

Guide

Essential Building Blocks of a Modern HR Foundation for Manufacturers



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Manufacturing: an industry of complexity and change.

Manufacturing is evolving faster and more dramatically than ever. A mix of factors—from labor and skills shortages to rises in automation and ongoing digital change—has made this one of the most fascinating and difficult industries in which to hire, manage, and retain workers. In fact, managing people is emerging as the key to survival in times of ceaseless change.

As a result, HR's role is expanding and changing. Today's HR departments must be more than trusted partners handling traditional hire-and-fire processes. They need to be strategic leaders, changemakers, and drivers of digital progress.

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Fortunately, 7 in 10 HR leaders say they have more opportunities for organizational impact compared to 3 years ago, and 6 in 10 say they have more authority to determine strategic priorities.¹ But with these opportunities comes pressure, and yesterday's brittle, disjointed technology ecosystems are holding HR back.

Leaving legacies behind.

Legacy systems hold back organizations of all sizes. Often designed in decades past when org charts were static and in-demand skills largely stable, these systems can't keep pace with today's HR needs. Moreover, companies now have to understand—and make informed decisions about—the changing composition of their workforce, including contingent, gig, salaried, frontline, or hourly workers.

Even if companies have made good decisions with standalone point solutions, niche applications, or manual work-arounds, those approaches only provide temporary relief while introducing new issues: fragmented, siloed data; the extra costs and complexity of maintaining a sprawling tech stack; and a frustrating, friction-filled experience for HR and IT alike. Here it's worth noting the critical connection between HR and IT—and the fact that digital advances in one realm improve the other.

Today, that advancement doesn't mean layering one technology atop another. Rather, it means ensuring that the right building blocks are in place—from unified, democratized data and analytics to a holistic view of the employee journey—to nimbly meet today's workforce challenges while also being poised to flex and adapt as the future unfolds.

What does that look like, exactly? This guide explores the essential building blocks of a future-ready HR foundation in manufacturing—and how that foundation enables HR teams to elevate and streamline the employee journey, from planning to hire and through to retire.

Manufacturing's people problem.

- 48% of manufacturing executives report turnover that's higher than the historical average²
- 2.1 million manufacturing jobs are expected to be unfilled by 2030 in the U.S. alone³
- 45% of manufacturers have had to turn down business opportunities because they did not have enough workers⁴

Manufacturing a better people management foundation.

Data on its own is inert. What organizations need is a way to transform their data into decision-ready insights and strategic workforce plans. To do that requires moving beyond a disparate set of generic tools to a cohesive human capital management (HCM) platform that spans the entire employee journey.

Consider these three interdependent principles of manufacturing today:

1. Single source of truth for data.

When HR and workforce data—from payroll to performance, recruiting to rewards—is unified in a true-cloud platform, organizations unlock dramatic gains in accuracy and efficiency.

Gone is the need to manage multiple datasets across separate systems and spreadsheets. And gone, too, is the heightened risk of error, security slips, and delays that comes from manually aggregating and sharing data. Instead, with unified real-time data, everyone has role-relevant access to the information they need—and peace of mind that it's data they can trust.

56%

of HR leaders say their HR technology solutions and strategy do not match their current and future business needs⁵

75%

of HR technology leaders expect their technology landscape in 2025 to be consolidated around a core cloud HCM suite⁶



Even as we expand our Workday footprint, our data stays centralized. What's more, our global HR service centers know Workday and understand the user experience so they can easily support employees.

Ashley Kruse, Global HRIS Technology Manager, 3M Company

2. Total workforce visibility.

HR is increasingly asked to assume a more strategic role, but it's difficult—if not impossible—to understand your people, uncover talent gaps, and plan your future workforce if your talent visibility is limited and fragmented.

A future-ready HCM platform opens the aperture on your total talent landscape, enabling HR to see the interdependencies and uncover amplified insights that would be obscured by a patchwork of disparate systems.

The best HCM platforms even make it easy to extend your workforce visibility beyond the usual boundary of employment to contingent workers that companies are increasingly relying on for in-demand skills.

