

## HR Acuity

*Innovation in User Experience for Issue Reporting & Case Management*



### SOLUTION **PERSPECTIVE**

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Governance, Risk Management & Compliance Insight

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## TALK TO US . . .

We look forward to hearing from you and learning what you think about GRC 20/20 research. GRC 20/20 is eager to answer inquiries from organizations looking to improve GRC related processes and utilize technology to drive GRC efficiency, effectiveness, and agility.

# HR Acuity

## Innovation in User Experience for Issue Reporting & Case Management

### The HR Challenge of Case Management

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#### The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men . . .

Organizations today are distributed and dynamic. With the globalization of business, organizations find that governance, risk management, and compliance (GRC) has become complex in the context of discovering, managing, and responding to issues from a human resources and employee relations perspective. Challenges of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, wrongful termination, and more pose significant risk to the organization if left undiscovered and unresolved. This challenge grows as the organization spans departments, jurisdictions, geographies, and cultures. At the same time, organizations are constantly changing. Employees, relationships, regulations, risks, economies, litigation, regulation, and legislation are constantly changing.

GRC professionals are challenged to get a big picture point of view of the range of HR issues being reported across the organization and the management of cases that impact the organization's "ability to reliably achieve objectives while addressing uncertainty and acting with integrity."<sup>1</sup> This requires greater focus on human resources governance, risk management, and compliance (HR GRC). Both small and large companies have issues documenting, tracking, and analyzing employee relations issues - from everyday issues such as time, attendance, and routine policy violations to more serious matters such as harassment involving investigations.

HR and employee relations professionals are still documenting employee incidents in spreadsheets or in software solutions not designed to deal with people issues. Documents, spreadsheets, emails, and general solutions not designed for the task are often commonly employed to log issues. These processes are inefficient, resource intensive, and are not designed with employee relations professionals in mind. People issues are highly sensitive, confidential, and need to be dealt with using consistent, compliant processes that also are fair and congruent with an organization's policies and values.

In addition, employee relations professionals are often not trained specifically for their roles. Workplace investigations, for example, require intense preparation, yet HR professionals are taught on the spot. Consistent best practices are not common, meaning employees are treated differently and in today's #MeToo era, organizations are open

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<sup>1</sup> This is the official definition of GRC as found in the OCEG GRC Capability Model

to reputational damage if they do not manage their people risk consistently and with auditable, defensible processes.

HR issue reporting and case management has become a moving target which needs a structured approach supported by a strong process, information, and technology architecture. Well-run organizations have issues, incidents, cases, and investigations. As the poet Robert Burns states, “The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry”. Whether unintentional issues or acts of the malicious miscreant, organizations need to be prepared and have established processes in place to manage HR issues as they arise in the organization.

The breadth of silos and documents to HR issue reporting and case management results in a maze of disconnected processes, reporting, and information. These are redundant, document-centric, and manual approaches that do not integrate and are highly inefficient. HR functions spend more time managing the volume of emails, documents, and spreadsheets than they do managing the issues themselves. Further, the line of business is overwhelmed with inconsistent approaches to issue reporting and case management.

This fragmented approach to HR issue reporting and case management resembles battling the multi-headed Hydra in mythology. As the Hydra grows more heads of risk, regulation, and ethical challenges, issue reporting and case management professionals find that scattered approaches leave them exhausted and overwhelmed as they lose the battle. This results in a reactive fire-fighting approach to issue reporting and case management, with silos of data that professionals struggle to find the time to coordinate and link together manually. This piecemeal approach is inefficient, increases risk exposure, and leads to serious matters that fall through the cracks. Redundant and inefficient processes lead to overwhelming complexity that slows down the business in an environment that requires agility.

The document-centric, scattered, and manual processes of the past have impaled case management functions with inefficiency. Process management and reporting is primarily comprised of emails, documents, shared files, homegrown databases, spreadsheets, and manual processes. Case management professionals are spending a disproportionate amount of time collecting data and reporting on data instead of time spent adding strategic value to the business through analyzing and trending the data collected. One organization that GRC 20/20 interviewed was spending 200 FTE hours to build one report on cases for the board of directors, because of the labyrinth of documents, spreadsheets, and emails used to report issues and manage cases. This antiquated approach leaves teams with flat metrics that lack context and don't help professionals identify or address problematic processes, culture, or behavioral issues. HR professionals often express to GRC 20/20 their frustration with the:

- **Inability** to gain a clear view of HR issue reporting and case management interdependencies
- **High cost** of consolidating silos of HR issue management information

- **Difficulty** maintaining accurate HR issue management information
- **Failure** to trend across HR issues, departments, and reporting periods
- **Incapability** of providing HR issue intelligence to support business decisions and strategic planning
- **Redundant** approaches that limit correlation, comparison, and integration of information
- **Lack of agility** to respond promptly to changing regulations, laws, and business environment

**The bottom line:** HR and employee relation issue reporting and case management programs have been very tactical and inefficient in the past in collecting issue reports and managing cases. HR professionals and management across the organization have lacked an overall approach to report and manage issues, provide reporting and analytics, and the ability to move issue reporting and case management from the tactical approach to an integrated approach. A centralized HR issue reporting and case management system saves time and money and creates an environment where the organization can measure the effectiveness and efficiencies of HR professionals, as well management resources across the organization.

