

How a Global Job Architecture Works at a Global Manufacturing Company

Best HRM Solutions in V4 Countries project

Contents

1. What This Case Is About	2
2. Context.....	2
3. From Where to Where?	2
3.1. <i>The Starting Point.....</i>	<i>2</i>
3.2. <i>The Background to Change.....</i>	<i>3</i>
3.3. <i>The Solution in One Sentence.....</i>	<i>3</i>
4. The Pillars of the Global Job Architecture	3
4.1. <i>The Job Catalogue – The Foundation of a Common Language.....</i>	<i>3</i>
4.2. <i>The Grade System – A Common Measure of Levels.....</i>	<i>4</i>
4.3. <i>Pay Ranges – Global Logic, Local Reality</i>	<i>4</i>
4.4. <i>HRIS Integration – Where Everything Connects.....</i>	<i>4</i>
4.5. <i>Pay Transparency and Pay Equity – Where the System Stands Now</i>	<i>5</i>
5. How It Was Built – The Story Behind the System	5
6. Results and Evidence – What Actually Moved.....	6
7. What Can We Learn as HR Leaders of Another Company?	6
8. If You Were to Adopt Something from This Good Practice... ..	7
<i>Minimum viable version (you could start tomorrow).....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>If you were starting now: 3 steps.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Minimum conditions.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>What not to overcomplicate.....</i>	<i>8</i>
Summary: What Makes a Successful Global Job Architecture.....	8

1. What This Case Is About

A globally unified, data-driven job catalogue system at a publicly listed American packaging manufacturer that creates a common language for managing positions, pay ranges and expectations across every region of the world. The essence of the system:

- a globally consistent job catalogue that organises every job profile with codes, descriptions and grade levels,
- a market-benchmarked pay range structure adapted to local conditions country by country,
- and the digital HR system integration that ties it all together, automating processes from recruitment through to appointment.

2. Context

We step into the HR operations of a global packaging manufacturer operating across multiple regions: several countries, two manufacturing profiles, one regional HR leadership structure – and a system that runs consistently from the Americas through Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to the Middle East. The organization operates production units manufacturing both steel and plastic packaging and applies a structured grade system ranging from 1 to 22, supported by a detailed job catalogue and an integrated HRIS solution. In Hungary, the company runs two production sites employing several dozen employees each.

The good practice was documented with a HR Director for the eastern and south-eastern EMEA region. The interview provided insight into how such a system can operate with a globally unified framework while remaining adaptable to local labour market realities.

The central question is simple: how can a job architecture be designed so that it does not generate administrative burden but supports decision-making—from recruitment through compensation to succession planning? The case shows how job content and pay can be connected through a shared global logic while still allowing local application. In this way, the system has been operating stably for years while remaining continuously fine-tunable—particularly in light of strengthening EU pay transparency requirements.

3. From Where to Where?

3.1. The Starting Point

A new HR leader joining an organization typically finds the picture common to most global companies: different names for the same function across business units, varying expectation levels, and pay decisions without a consistent underlying logic. In such a system, comparison is nearly impossible: what is the difference between a senior position in Hungary and in Greece? What is a fair salary? Who is next in line for promotion?

The problem is not unique: in many multinationals, the name, content and pay of positions vary by region – even by entity – according to separate logics, making transparency, fair pay and internal talent mobility difficult.

3.2. *The Background to Change*

The organization decided approximately six to eight years ago to build a globally unified job catalogue system. Several factors drove the decision:

- The increasingly complex global organisation could no longer be managed with local, ad hoc solutions.
- Growing regulatory and employee expectations around pay transparency and pay equity require comparable data.
- Recruitment, appointment and transfer processes were slow and manual without a unified system behind them.

3.3. *The Solution in One Sentence*

Globally unified job catalogue + market-benchmarked, country-adapted pay ranges + digitally integrated HRIS system = a common language and automated HR processes across every region of the world.

4. The Pillars of the Global Job Architecture

4.1. *The Job Catalogue – The Foundation of a Common Language*

The heart of the system is the job catalogue, which organises all job profiles in a hierarchical structure. At the first level sit the major job families – such as HR, IT, Logistics, Finance – within which sub-families provide further breakdown. Within Logistics, for example, Procurement, Transportation and Warehousing each form their own sub-family.

Within each sub-family there are job profiles with unique codes and detailed descriptions. These contain duties and accountabilities, the reporting line and organisational placement, requirements (education, years of experience, language skills), and career paths – distinguishing individual contributor and people manager tracks.

“Without the job catalogue, I think nothing could be operated globally. It is the common language by which everyone knows what a position means, what it pays, and what the expectations are.”

4.2. The Grade System – A Common Measure of Levels

Job profiles are placed within a global grade system running from 1 to 24, of which grades up to 22 are used in Hungary (grade 22 designating the global CEO). Each grade level has associated pay ranges with minimum, midpoint and maximum values.

An important characteristic is that a single grade level can contain several distinct job profiles. For example, grade 8 includes a Plant Manager, a Customer Service Specialist and an administrative HR employee. The same pay range applies to all of them – the range reflects the organisational level, not the individual position.

This approach simplifies the system and ensures comparability, while leaving sufficient flexibility for different functional areas.