84%

of HR leaders report that inclusively leading an expanding workforce, including those inside and outside the organization, is important or very important to their organization's success⁷

9 to 11 HR tech systems and 30 HR system integrations are the norm at a large organization⁸

3. Intelligent skills foundation.

As more and more organizations look to reinvent the way they operate, redefine roles, and reimagine work, they're shifting away from focusing on tightly constrained jobs to focusing on the skills required to do the work itself. But while organizations are awash in skills data—from recruiting applications and learning solutions to skills assessments and labor market data—they struggle to integrate that data and draw connections between related skills.

A true-cloud platform can synthesize structured and unstructured data alike, breaking down components of what makes up a skill, connecting those components in relation to other skills, and relating those skills to other categories. The result: a rich, holistic understanding of your workforce that can help ensure every action HR takes helps move the organization in the right direction.



Workday machine learning is a fascinating technology that enables us to do things that in the past we could only have dreamed of. It's supporting the identification of talent and the identification of skills gaps within the organization. Being able to use a system and a technology that can source and scout across the entire organization to see the talent we have and help us support in accelerating it makes the biggest difference for us.

Global Head of Talent, AstraZeneca



84% of CHROs say they're increasing investments in skills-based talent approaches⁹



More than 2,000 Workday customers use Workday Skills Cloud

From planning to retention: exploring core workforce processes.

Unified data, skills, and workforce visibility are just three ways Workday delivers a future-ready foundation. For smaller, high-growth enterprises, various Workday products can work in harmony to solve unique challenges, even for companies with modest resources.

In the following sections, we'll walk you through the significant workforce processes and workloads, with special care given to how you can optimize these crucial operations and create lasting organizational change that helps boost the bottom line.



Employee lifecycle processes.

Plan to hire.

Manufacturing organizations know that remaining competitive means investing more time and effort into engaging and retaining top talent. To do so, many firms are setting up a data-driven plan-to-hire process that offers the insights necessary to plan for future needs, recruit the right individuals, and successfully onboard and engage employees.

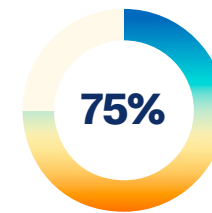
In manufacturing, this often includes significant planning for high-volume frontline worker recruiting, hiring, and onboarding. With manufacturers reliant on various types of workers, their systems need to bring the flexibility and scalability to handle all sorts of needs—and quickly.

Several key factors enable manufacturers to meet their time-sensitive resource demands:

- Identifying and cultivating internal talent more proactively and smoothly, helping to develop tomorrow's skills, fill emerging roles, support internal mobility, and prime your leadership pipeline
- Flex at the speed of the market to fill short-term resource gaps by strategically leveraging contingent workers, executing efficient mass hires, or temporarily reassigning internal talent
- Hire to add new employees with the right skills when it most makes sense for the enterprise
- Augment repetitive, routine tasks and make strategic use of AI to maximize the value of your human talent

Traditionally, this kind of plan-to-hire framework is out of reach because each phase would have to be managed by different teams working from different frameworks, tools, reports, and data. That's where a true-cloud HCM platform comes in: it obliterates the silos that have historically made HR take a back seat to finance in the planning process. Instead, HR can also take the wheel—from modeling and optimizing grow, flex, and hiring plans; to using analytics to identify and address the root causes of recruitment issues; to supercharging engagement across hiring teams; and so much more.

With the right technology foundation, data, and processes, your teams can continuously plan, execute, and analyze. As a result, you can evolve your plan-to-hire processes while aligning with your company's growth strategies. As you finalize those plans, talent acquisition teams can proactively focus on recruiting and retaining top talent. All the while, your organization can deliver an engaging onboarding experience that not only welcomes new hires but also identifies key connections, people to meet, and recommended learning so they can hit the ground running on day one.



of recruiting professionals predict that skills-first hiring will be a priority for their company in the near future¹⁰

Plan to hire: five key steps.

