |
| Legal | |
| Contact Center Leadership, if applicable | |
| Leaders over Benefits | |



# Phase 2: Process Flow

## Identify Process Gaps

All involved stakeholders in the process should have an opportunity to evaluate and provide input. Oftentimes there is a misunderstanding between parties and discussions visually reviewing an outline of the agreed upon process and opportunities is advantageous to a successful project.



# Phase 2: Exercise

Using the provided worksheets on the tables, write down a list of internal and external stakeholders that should be interviewed as part of your end-to-end assessment.



# Technology

Phase 3



# Phase 3: Technology Platforms

## Who are our partners today?

| Category | Capabilities |
|---|---|
| Enterprise resource planning (ERP) | Platforms designed to run an entire enterprise including operations, financials, purchasing, payroll, time and attendance, and benefit enrollment |
| Human capital management (HCM) | Platforms that run a company's workforce including HR functions, benefits, and payroll |
| Benefits administration (ben admin) | Outsourced benefit administration services including core enrollment and eligibility, plus wraparound services like COBRA, ACA tracking, and call center support |
| Enrollment point solutions | Limited scope solutions designed to solve specific enrollment needs in the market |
| Workflow automation platforms | Cloud and AI-based automated business workflows delivered through HR service delivery, employee journey management, and specialized absence policies. Includes automated compliance (FMLA), activity sets for complex leaves, self-service portals, AI-powered virtual agents, and performance analytics |



# Phase 3: Data Flow

## Identify Current System Connections

- What is the primary leave status system?
- What types of leaves and leave status information is tracked?
- What downstream impacts are in place based on an update or change to a leave type and/or status?
- Is information manually updated? Is there a file in place?
- If there is a file in place, is it an API? Is it a daily or weekly file?
- Are there any integrations in place with a leave/disability vendor?



# Phase 3: API

## Application Programming Interface- Key Considerations

| Factor | Details |
|---|---|
| Timing of data transmission | • Real-time vs. batch processing (scheduled nightly/weekly)<br>Important to confirm actual timing to set correct expectations |
| API limitations | • Some data elements may not be supported (e.g., FMLA eligibility data, termination reason codes)<br>• Plan design configurations may have restrictions<br>Understanding limitations prevents client dissatisfaction |
| Implementation process | • Requires client IT resources - timing and effort should be clearly communicated<br>• Important to set expectations on resource availability and hours needed |
| Flexibility | • API can be implemented after plan effective date<br>• Allows clients to manually manage processes initially before automating |



# Phase 3: Technology Aids

## Technology to Provide Employee and Employer Support

- Intake and leave planning tools that can provide a digital experience for employees to understand benefits that are available
- HR teams may have access to these tools to provide support to employee's with questions
- Understand where artificial intelligence may be used today internally within your organization and vendor partners
- Review manual processes that may be reduced or streamlined with a technology integration or solution



# Compliance

Phase 4



# Policy Review

- Compliance in all aspects (built into the overall review)
- Deep dive on policies
  - Policies are the foundation of compliance
    - Explicitly include required compliance language or notices
- Processes are built on that compliance foundation
  - Spell out compliance-related parts of the process
  - Incorporate compliance requirements into process (and process documents)



# Gather ALL Relevant Policies

- LOA policies
  - Statutory LOA
    - FMLA, State/Local LOA, Military Service (USERRA)
  - Company-provided unpaid LOA policies
    - Medical LOA, Personal LOA
- Non-LOA policies
  - Accrued paid leave policies
    - PTO/vacation, Paid Sick Leave (PSL)



# Gather ALL Relevant Policies, con't.

- More non-LOA policies …
  - Short- and Long-term Disability
  - Company-provided paid LOA
    - Paid Caregiver or Parental/Bonding
  - Accommodations policies
    - ADA, PWFA
  - Attendance policies
  - Bereavement
  - Holidays



# Policy Review – In the Weeds

- Identify key compliance requirements – FMLA policy
  - The basics (eligibility, entitlement, leave reasons)
  - Decisions within FMLA that allow employer control (e.g., calendar method, intermittent bonding)
  - Notice and documentation requirements
  - Concurrent leaves and pay coordination
  - Job- and benefit-protections
  - RTW requirements



# Policy Review – Non-FMLA

- Identify key compliance requirements – each type of policy will have different components and requirements
  - Required language and information
  - Basic information (eligibility, entitlement, etc.)
  - Definitions
  - Notice and documentation requirements
  - Protections and benefits
  - Coordination with other policies and benefits



# "Non-Compliance" Considerations

- Focus here is on policy compliance, but …
- Policies are a balance of technical requirements and user-friendliness
  - First, understand the intent of your policy
  - Potential impacts to language and the information that will be included
- Policies can focus on technical requirements only or incorporate the overall employee/stakeholder  experience



# Beyond the Policy

- Policy is the compliant foundation
  - Process must be built on that foundation
- Process must be standardized, scalable, repeatable
  - Perhaps most importantly, the process must be documented
  - Separate, and very different, from a policy document



# Beyond the Policy, con't.

- Review all other relevant documents for compliance
  - Process documents on prior slide (SOPs, workflows, etc.)
  - Letters/notices
    - Attachments (e.g., FMLA Rights and Responsibilities)
  - Handbook
  - New hire packets
  - Posters
  - Scripts/templates
  - Systems/feeds
  - Paystubs
  - Timelines



# Policy Review Cycle

- Develop a standardized process to review policies
  - Review and update anytime there is a major change to the laws or requirements, and
  - Develop an annual review process



# Outcomes

Phase 5



# Phase 5: Data Synthesis

## What have you learned?




Following completion of Phases 1-4, you will likely have a long list of potential opportunities to act upon.

The next step is to categorize these opportunities into larger themes. This will help with prioritization and to ensure the actions support larger initiatives and your initial objectives.

# Phase 5: Analysis and Cost Modeling

## How much will this cost or save?

Change of any kind often results in either a cost savings (or avoidance), or a cost increase. However, often, a change may result in both in different areas. It is important to analyze the net impact of any change when determining the feasibility of an initiative. Below are common triggers you may encounter:

| Plan Design Change | Technology Investment | Vendor Support Model Change |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Enhancements to paid benefits may result in higher benefit cost and higher productivity loss if it enables employees to be out longer. | • The procurement of additional technology may come at a cost, but may result in increased efficiency/productivity. | • Outsourcing currently in-sourced tasks will likely result in higher costs, but should also reduce headcount needs. The opposite is also true. |



# Phase 5: Roadmap

| Initiative | Objective | Timeline (Start–End) | Key Milestones & Dates | Owner / Lead | Status | Priority | Notes / Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Example:**<br>**Implement a leave planning tool** | Reduce reliance on the LOA team by enabling employees to plan their leaves via a self-service tool | 1/1/27-6/30/27<br><br>Go Live: 7/1/27 | 2/1/27: Begin implement-ation<br>5/1: QA begins | Jane Smith | Not Started | High | |

See handout for a more detailed Roadmap template



# Phase 5 Takeaway

Please feel free to take the detailed roadmap template on your tables for future planning.



# Questions?

