



## CASE STUDY

# HR gets the Web 2.0 touch

By **SIMON SHARWOOD**

Like almost everyone else in Australia, Jodie Dickson is tired of hearing about the minutiae involved in the nation's industrial relations system.

Ms Dickson, however, cannot afford to ignore those details. The Mount Pritchard and District Community Club (better known as Mounties) where she is human resources manager employs 600 people, 70 per cent of whom are employed under Australian Workplace Agreements.

But with those staff spread across four sites and many different roles, creating and maintaining AWAs is a task Ms Dickson finds time-consuming. And with two of the club's sites writing their own AWAs, the potential for confusion or error is high.

Enter peopleinsite.com.au, a new software-as-a-service site developed by Sydney employment lawyers Fisher Cartwright Berriman that is taking care of the details for Ms Dickson.

Richard Breden, a partner in the firm and managing director of peopleinsite, says there was a need for businesses to create AWAs cheaply and efficiently.

"We felt there was a need . . . especially for small businesses who may not otherwise have taken advantage of some of the changes because of the cost of introducing AWAs was prohibitive using traditional consultants and lawyers."

You can create a single AWA for just \$250 on peopleinsite — a sum most lawyers charge for a single hour's work — using a wizard-style tool that walks employers through a quiz.

"Users are asked a series of questions," says Mr Breden. "It could start by asking if the employee is casual, part-time or full-time and then a series of

questions comes after that.

"Sitting behind the system is a very complex series of clauses all approved by the Office of the Employment Advocate."

If the law changes, peopleinsite changes its clauses so they remain ready to use. Customers can no longer access invalid ones.

The site also serves as an online repository of AWAs, a useful function as these agreements must all be lodged with the OEA. Workplace agreements can also expire and must then be renegotiated and renewed, creating a document management challenge that Ms Dickson is happy to outsource.

"The site lets us store our AWAs and define how we want to store them," she says.

"Having this on the net also means we stay ahead of the game with legislative changes because the site modifies the clauses in the AWA," meaning any new agreements are always up to date.

Best of all, Ms Dickson says the service is cost effective. "It is about 10 per cent of the cost of accessing a lawyer every time we write an AWA," she says.

Another cost-saving online HR service is hosted by hotemployers.com.au, a site that hosts and conducts employee satisfaction surveys.

"A 30-person company could spend up to \$5000 conducting an employee satisfaction survey," says Bob Meeuwissen, the site's CEO. Online surveys are cheaper, while the anonymity of a survey by a third party often produces better results.

Hotemployers has also added a social networking twist to its services to help employers.

"There are lots of human resources and marketing departments that say nice

things about themselves,"

Mr Meeuwissen says. "But when you are looking for a job, you want to hear what their employees really say."

Hotemployers.com.au makes this possible by publishing the results of its clients' surveys online for anyone to read, an approach that human resources consultant Klaus Duetoft of irrelach.com, who includes eBay Australia among his clients, says is very valuable.

"One of the challenges I often see is that companies have lots of rhetoric about being an employer of choice," Mr Duetoft says. "Employees, meanwhile, look at their careers in terms of how they can gain experiences that enhance their portfolio. The web is integral in terms of the kind of research candidates do."

"The thing I like about hotemployers is that it goes down to the next level of detail. It will mean that employers have to be practising what we preach otherwise the feedback that will come out of that kind of survey will not reflect we are a good business to work for."

Mr Meeuwissen says users of the site will have the option of whether or not to publish their survey results, but expects the tight labour market will mean many take up the option in the hope their openness attracts candidates.

"This is not really an HR decision," he says. "The internet is obviously lower cost for surveys and obviously the way of the future for candidates' research. So I see this as a decision for senior management, marketing and the CEO to decide if they really want to be seen as an employer candidates should be interested in," he says.



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Human resources manager Jodie Dickson uses online software to monitor the AWAs of 600 staff at a fraction of the cost of using lawyers. PICTURE: DOMINO POSTIGLIONE