Steps	How to Get It Right	Questions to Ask
1 Create and optimize holistic workforce plans.	Hiring plans shouldn't happen in a vacuum. You need unified data that spans HR, finance, and operations, as well as contingent talent pools, to understand and analyze the full upstream and downstream impacts of grow, flex, and hire strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the traditional point of control and accountability for workforce planning? Is it where it should be? • Which stakeholders stand to benefit from modernized workforce planning? How can they be invited and assisted now?
2 Deliver candidates a consistent, engaging experience.	Delivering a great experience to internal and external candidates helps keep people engaged and improves time to productivity for new hires. It's also essential to support internal candidates with visibility into open positions and contextual, personalized insights into the skills needed to make a move.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What message is your digital experience unintentionally sending to prospective talent? • What are the most significant complaints or needs among existing talent wanting to progress within the company?
3 Amplify collaboration and communication across hiring teams.	Involve recruiters, hiring managers, and other key stakeholders early in the process and replace time-consuming email exchanges with real-time, cloud-based collaboration. Empower everyone at your organization to build the candidate pipeline by connecting with referrals and current and prospective applicants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many hiring processes are delayed because of disjointed communication or collaboration tools? • Are some hiring teams experiencing more challenges than others? Why?
4 Leverage automation to supercharge the process.	Further simplify mass hiring and rapid scaling by reducing your time to fill, improving time to productivity, and eliminating gaps in your recruiting process while staying aligned with hiring regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you relying too much on home-grown processes and work-arounds? What are their effects? • What are your most significant barriers to scaling to meet demand and opportunity?
5 Empower workers to hit the ground running.	Provide more than just tasks to new employees by leveraging welcome videos, training content, and a superior onboarding experience. Reinforce your organizational values and mission as you provide new hires with the tools, resources, and global connections to get started.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your new employees gain energy and purpose from your onboarding—or are they just getting fatigued by it? • Are you introducing your culture and organizational values by showing or just telling?

How Workday can help.

A unified platform such as Workday streamlines workforce planning and hiring by integrating full-time and contingent talent management, giving HR leaders full visibility for resource allocation and strategic hiring. Advanced Workday tools enable dynamic workforce planning and hiring models across even the most complex organizations. With talent optimization features, Workday connects employees to opportunities based on the skills they have or want to develop and supports hiring managers to recruit and onboard needed contingent labor.

Hire to pay.

Often, the road from getting hired to getting paid requires pages of checklists, a patchwork of paperwork, and painstaking patience with multiple digital systems that might or might not play well with each other.

For most manufacturers, this old reality is simply too cumbersome and risky. Why? When payroll and HR use separate systems, it can be a challenge for payroll to keep up with employee changes and often requires additional data reconciliation to avoid costly errors. This is compounded by the fact that so many manufacturers operate multinationally with different workforces, markets, and regulatory environments.

All of this affects not just the financials but also the employee experience—sometimes before people have even clocked their first hour with the company.

Pay setup, onboarding, and compliance processes during this important phase are often held up by manual interventions. This slows everything down—especially mass onboarding during times of rapid scaling up, which manufacturing companies frequently face. It can also put organizations at risk of reporting on incomplete data and acting on inaccurate financial and labor cost analyses.

Additionally, trying to maintain compliance while managing multiple systems opens the door to problems stemming from the various global rules and regulations that govern human resources and employment laws. Whether it's staying up-to-date on tax reforms, employment scheduling laws, or statutory regulations, the costs associated with penalties and interest for noncompliance can significantly impact the financial health and reputation of your organization.

You can increase your organization's health by providing employees with best-in-class technology with intuitive user experiences. Consolidating data from disparate sources into a unified, flexible, and scalable platform can revamp the traditional hire-to-pay process in ways that can help your entire workforce succeed while making HR a more strategic partner to the business.

According to an analysis by EY, the average company has **only an 80% payroll accuracy rate** and makes 15 corrections per pay period¹¹

\$78,700

The average annual cost per 1,000 employees that companies lose to missing or incorrect time punches¹²



Hire to pay: five key steps.