## HR Acuity

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### Innovation in User Experience for Issue Reporting & Case Management

HR Acuity is a solution that GRC 20/20 has researched, evaluated, and reviewed with organizations that are using it in complex, distributed, and dynamic business environments. HR Acuity is an agile and intuitive HR issue reporting and case management solution that delivers significant business value and brings a contextual understanding of HR and employee relations issues to HR GRC professionals, management across the organization, as well as senior executives and directors. In this context, GRC 20/20 is recognizing HR Acuity with a **2019 GRC User Experience Award in Issue Reporting & Case Management**.

HR Acuity is headquartered in Florham Park, NJ. Its aim is to provide purpose-built technology that helps businesses anticipate and act on employee relations with fairness and transparency. First released in 2009, HR Acuity is a modern, flexible SaaS solution that is continually enhanced based on user feedback. It has two core functions: employee relations management, for ongoing issues management, and investigations, for workplace investigation case management and reporting. The solution provides best practices, content, and technology around documentation, investigations, and analytics in ways that provide consistent experiences and 360° contextual intelligence on cases across organization. HR Acuity has evolved over the past 10 years and today is being used by more than 150 companies, with a focus on enterprises.

GRC 20/20 finds the HR Acuity solution to be easy to use and intuitive for the business user as well as the HR professional. This makes it an ideal solution that manages HR issues and cases from the front office to the back office of HR GRC that crosses all three lines of defense. It is cost-effective and agile for organizations across industries.

GRC 20/20's evaluation of HR Acuity clients has revealed the following:

- **Before HR Acuity:** Typical clients struggled with manual processes for HR issue reporting and case management that were encumbered by documents, spreadsheets, and emails or custom internally built databases that were cumbersome. No one had complete visibility into HR issues cases was reporting was time consuming. There were significant inefficiencies, redundancies, as well as gaps.
- **Why organizations choose HR Acuity:** Clients desire a full end-to-end enablement of HR issue reporting and case management. In evaluating solutions, they find HR Acuity intuitive, easy to use, had strong customization features that did not require coding and IT help, and had the breadth of capabilities and reporting desired. HR Acuity clients particularly value the overall methodology and practices integrated into the solution that includes best practices and domain experience.
- **How organizations are using HR Acuity:** HR Acuity clients use the solution to manage employee relations issue reporting and case management. Their goal is to have a single information and technology architecture that enables HR issue reporting and case management to drive efficiency and resilience. The ability to integrate the full scope of HR related case types with a strong system of record that provides assurance in one platform provides 360° contextual intelligence on HR issues, incidents, investigations, and cases.
- **Where HR Acuity has excelled for organizations:** Organizations use the solution to automate HR issue reporting case management strategy, execution, and reporting. This provides an integrated view of HR issues and cases to manage and monitor the entire process from oversight across cases to the effective management of individual cases. They find value in having an integrated platform with robust reporting through a harmonized process for all HR cases that provides a defensible system of record and single source of truth on issues and cases.

## What HR Acuity Does

### *Enabling HR and Employee Relation Issue Reporting & Case Management*

GRC 20/20 has evaluated the capabilities of HR Acuity and finds that they deliver an intuitive and robust issue reporting and case management solution that is easily configured and customized to specific organization needs. HR Acuity integrates into one system what was a range of labor-intensive tasks associated with managing HR issues and cases. HR Acuity provides the full range of capabilities organizations need to manage the issue reporting and case management process from end-to-end, this includes:

