Styling efficient innovations for employees

Mary Tyrone
Senior HR director

Misti Cabrales
HR generalist

Quick facts

Company: Conair Corporation

Industry: Consumer Goods

Headquarters: East Windsor, New Jersey

Employees: 2,000

Award: ADP® Meeting of the Minds 2021 Client Award for People at Work

Conair Corporation began in 1959 as a small hair appliance and hair care company. Today, Conair is one of the largest and most diversified consumer corporations worldwide. It is a global leader in manufacturing and distribution of personal care, health and beauty products, premium kitchen electrics, tools and cookware and has offices around the world.

Learn more about Conair Corporation at conair.com

Meet the senior HR director and HR generalist

Mary: I'm Mary Tyrone and I'm the senior HR director for Conair Corporation. I have a dual role; I am the lead HR person for the employee population at a location based in New Jersey, and I also play the role of the HR process and technology expert at the company. It's my job to make sure there's consistency on the policy side and bring the technology to our employee base in the hopes of making all our jobs more efficient. We've been family owned for most of our 60-year history, and it's still a family-type environment. We have employees with very long service, people who have grown up here, who have known the family that owns us for many, many years. We are a changing culture right now, bringing in things like technology and more of an employee focus, which is something new to the organization. We're all working toward that new common goal.

Misti: I started at Conair about two and a half years ago, and I've been in HR for 10 years before coming aboard here. It's exciting to be part of a company with such a big name and that really owns the industry of beauty and hair products. One of the things I like most about the culture of Conair is the people. We have lots of generations of family members. We're like a big community, like a family. It's very normal to see people who have 40 years of service here. We even have some instances where someone's father worked here and retired, and then they came onboard because they saw their father enjoy this great career at Conair.

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Time for change

Mary: Over the last few years, we've had a major change in how our human resources department looked within the organization. We brought our very first CHRO on board in 2019 and I came in shortly after that. Our main focus was to try to bring to life human resources, make it a bit more of a modern space with technology and consistency that hadn't really existed before. Each location operated a little differently, and we found that our employees were actually looking for consistency. We really put a lot of stake in moving the company forward in the HR space.

Misti: In our previous systems, we had very little functionality to be able to run reports to look at labor costs and analyze how many people were scheduled to be off/how many people we needed to schedule. By going digital, we opened this whole new world of analytics that we can transfer and be able to pull for our leaders. Now they can look at the hours worked and compare that to the business output and make sure they're running an effective business that still makes sense and is still profitable. We didn't have those reports before.

Losing the paper to gain efficiencies

Mary: When I joined Conair just a couple of years ago, we were still very manually focused — lots and lots of paper, lots of cumbersome processes. Everything was done at an HR level, as opposed to giving employees ownership of their own data and their own destiny. Over the last couple of years, we've been trying to make that whole piece more efficient and even a bit greener without paper.

One of the first things we tried to do when starting this technology journey with Conair was to take a look at the redundancy of paper. We are great at keeping documentation, so that was one of the first areas we looked at. Do we still need to take this piece of paper, which is a printout of the email that was sent, and put it in a file somewhere? We started small then moved more and more of what had been paper into digital storage. We are moving continually toward online personnel files, online processing and onboarding so all that paperwork isn't in a file somewhere in somebody's desk.

Another paper-heavy area we looked at was onboarding. My onboarding process when I started with Conair was on paper. Reams and reams of paper were sent to me to read and to fill out. And then, someone else had the pleasure of having to input all that data into the system we were using. Now, we have an onboarding technology function, which allows a lot of that paperwork to be done even before the employee starts. They're able to read our policies and handbooks and complete many of their documents online. By allowing them to learn about the company and their job before they actually walk into the organization for the first time makes it a much smoother transition.
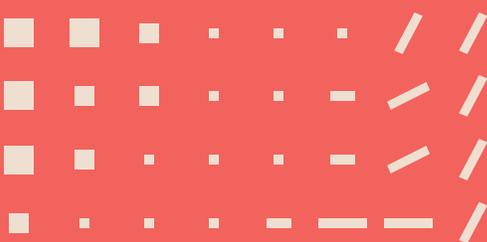
Misti: When I started at Conair, we still hadn't made these upgrades to a digital process. The first day I came in, I had a stack of new hire paperwork. It was paper, upon paper, upon paper for me to sign. It was a huge, manual, paper process. I remember being shocked because I thought, "Wow, Conair is a very innovative company, and we're still behind the times with all this paper."

Now that we've started working through some of these digital improvements, we've really improved the onboarding experience.