Steps	How to Get It Right	Questions to Ask
1 Treat configurability as table stakes.	Role-based permissions and high configurability make it easy to adapt your payroll model—from in-house to fully managed and everything in between—without redeployment. Configure accumulations, balance periods, and balances to your needs and easily reconfigure as the organization evolves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your current role and permission management introduce compliance vulnerability in addition to process complexity? Who else around the organization benefits from more controlled, simplified permissions and provisioning?
2 Manage globally even while processing locally.	Decentralized processes limit corporate-level visibility and make reporting more onerous. To avoid such drawbacks, establish a unified view into global labor spend, and opt for a platform that's able to seamlessly and securely share payroll data with local processors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is your leadership making globally impactful decisions based on globally informed data? What information silos are most consequential to your highest-level strategy and decisions?
3 Identify the metrics that matter.	Tracking key payroll performance metrics, such as error rates, percentage of off-cycle payments, and direct deposit utilization, enables payroll teams to monitor the business impact of their efforts and support business initiatives, such as workforce optimization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well do you understand payroll performance today? What's lacking? If payroll teams are expected to adhere to a strategy, do they have all the information they need to succeed?
4 Take the complexity out of compliance.	Regulatory changes around the world are becoming more complex, demanding, and difficult to comply with. Invest in a unified workforce and pay platform that supports regulatory changes and legal updates across all relevant worker dimensions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance issues will accelerate in the near future. Do you feel ready? What would your legal team(s) urge you to prioritize in a new technology deployment?
5 Empower employees with flexible options and intuitive tools.	An intuitive, mobile-first user experience increases employee self-sufficiency and nurtures trust. Meanwhile, unified data across the employee journey lets manufacturers satisfy workers' interest in pay on-demand and other emerging options—without increasing compliance risks and complication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you meeting employees where they are by providing mobile-first tools that they want to use? How open are you to pay on-demand? Would better technology make you more open?

How Workday can help.

A unified platform helps you connect talent and workforce operations, enabling accurate, timely, and compliant payroll while meeting evolving workforce expectations. Workday seamlessly integrates payroll functions with other HCM capabilities to give you a comprehensive workforce view. From an employee perspective, integrated features provide a complete end-to-end user experience that is streamlined and adaptable for diverse situations.



We rely on a partner like Workday who can quickly help us evolve to continue our passion to improve employee experience.

Scott White

SVP, Global People Operations
Levi Strauss & Co.

Develop to perform.

In today's workforce management conversations, promises are everywhere. Results, not so much.

We know that employees who are more engaged and cared for help the organization achieve its goals and strategic business initiatives. This is why manufacturers are looking for innovative ways to compensate workers as well as better manage goals and performance, track and develop skills, promote learning, and better prepare future successors within the organization.

An engaging develop-to-perform process, therefore, must provide insights and flexibility to prepare talent for the future and adapt to new strategic business initiatives.

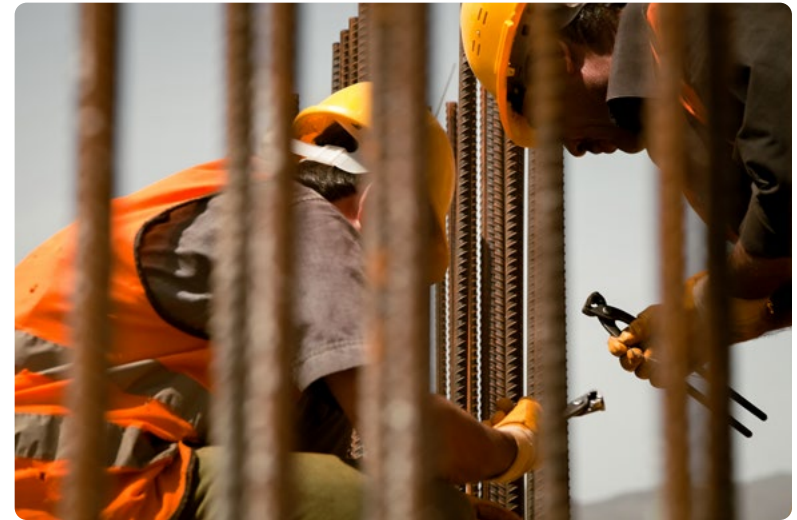
Workday does this, in part, by introducing career pathways that enable employees to take control and responsibility for their career journeys—often turning a “job” mindset into a “career” mindset within the organization. By proactively empowering your internal workforce, you not only help build retention and a succession pipeline but also fulfill the workers' need to feel that the organization values their contribution. This is especially impactful in manufacturing, where many tradespeople and certified experts are so valuable.