- 1. HR case planning and administration.** HR Acuity enables the ongoing planning and administration of HR issues, cases, investigators, workload, and tasks. This includes resource and case planning and administration, the ability to measure cycles/seasonality of cases, backlog, and costs. The solution provides a single system of record on case details and action and provides an integrated information architecture that avoids scattered documents and versions. With a single solution for case management there are no rogue or shadow cases that are missed and failed to be documented and tracked.
- 2. HR issue intake & triage.** HR Acuity manages intake of issues being reported (anonymous or not) through integrated hotlines (via API), web forms, management reports, and other inputs. The solution enables the review of issues to eliminate noise, consolidate duplicated issues, flesh out non-cases, and enables the organization to focus on what is critical and exposes the organization to the greatest risk. The solution allows for the auto-triage of cases to different levels and assignment to investigator teams. Templates help these teams provide standardized tasks and workflows to investigate and respond to issues. The solution can also auto-create the list of tasks, processes, and timing for different case types as required.
- 3. HR investigation.** HR Acuity enables the core process to manage individual investigations from reporting to closure. The solution provides structured templates and processes to keep everything organized, document the investigation, manage tasks, notifications and escalation, and keeps a complete system of record and information in one place for ease of reporting. This includes investigation reports that pull information from the case file into a report template.
- 4. HR remediation & resolution.** HR Acuity then manages the process to ensure remediation steps are followed through to mitigate or eliminate the risk of similar HR issues and incidents. This involves the capability to track action items, due dates, create reminders, and ensure that things do not slip through cracks so the organization can realize a reduction in repeated and future cases.
- 5. HR reporting & metrics.** HR Acuity provides a flexible, customizable, and robust reporting capability with detailed reports on both individual cases as well as aggregate case reporting across case types and teams. With HR Acuity, organizations can track past due tasks, benchmark timelines of cases, identify where exposure can be mitigated, and reduce gaps. The solution provides a breadth of different report types for standardized reports that can go to stakeholders and third parties such as regulators.

HR Acuity enables these five areas of effective issue reporting and case management processes. What makes HR Acuity particularly effective, efficient, and agile is that it does this in an easy to use, configurable/adaptable, and intuitive user experience. This provides clients with a solution to manage the lifecycle of HR issues and cases across the organization and its operations and processes.



## Foundational Capabilities of HR Acuity

HR Acuity can be deployed to manage the range of HR related issues, cases, incidents, and investigations. While HR Acuity is focused on HR issues and cases, it could be implemented to manage the range of operational issues and cases that go beyond HR (e.g., fraud/corruption, security, ethics, compliance, legal, environmental, health and safety). Specific capabilities in HR Acuity that enable organizations to have efficient, effective, and agile HR issue reporting and case management processes are:

- **HR case governance.** HR Acuity enables the overall coordination, management, and oversight of cases across HR investigation teams with capabilities to monitor investigation performance, track each team member's caseload, monitor overdue cases and actions, measure metrics and statistics for investigations, and alert on slow moving cases and overdue cases.
- **360° contextual awareness.** HR Acuity provides a unified technology and information architecture that acts as the central hub for HR issue reporting and case management processes and information. This includes content and workflow management to automate processes, reminders, alerts, and escalations. The solution is scalable, flexible, and adaptable. The core engine for workflow and task management, content management, reporting, and case project management provide a common core architecture across issue reporting and case management.
- **Workflow and task management.** HR Acuity provides a full range of capabilities to build workflow and tasks. This includes the ability for both linear and parallel workflows, alerts on pending tasks that are soon due, and escalation of missed tasks. Another key component of the workflow is the hierarchy of levels of approval as a case moves from start to finish. HR Acuity allows multiple levels of case reviews and approvals, as well as ensuring proper processes and policies are completed for each case.
- **Dashboard and reporting.** HR Acuity offers a customizable dashboard and reporting. Case management professionals can report on metrics and trends to track relevant information, developments, trends, and issues for both individual and across cases. Reporting can be automated with specific schedules for report publishing and distribution/notification. Detailed reporting and analytics provide insight into employee behavioral trends, helping employee relations be more proactive and provide insight to senior leadership.
- **Security & access control.** HR Acuity allows for granular security and control at the case as well as field level. This allows clients to have complete control over who can see and modify cases to protect sensitivity and need-to-know access. This includes defensible records that also protect and support attorney client privilege.
- **System of record.** HR Acuity provides a detailed audit trail and system of record for HR investigations and related activities. With HR Acuity, organizations can manage evidence and provide a defensible system of record.

- **Mobility.** HR Acuity is a modern and intuitive responsive web application that scales to be used from desktops, to laptops, to tablets, and to smartphones.
- **Notifications.** HR Acuity provides notification through email templates to notify stakeholders of programs and expectations with embedded links to tasks.
- **Configurability.** HR Acuity is designed to be configurable to the unique requirements of organizations. Once implemented, the solution can evolve to accommodate the dynamic nature of issue reporting and case management in context of changing business requirements.
- **Integration.** HR Acuity can integrate with existing whistleblower hotlines, as well as an organizations HR system so that current information is always in place.
- **Templates.** HR Acuity delivers standardized, but configurable, investigations and incidents process and letter templates. These include best practices, interviews, and protocols that are delivered as part of the solution.
- **Investigation process map.** HR Acuity uses an investigation process map to scope response activities that define response plans such as who to interview, documents to review, and when forensics are required.
- **Benchmarking.** HR Acuity, leveraging its secure and confidential SaaS architecture, can extrapolate and anonymize HR issue and case information so an organization can compare its HR issues and cases against other organization of similar size and industry.

