

Empowering Proactive Employee Relations: How HR Acuity Supports Sun Life's Data-Driven Strategy



The Challenge

Before adopting HR Acuity, Sun Life managed employee relations across multiple systems, making it challenging to maintain a single, global view — especially crucial for its distributed team. Sun Life also needed a solution with built-in processes and best practices to account for case complexity and support investigators at every experience level.

When Abira Balendran joined Sun Life as the Director of Enterprise Employee Relations, she saw that the tools were limiting the team's visibility and ability to drive impact — and set out to create a more strategic, unified approach.

“Having a single, consistent view of employee relations across the globe would allow us to be far more strategic and proactive,” shared Abira. “We saw an opportunity to achieve that with HR Acuity.”

The Solution

The team partnered with HR Acuity to create a single source of truth, centralizing case management to drive strategy, ensure compliant and secure issue handling and enable cross-team collaboration. From the start, HR Acuity acted as a true strategic partner — coming to the table with a recommended structure while always providing the flexibility to tailor the platform to Sun Life's unique needs.

“Having gone through ER tech implementations at other organizations, I immediately noticed the difference with HR Acuity,” said Abira. “HR Acuity's guidance and genuine thought partnership are one-of-a-kind.”

Abira's team also values how HR Acuity empowers them to take ownership of key actions themselves. “I love that the system hands control back to the organization. It gives us the confidence to make changes quickly and make critical decisions,” said Abira.

“It’s a full-circle experience — we get the support we need while maintaining control over our system and how we use it.”

With HR Acuity, Sun Life handles issues and employee relations more strategically by:

- **Elevating ER as a Strategic Function:** By leveraging HR Acuity’s robust platform and partnership, Sun Life successfully positioned employee relations as a core driver of organizational success.
- **Conducting Consistent Global Investigations:** Compliant, best-practice investigations are now standardized across regions.
- **Benchmarking Performance:** Comparing performance and trends against similar organizations by industry and size to uncover insights and opportunities — directly in platform — normalized per 1000 employees.
- **Streamlining Workflows:** Minimizing repetitive administrative tasks to allow focus on strategic employee relations initiatives that support the employee experience.
- **Providing Role-Based Data Access:** Flexible permissions tailored to the team’s needs ensure only necessary parties can view sensitive information .
- **Detecting Potential Risks Early:** HR Acuity’s reporting and analytics uncover potential issues proactively, prevent escalation and maintain a strong, consistent culture.



HR Acuity talks the talk and walks the walk. It’s a full-on support system.

Abira Balendran

Director of Enterprise Employee Relations, Sun Life

The Impact

Seamless Cross-Functional Collaboration

HR Acuity connects Sun Life’s employee relations, absence management and accommodations teams, providing a centralized source of truth. With everything in one place, teams can work in tandem while maintaining alignment and visibility.

Abira said, “HR Acuity has given us a consistent, unified way to manage cases. By having everything in a single secure platform, with a streamlined process, our teams can collaborate more effectively, make decisions faster and work with greater efficiency.”

Actionable, Data-Driven Insights

With HR Acuity, the teams now have access to data specialized to their specific functions, enabling smarter, strategic decisions. Akhil Nair, Senior Consultant at Sun Life, shared, “With HR Acuity, our teams have access to tailored data that drives smarter planning, efficient resource management and confident decision-making.

The reporting capabilities give us clarity we didn't have before." This makes a meaningful impact in a data-driven organization like Sun Life. "HR Acuity supports our proactive approach," said Abira. "We can now share insights from the data with partners and provide guidance to people leaders to help drive informed decisions." As a result, the team can move beyond reactive case management and tell a true story of their employee relations efforts — what Abira calls their 'culture on display.'

"With HR Acuity, we can overlay the data to paint a clear picture of our culture — how we show up for employees and how we're living up to our values and delivering on our purpose," she said. "These were insights we couldn't access before." This has resulted in measurable improvements in case volume, time-to-close and investigation substantiation rates.

Abira and Akhil also value the flexibility HR Acuity provides in analyzing data. The platform supports both broad, high-level insights and detailed, drill-down analysis. "HR Acuity gives us the ability to understand both the big picture and the specifics of individual cases," said Abira. "This dual perspective helps us identify trends across our organization while also addressing the details of each case."

The team also leverages in-platform benchmarking to compare their function's performance against peers. "It's one thing to be insular, but it's another to step back and compare our function within a heavily regulated industry with its own unique nuances," shares Abira. "HR Acuity's in-platform benchmarking enables us to do that."



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Secure, Role-Specific Access

HR Acuity allows teams to define roles based on factors like issue category, group or location — giving Sun Life the ability to design access around their specific needs.

"Role-based permissions were particularly important for us when selecting our solution," shared Akhil, "With HR Acuity, we are able to ensure that sensitive data is only accessible to authorized personnel, which is critical for our compliance and privacy requirements."

With this level of control, Sun Life can maintain strict compliance, protect sensitive information and empower teams to handle employee relations with confidence.

Reduced Administrative Burden

Before HR Acuity, Sun Life's ER team spent a significant portion of their time on administrative work associated with investigations. Centralized case management, built on best-practice workflows, now streamlines processes and frees the team to focus on outcomes rather than administrative tasks.

"HR Acuity eliminates the administrative burden for our team, allowing us to deliver a better experience for employees," said Abira. "With multiple team members involved in an investigation, we can stay aligned, track progress in real time and focus on managing the case effectively rather than on administrative tasks that previously consumed significant time."

Ongoing Partnership and Empowerment

Sun Life continues to see the benefits of HR Acuity's hands-on support and ongoing development. The team values that the system isn't static — new features and updates are consistently added, reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement. Akhil shared, "We appreciate HR Acuity's ongoing investment in the platform. It's exciting to leverage new features, and it's impressive that there's a real effort to continue to update and enhance it."

Beyond the technology itself, Sun Life also values HR Acuity's flexible, collaborative support. "Working within a highly regulated environment can be complex, with many practices requiring approval," Abira explained. "HR Acuity is always willing to work with us and find solutions that meet the unique needs of our organization."

Thought Leadership and Community Impact

HR Acuity sets the standard for best practices and innovation in the field with its category-defining thought leadership and community. Abira says, "HR Acuity talks the talk and walks the walk. It's a full-on support system." Before partnering with HR Acuity, the team relied on the Annual Benchmark Study to understand how their function compared to others. Now, they have a partner to guide their ER journey — and a dedicated space to share insights and learn from peers through the empowerER™ community. "Seeing how other organizations approach ER has helped us explore and evolve our own processes," said Abira. "The community's generosity with time and knowledge is unique and invaluable."

HR Acuity Supports Sun Life's Data-Driven Employee Relations Strategy

By centralizing case management, providing actionable, tailored data and offering ongoing support, HR Acuity empowers Sun Life's team to operate with clarity, efficiency and confidence. As a result, Sun Life's team is able to reinforce its values and deliver a more consistent, strategic and employee-focused approach.

"Based on our experience with the HR Acuity team and the feedback from our employee relations partners who use the platform every day, HR Acuity is absolutely the right platform for our team," said Akhil.

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