A develop-to-perform process that encourages feedback, fosters connections, enables continuous performance and development, and reflects your corporate culture can help meet the changing expectations of your workforce. One of the top reasons employees cite for leaving their job is a lack of career development or advancement, so a more innovative approach can give your organization an edge.¹³



We needed HR business partners to work together cohesively and bring about a new employee experience that was more efficient, simpler, and easier for everybody.

Yeelin Chong, Head of HR Digital Solutions, Air Liquide



9 in 10

organizations expect to face a meaningful skills gap in the coming years¹⁴



of employees say they have skills that aren't clear from their qualifications, job history, or job titles, and **30% say** they've missed out on opportunities because they don't know the right people¹⁵

Employees stay almost 2x as long at organizations that are highly committed to internal mobility,¹⁶ while 77% of companies have lost talent due to a lack of career development opportunities¹⁷

Develop to perform: five key steps.

Steps	How to Get It Right	Questions to Ask
1 Get a comprehensive view of talent.	Rely on accurate and complete talent data, including a universal skills ontology, to gain visibility into workforce skills gaps, career interests, and ambitions so you can better understand where to recruit or develop talent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you developed a unified, reliable skills language across the organization? • Do you hear, directly or indirectly, that your employees are sometimes restless and waiting for skills development?
2 Define your performance and recognition strategy.	Continuous performance conversations—whether through anytime feedback, regular check-in conversations, or performance reviews—provide timely and meaningful feedback to employees while simultaneously fostering learning and career growth opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your current employees have ways to communicate their ambitions and curiosities outside of yearly reviews? • Have you moved beyond the era of “the big review” each year and into a more conversational way of providing feedback and growth?
3 Develop a culture of connection and continuous learning.	Personalized learning paths and programs that deepen and expand a worker’s expertise can drive growth and engagement. When you promote opportunities for collaboration on cross-functional teams, internal projects, flex teams, or stretch assignments, your workers feel more connected, experience a higher level of engagement, and gain valuable knowledge and skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your employees embrace the expectation of continual growth and development? • Are you seizing every opportunity for cross-team assistance or collaboration, or do opportunities go missed—or unseen in the first place?
4 Focus on skills depth and development.	Encourage skills-based decisions about whether to develop internal talent or focus recruitment efforts externally. Organizations can highlight top skills, perform gap analyses, and optimize their talent by leveraging AI to identify workers and recommend candidates whose skills are best suited to a strategic business objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your teams decide whether to hire internally or externally? Is there an objective, consistent process in place? • How well do you understand your company’s top skills and competitive talent advantages against competitors?
5 Gain insights and innovation to help plan for the future.	Augmented analytics and AI can provide leaders with a lens on the most critical trends in their workforce. By understanding the drivers of such trends, HR teams can craft stronger talent decisions and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your hiring more proactive or reactive? • How will you know when your skills goals have been achieved?

How Workday can help.

A unified platform with embedded AI empowers organizations to unlock potential at scale by fostering growth, development, and performance. Workday provides employees with tools to build career paths, connect with mentors, and gain visibility into opportunities. Managers can use Workday to develop teams more effectively and tailor their approach to guide specific employees through key career moments. Organizationally, the company benefits from improved workforce agility, team optimization, and aligning available talent with strategic goals.

Reward to retain.

The current economic climate finds employees facing significant financial burdens. At the same time, profound shifts are underway in how, when, and where people work. Today's workforces are increasingly composed of both on-staff employees and contingent and freelance talent. In manufacturing, this is compounded by the need for rapid scaling, hiring, and onboarding according to unforgiving market fluctuations.

This requires new ways of thinking about rewards and retention—evolving from a static, salary-centric philosophy to a more dynamic, personalized approach that prioritizes flexible scheduling, effective time management, two-way communication between workers and HR, and other advances so all workers can feel more engaged, motivated, and fulfilled.