## Benefits Organizations Have Received with HR Acuity

Most HR Acuity clients moved to the solution because they found their manual document-centric approaches for HR issue reporting and case management consumed too many resources. Too often things are missed in the continuous barrage of incidents in the midst of the complexity of the organization and business change. Others moved to HR Acuity as they found their previous home-grown database solutions were dated, cumbersome, too costly to own and maintain, and lacked the ease-of-use and intuitiveness that the business needed to understand HR issues and cases.

Specific benefits that GRC 20/20 finds that HR Acuity clients will achieve in their implementations are:

- ***360° visibility into HR issues and cases*** where all information is in one place and gives complete situational and contextual awareness of HR issues and cases.
- ***Elimination of hundreds to thousands of documents, spreadsheets, and emails,*** and the time needed to monitor, gather, and report on them to manage HR issues and cases.

- **Significant efficiencies in time through automation** of workflow and tasks as well as reporting. Specifically, the time it took to build reports from hundreds to thousands of documents and spreadsheets now is just a matter of seconds.
- **Fewer things slipping through cracks** as there are established tasks, monitoring, notifications, and escalation for HR issues and cases.
- **Efficiency in streamlining processes** through standardizing the lifecycle of HR issue reporting and case management from initial report, to management of the case, to remediation and reporting.
- **Greater granularity and ability to report** across HR issues and cases as well as on specific cases - details that could not be done in documents or spreadsheets.
- **Increased awareness and accountability** of HR issues by business owners who are informed on the subject matter in context of their role.
- **Consistency and accuracy of information** as the organization conforms to consistent processes and information structures.
- **Accountability with full audit trails** of who did what and when on HR issue reporting and case management.
- **Increased agility in context of change** that enables the organization to be proactive in keeping up with HR issues and cases when the business changes, and not just reactive - leading to less HR risk exposure.

## Considerations in Context of HR Acuity

Every solution has its strengths and weaknesses and may not be the ideal fit for all organizations in all situations. While GRC 20/20 has identified many positive attributes of HR Acuity to enable organizations to achieve consistent HR issue reporting and case management processes, readers should not see this as a complete and unquestionable endorsement of HR Acuity.

HR Acuity has a deep understanding of HR, employee relations, and specifically on HR related issues and cases and how to respond to them. This is evident in their application. The value of HR Acuity goes beyond a strong and intuitive technology platform but leverages their domain expertise, as well as benchmarking, so an organization can understand how they are doing compared with their peers. They strive to work with their client and be a true partner and knowledge source and not just a software provider.

At the end of the day, HR Acuity saves the organization time over manual processes for HR issue reporting and case management that also delivers greater effectiveness and agility to the organization. This enables organizations to mitigate their HR risk, better understand issues, and document cases and trend impacts. Overall, it gives an organization a clear understanding of HR related issues and cases throughout the

business and does so in a context the business can understand without the overwhelming complexity technology too often presents.

## About GRC 20/20 Research, LLC

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GRC 20/20 Research, LLC (GRC 20/20) provides clarity of insight into governance, risk management, and compliance (GRC) solutions and strategies through objective market research, benchmarking, training, and analysis. We provide objective insight into GRC market dynamics; technology trends; competitive landscape; market sizing; expenditure priorities; and mergers and acquisitions. GRC 20/20 advises the entire ecosystem of GRC solution buyers, professional service firms, and solution providers. Our research clarity is delivered through analysts with real-world expertise, independence, creativity, and objectivity that understand GRC challenges and how to solve them practically and not just theoretically. Our clients include Fortune 1000 companies, major professional service firms, and the breadth of GRC solution providers.

## Research Methodology

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GRC 20/20 research reports are written by experienced analysts with experience selecting and implementing GRC solutions. GRC 20/20 evaluates all GRC solution providers using consistent and objective criteria, regardless of whether or not they are a GRC 20/20 client. The findings and analysis in GRC 20/20 research reports reflect analyst experience, opinions, research into market trends, participants, expenditure patterns, and best practices. Research facts and representations are verified with client references to validate accuracy. GRC solution providers are given the opportunity to correct factual errors, but cannot influence GRC 20/20 opinion.

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