Mary: When there's a lot of paper involved and a lot of manual input, it does take up a lot of the HR team's time. As we've moved toward a digitalized HR functionality, it's really allowed us to be more of that business partner and shift attention to employee engagement. Now instead of pushing paper, we can be more visible in the HR space, more visible in our distribution centers, on the floor, talking to employees and working with our business partners on more strategic goals.

Consistency and accuracy are key

Mary: I think the benefit of the changes we have put in place is in the consistency of how processes are now completed. In our performance management system, employees know at any time of year, they can see what their goals are. They can record how they're doing on those goals, and their manager can see the goals. They can understand what the competencies are in the organization and examples of what demonstrating those competencies mean. I think it's a more easily visualized idea of how the employee can interact within their own function, to the greater good of the company.

Misti: ADP has really helped us with accuracy. You never want to mess with somebody's pay. You always want to make sure that's accurate. You always want to make sure their time off is accurate. And I think digitizing and upgrading our systems has improved that. The more transactions you do, the more room there is for error. ADP has helped us close the gap between natural errors from manual processes. They're easier to find and catch before it's too late. With the new functionalities of the system, we can see things like a missing day that should have been put in as PTO. We didn't always catch those things before. Nobody wants to get shorted on their pay, and ADP has really helped us improve in those areas.

"We've gotten a lot of great feedback from the employees as well. They know when their PTO requests have been approved because they can see it. It's very transparent and open. They're not waiting for their supervisor to get back to them. They've gotten that approval through email, or they can log into their app and see where they stand. Now, they can work their lives around the work schedule."

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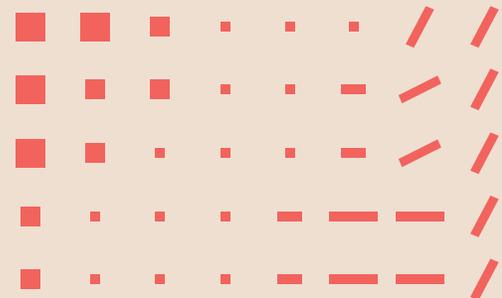
Exploring the possibilities with an ADP partnership

Mary: Conair has been an ADP partner almost for 15 years now, and during most of that time, it's been in the payroll space. Over the last few years, we've been working with the entire ADP team to take the partnership we have in payroll and broaden it into other functionalities within the HCM space. We've worked with them to bring in performance management for our entire population and have benefits open enrollment done online, as it had been traditionally paper-based. We've also tremendously upgraded our time management system, so now not only do the managers see the time, but an employee can also review what they've scanned themselves in for and what vacation they asked for.

With ADP's help, we've really been able to think more broadly about the HR space and bounce ideas off them about how we put these plans and processes in place without overwhelming our workforce. The last thing we want to do is bring in hundreds of pieces of new functionality when we can absorb one or two at a time. It's been extremely helpful working with ADP on a roadmap to make it happen.

We would not have been successful in this journey without our ADP partners. Tabitha and Diane have been amazing. In our benefits space, we've had a number of really good partners who helped us get open enrollment up and running. On the time side and payroll side, we've got great partners who have been able to listen to us, offer suggestions how to move us forward and presented us with some best practices. They've been an amazing sounding board during this entire journey as we move forward in this space.

Misti: We have had a lot of interactions with the ADP team. Through each initiative and any rollout that we've had, they were right there, supporting us with whatever we needed. Anytime we wanted to better understand the functionality or what we needed to do or what it was going to look like, they were there to answer those questions. We just rolled out a new time and attendance system, and I really appreciated the fact ADP found it so important to make sure people who were doing the day-to-day transactions were involved in building our attendance system.

Technology leads the way to benefits

Mary: With our new ADP technology, we did see a couple of really quick benefits, especially in the benefits space where we were used to processing open enrollment paperwork. Previously, people would fill out the paper form, hand it off to their HR person and then somebody on the HR team would have to input the data and then explain to the person what they actually picked. Now, all that information is at an employee's fingertips and they can understand their coverage, what they've chosen, who's eligible and who their dependents are. From a day-to-day activity perspective, our benefits team especially has seen a big change in the types of questions they're now being asked.
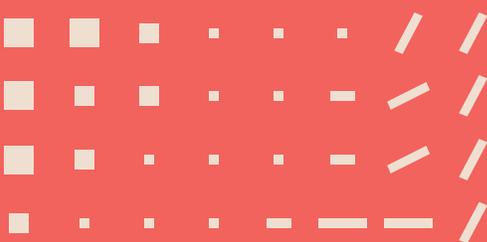
On the HR side, we see people are taking ownership of their own data and they are more comfortable with inputting their own confidential information, rather than having to write it down and hand it off to an HR person. We are not seeing as much paper pushing rather, our day-to-day functions are moving into a partnership with our employee base around more things like communication and change management.

