Vol. 12 / 12

Q3 2019
SuccessFactors Review

Employee Central Service Centre

- Stephen Millard

After a packed second-quarter release of features and improvements for Employee Central Service Centre, quarter three eases off a little and to my mind focuses on maturing some of the existing aspects of the solution. Nevertheless, the updates this month are important and will almost certainly have significant impact. For example, I can see many of the user interface enhancements making a real difference to the efficiency of agents – freeing up more of their time to deal with requests versus spending it on data maintenance and system navigation. Likewise, administrators will find useful options introduced that could open up some new opportunities.

ZALARIS

– Value people

Cloud for Customer

The service agent back end system for Employee Central Service Centre is Cloud for Customer (C4C) and is always where most development improvements occur each quarter whereas the employee system, Ask HR, is vastly less sophisticated. As well as the usual user interface revisions, there are some notable changes around tickets, workflows, search, and a few administrator focussed areas.

User Interface

As anyone who has been following Employee Central Service Centre will know, the Fiori client will become the default user interface with the release of the 1908 version of Cloud for Customer (C4C). If you didn't update in advance, then time is officially up, and you are now in the land of Fiori. For those of you who have been using it already, you're going to see a handful of key changes.

First of all, actions and header fields (on object details pages) have moved up to the top of the page meaning that all actionable elements are at the top instead of being split between the top and bottom. The most commonly important data fields are also at the top, making them first to appear on page load. These layout changes should make using the app easier and are a sound user interface change across all the pages to which they are applied.

Another speed improvement in the form of 'editable data sets' is available for those not using the old "Blue Crystal" theme. This enables agents to quickly update key fields on records in listings without having to open, edit and save the records. This should be a great enhancement for those triaging ticket listings.

Alongside this, some fields and detail records can also be edited on a per-field basis. This is referred to as inline editing. The intention is that for some of the more commonly edited fields it is quicker just to switch that field into edit mode and save it rather than being forced to enable the detail's global edit mode, load the page updates in, make the changes and then save it.

I think the dataset edit change will be a more significant time-saver for most organisations, but anything that can save time regularly is going to be worth it in the long run.

A new Quick View feature was due to be made available on phased release but has been held back for now. It allows for a quick way to view key data (e.g. for tickets) without loading a full record. While it is available for beta testing in non-production environments, it is expected to be a fully available feature in the Q4 release later this year.

Tickets

A small but important highlight for me in this release is the option to unlock other people's tickets via an admin-level function. This means that if an agent needs to pick up a ticket that is locked open by another user who is not available to unlock the ticket (e.g. they have left for lunch or their shift, gone to a meeting, or are just on another call), someone with appropriate access can override the lock. This enables service to continue without notable interruption, and so it is a really useful, experience focussed feature.

From a personal point of view around projects and support, locked tickets seem to come up regularly during testing phases, and so this will notably be helpful there too.

In addition to being able to unlock tickets, when a ticket is manually created, the 'To' e-mail address for the employee is now defaulted in. Previously this was a manual action that front-line call centre agents had to perform frequently, it boggles the mind to try and understand why it has taken so long for this to be included. But now it's here this frustrating friction point is smoothed out.

Search

Search has now been extended to allow agents to search across e-mail addresses and not just e-mail content. As e-mail addresses are generally equivalent to individual contacts, or at least specific contact points in the case of shared mailboxes, this means that the breadth and specificity of searching have been improved. While it might not be a search used by service agents every day, should the occasion arise, it will potentially save a considerable amount of time that would otherwise be a manual filtering process for the service agent.

Ticket Intelligence

Cloud for Customer will also be offering up some new machine learning-based functionality in the Q3 release. Primarily this will be a switch to a new sentiment analysis service that should be able to more accurately categorise an employee's current state (happy/unhappy), based on the most recent update they have supplied to a ticket.