The rising urgency to modernize the reward-to-retain process is driven by a number of factors and challenges including:

- Changing expectations of a global, multigenerational workforce that places a premium on transparency, flexibility, and a personalized rewards experience
- Boundaryless ways of working that redefine how, where, and by whom work gets done
- Changing legislative and regulatory requirements to drive pay equity and transparency
- A new urgency to maximize the impact of investments while managing costs

Developing an up-to-date, personalized reward-to-retain experience demands a better understanding of individual worker preferences, a variety of choices to support diverse employee populations, and flexibility to adapt programs to keep up with changing workforce needs.

Pay equity and pay-for-performance strategies have been debated for years, but changing employee expectations for transparency and flexibility around rewards are creating a different dialogue today. Fewer than one-third of employees believe their pay is fair and just 34% believe their pay is equitable, a recent Gartner survey found.¹⁸ Whether those perceptions reflect reality does little to blunt their impact: the Gartner research also shows that employees who believe their pay is inequitable have a 15% lower intent to stay with their employer and are 13% less engaged at work.

For many manufacturers, the goal is to educate and empower workers with more visibility into the process so they feel valued and fairly rewarded for their contributions. The comprehensive reward-to-retain program must go far beyond traditional compensation and benefits packages, encompassing a richer array of potential rewards that include flexible work environments, personal growth opportunities, career development, and well-being programs to support the whole worker.

73%

of organizations report that growing regulatory requirements are encouraging communication about increased levels of pay¹⁹



Only **2 in 5 organizations** report that they're effective at educating managers on pay and pay equity issues²⁰

Reward to retain: five key steps.

Steps	How to Get It Right	Questions to Ask
1 Create a system for alignment and flexibility.	The most fundamental employee rewards are control and trust. Start with a unified platform that gives you a complete and accurate view of your workforce, schedules, and total rewards programs. Then you can easily manage business events while maximizing employee ownership and choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there workloads that employees cannot take care of by themselves due to the limitations of your systems? • What self-service capabilities are employees asking for most? Is anyone listening?
2 Configure, reward, repeat.	Look for a configurable platform that allows you to build a flexible rewards program. This enables you to capture individual value across broader demographics and career-stage segments, giving you greater insight into workers' contributions and driving engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has your company deployed a rewards program before? What did you learn from it? • How certain are you that you're seeing and supporting all the value your employees bring?
3 Reward top performers.	Empower your team with the information it needs to invest in rewards to retain your high performers. With a unified data experience, you can blend your performance and compensation data in easily accessible reports, identify your top performers, and reward appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you quantify high performance? How would you like to? • Do your employees clearly understand the company incentive packages or programs in place?
4 Audit proactively.	Minimize risk by using analytics to identify workers who may be noncompliant with mandatory rewards. Choose a platform that generates proactive alerts to help reduce the need for more manual and resource-intensive auditing processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which audit processes would be most helpful to automate? • Are compliance and rewards handled proactively or reactively in your company?
5 Gain insight into diversity and pay equity.	Choosing a platform that offers customizable dashboards, reports, and processes designed to identify and mitigate issues around diversity and inclusion helps ensure that all employees are assessed and rewarded fairly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you ensuring fairness across compensation and rewards? • Regardless of the processes in place, do your employees really feel they are treated fairly?

How Workday can help.

A unified platform enables organizations to craft competitive compensation packages that attract and retain top talent while fostering engagement and equity. Advanced Workday tools help identify and address pay gaps, support pay-for-performance practices, and equip managers with contextual data to make informed decisions. From an employee perspective, the integration of external data with Workday data improves transparency and trust by helping employees see the complete picture of their total rewards.

Right this way.

Workday is the future-ready platform that HR leaders in manufacturing need. Built as one platform with a single source for data, a unified user experience, and embedded AI, it spans the entire employee journey. It also empowers partners across the business, from IT to operations—freeing them of their own burdens and enhancing cross-departmental collaboration. The adaptable structure of Workday is built to evolve at the pace of both rapid technology advancements and dynamic business needs.

We'd love to help you on your journey to modern workforce processes. To explore how Workday Human Capital Management can help your organization, visit: workday.com/manufacturing or contact us at workday.com/contact.



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