Misti: ADP has saved us so much time. We no longer have to fill out all this paperwork and do all this printing for audits. This system and these upgrades have really ensured accuracy in a timely manner. It's less steps in the process, which has improved our time spent. We've gotten time back, which is so valuable because we need to spend most of our time supporting the business and the business initiatives. That's where our time needs to go.

Enhanced employee functionality

Mary: Our employees now have a place where they can more readily see and understand everything that's going on in their world around performance, payroll, benefits and compensation. It's a one-stop shop, they don't have to call somebody and say, "Hey, can you help me? Can you show me? Can you tell me? Can you print out this piece of information that I need?" It's really at their fingertips. And I think they also appreciate the ability to look at that any time they want, even if it's on the weekend or at night to get the answers they need. Our employees, especially in our distribution centers, love the mobile app. We have found that they do the majority of their work on there. Our hourly folks on the floor really find the ease of the mobile app to be a much better option for them than to try to find a computer.

Misti: Requesting PTO was a big process change for us when we transitioned into digital. Before, we had these paper PTO slips and they were a carbon copy. Any time an employee needed to request time off, they would need to get one of those slips. It was detrimental if we ran out and we were waiting on an order. Sometimes, those slips would get lost. Now, giving people the ability to request time off through the system allows them to be more proactive and be good business partners by planning their time well in advance so our managers can run an effective business.

We've gotten a lot of great feedback from the employees as well. They know when their PTO requests have been approved because they can see it. It's very transparent and open. They're not waiting for their supervisor to get back to them. They've gotten that approval through email, or they can log into their app and see where they stand. Now, they can work their lives around the work schedule.

Advice to those looking to digitize

Mary: If someone is on the fence right now about this digital journey, I would say go for it. Ultimately, you and your company will be better off for digitalizing the process and giving the employees ownership of their own data, especially in this world where confidentiality of sensitive data is critical. I believe that most employees are happier knowing they have the control over that information for themselves.

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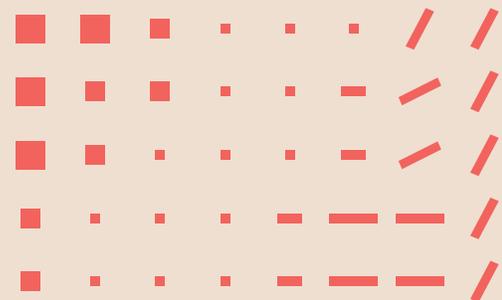
Misti: Don't delay. Think outside the box and just go for it. I think the scariest part is doing something that you're not used to, but once you move forward and you see the ease, and the time it gives back to you and your department to focus on the more important things, it sells itself. I mean, there's nothing better than getting that time back. Now we are able to put our focus on bigger, better initiatives that are going to take us to the next level and really elevate our teams and the company.

Looking forward

Mary: We want to continue to digitalize the HR process and there are several areas that I see us moving into to do that. One of the most logical things to do is to build on employee self-service and add more manager self-service functionality into the system. That's probably one of our top priorities. We're also looking at things in the employee engagement space and have just started those conversations with ADP as to how they can support us in that rollout.

Additionally, the talent space is another area where we see potential, and that can be anything from learning to succession planning. Those are things that need to be on Conair's radar for the future. In this last year with COVID, especially in our Northeast locations, we've all been home-based. Having had the ability to do a lot of the work online now, as opposed to somebody having to stop by HR and pick up a piece of paper to complete, really saved us. It was serendipitous that we had started moving in this direction. We had just rolled out a lot of the initiatives through ADP that allowed us to do many of our processes online, which was helpful because now employees did not have to come to their HR departments and ask for that piece of paper.

Misti: Going digital with MyADP and opening up employee self-service is going to give us the opportunity to spend that time on bigger initiatives, like training and process improvements, employee engagement, mentorship, career growth, creating positions, analyzing better ways to become more efficient and having a better return on investment when it comes to productivity. Going digital has helped our managers by giving them better analytics they can pull to see how much their labor is costing and whether scheduling that overtime is going to cross reference and still bring value. We didn't have access to the reporting and all of those things we have now by going digital.

Winning the People at Work award

Mary: I think the journey so far has really been worth it. Our employee groups are happier now that they can see a lot of their information in front of them and that they have the ability to make those changes themselves. They can connect all the dots between their own performance and what the company expects of them. I think our HR teams find it to be worth it because of the reduction in the amount of paperwork and manual processing they have to do. Winning the ADP People at Work award this year is a validation for all of us, for the tough job that we undertook over the last couple of years. It's always nice to have people recognize that you've done a good job and having this additional validation has just been the icing on the cake.