While many service centres dealing with external customers use deep sentiment analysis to drive customers to service agents who are skilled at dealing with particular emotional states and issues, Employee Central Service Centre based service centres tend to be operating at a much different scale and with a notably different population of people raising issues. Unless you have a particularly large multi-team service centre with various specialists and leads, I don't see this particular application of machine learning being of particular benefit. However, if you do, then this could be a real boon around effective ticket allocation and overall efficiency.

Updates for Administrators

The main thing administrators will probably relish in this release is an option to enable adaptation mode in the Fiori user interface. Not having to switch back to the HTML5 user interface to make changes will not only speed things up but with the impending full deprecation of the HTML5 user interface, this is a critical advancement.

The new release brings new workflow rule options that allow administrators to create rules to auto-acknowledge receipt of e-mails on events other than those creating new tickets. While this can just be a useful auto-response, I would encourage administrators to consider if having a general auto acknowledgement might simply add to 'e-mail noise'? I do think that combining it with things like checks against attributes such as status could provide some interesting use cases.

For example, if a ticket is completed, the e-mail could provide details on how to have the ticket reopened, or if the ticket is closed, inform the user how and why they should open a new ticket and to remind them of the importance of cross-referencing to the previous ticket.

Somewhat less exciting, but still very useful is that transports continue to get some attention with reporting dashboard filters now becoming a transportable item as well as custom orders for items in code lists.

Ask HR

Behind the scenes, SAP is continuing to work on improving the speed of the Ask HR app. When version 2 of Ask HR, the current major version of the application was released, it was notably slower than the previous incarnation. I think we are now at the point where version 2 may be faster than version 1, but it has certainly taken quite some time to get there. While this isn't an obvious update in the application, it will be interesting to see how users find it, and in particular how users who have to raise and monitor lots of tickets find it. They have been the ones hit hardest by the speed previously.

Filter Optimisation

Previously two buttons were presented on the ticket page to filter and group by. These are now consolidated into a single button. While this is intended to make things faster and easier for the user, I remain unconvinced that it will bring a great deal of improvement. In my experience, users may filter, and they may group by, but very rarely have I seen anyone need to filter and then group by when dealing with tickets. But, if that is something your users need to do, then it should indeed be easier to access in a single location.

What I do think will make a big difference is that only active tickets are included in the default filter. Issues that have been resolved should no longer show by default when opening the application. This will mean that the app is loading fewer sets of data and should render the page faster. It should also mean that users with larger ticket histories can find current active tickets faster and are not finding the app progressively slowing the more they use it.

Administrators may wish to make their user base aware of this change as any employees looking for inactive tickets must modify the filter on the ticket status to list them.

Ticket Priority

Finally, Ask HR can now be configured to have the priority field hidden during ticket creation. This is an often-requested feature as it stops users making every ticket a high priority.

If this is something your organisation has struggled with previously, then it is well worth looking at enabling this option - via the HANA Cloud Platform account's OData destination configuration.

Conclusion

With this release, I think it is worth spending a little time with service agents showing them the changes to the user interface that could save them time. The new quick edit features are all worth knowing about.

Spend some time establishing who is going to be able to unlock tickets and under what circumstances. It's probably not for everyone, but it does help to have more than one person who can unlock tickets.

Lastly, consider initiating at least some communication to end-users noting the changes to the filtering in Ask HR and do consider if you should be offering the priority field to Ask HR users. In most cases, the answer is probably that it should not.

How Can We Help?

Zalaris excels in delivering comprehensive HR and payroll services across the UK, Northern Europe, the Baltics and Poland. Our industry leadership position, however, goes beyond the borders and constraints of other providers to enable what matters most to our clients: maximising the value of human capital through excellence in HR processes.

- **Scoping Services** - for if you are thinking of moving to the HCM Cloud but are unsure of where to start.
- **Support Services** - for if you are already using SAP SuccessFactors and want a flexible support partner.
- **Release Management Services** - for if you are struggling to take advantage of the quarterly innovations in SAP SuccessFactors.
- **Business Process Services** - for if you are looking for operational support with your HCM processes.
- **Training Services** - for if you are not getting the most out your SuccessFactors system.