4.3. Pay Ranges – Global Logic, Local Reality

The determination of pay ranges is one of the most rigorously managed elements of the system. These are set not by internal company decision, but by the market: the ranges for each grade level are derived from surveys by Hay, Mercer and similar providers. The global compensation team reviews the data annually – the major update typically takes place around May.

Pay ranges differ by country, taking into account local labour market conditions, inflation and legal requirements. This is particularly critical in countries operating in hyperinflationary environments – such as Turkey or Brazil – where normal pay range logic cannot be applied automatically.

The system also contains an internal rule: no one may fall below the minimum of the pay range for their grade, and if someone approaches the top of the range, separate rules apply to further increases – maintaining the long-term sustainability of the system.

4.4. HRIS Integration – Where Everything Connects

The job catalogue is a valuable tool on its own, but its real power comes from integration with the digital HR system (Workday). When an HR manager fills a position, transfers someone or initiates an appointment, they simply select the appropriate job code in the system – and all other data loads automatically: the job description, grade, pay range and requirements.

This not only accelerates processes but also ensures consistency: the offer letter, the notification, the organisational placement – all feed from the job catalogue. In the HR Director's words: the system "takes the work out of daily operations" – the HR professional is not searching and negotiating unnecessarily, but can focus on strategic questions.

4.5. Pay Transparency and Pay Equity – Where the System Stands Now

The job catalogue and grade system create the infrastructure for what the EU Pay Transparency Directive requires: comparable positions, consistent pay ranges, and documented expectations. At the organization, this is not a future task but an ongoing process.

The pay equity project – closing gender pay gaps within the same positions – has been running for two to three years. Not through immediate correction, but through gradual alignment: if a manager suddenly had to give someone a 20% increase for pay equity reasons, it would be a shock to the organisation. The gradual approach is what is sustainable.

Training of the relevant managers is also underway: they need to know how to communicate pay ranges, what questions they must be able to answer, and how to handle the topic of pay fairness with their teams.

5. How It Was Built – The Story Behind the System

1. **Laying the foundations:** The roots of the system go back nearly six to eight years. At that time, the company's leading compensation team – based exclusively in America at the time – decided to build a globally unified job structure. The starting point was the benchmark frameworks offered by market consultants (Hay, Mercer), on top of which the company's own grade and job catalogue system was constructed.
2. **Expanding and refining the catalogue:** Over the years the system went through continuous development. One of the most significant changes was the redesign of the commercial team's profile structure: the previous four positions became sixteen, more accurately reflecting the different sales roles, levels and expectations. This project took nearly two years and involved the Sales Vice President, the Global HR Leader and the compensation team.
3. **Regional rollout:** The V4 countries – Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic – have been part of the company for nearly thirty years, so the system was introduced there gradually and without resistance. In other regions – for example Turkey, Greece or Israel – there was greater lag: systems were used little or not at all. Over the past year, the Regional HR Director implemented comprehensive changes in these countries, introducing job catalogue-based position management and the associated pay range structure.
4. **Technology integration:** With integration into the Workday HRIS system, the job catalogue became an active, living tool. The codes and profiles were entered into the system, and since then every HR transaction – recruitment, appointment, transfer, pay development – originates from it. This reduced not only the administrative burden but also significantly improved data quality.
5. **The arrival of AI:** The past one to two years have brought radical acceleration through the application of AI technologies. The company's 15-person AI team in

America and India works to identify functions – HR, Finance, Procurement – where automation creates the most value. Writing job descriptions, updating profiles, and preparing analyses are now largely AI-assisted. As the HR Director put it: more changed in the last six to twelve months than in the previous three and a half years.

6. Results and Evidence – What Actually Moved

The impact of the system is measurable at multiple levels. The first and most direct result is unified communication: if someone says “grade 14 senior procurement manager”, everyone – in Budapest, Warsaw or Chicago – knows exactly what it means. This was far from self-evident before.

The recruitment and appointment process has accelerated significantly. Where previously a series of discussions was needed to define a position precisely, today the full description, pay range and expectations are ready in a few clicks. This is especially important in cases such as succession planning for the Hungarian Plant Director: in the process coordinated by the HR Director, it was possible to define precisely which grade levels the successor would progress through, what profile they would work in, and what compensation steps would accompany this.

Progress on the pay transparency project is also measurable: the pay equity process is running, manager training has begun, and in the United States – where it is now mandatory to include the pay range in job postings – the company meets the requirement easily, because the infrastructure has been in place for a long time.

Perhaps the most surprising result is what did not happen: in the V4 region there was no resistance, no chaos during the rollout. The gradual, logical build-up and the dedicated team’s background support resulted in the system becoming a natural part of HR work today.

7. What Can We Learn as HR Leaders of Another Company?

Three key lessons from the case:

- A job architecture is not HR administration – it is strategic infrastructure. Without a common grade system and job catalogue, you cannot pay fairly, recruit transparently, or meet pay transparency requirements.
- The power of the system lies in integration. The job catalogue is valuable on its own, but the real impact comes from connecting it to the HRIS: when every HR transaction starts from the same source, it unifies data and accelerates processes.
- It does not work without a dedicated team. Such a system cannot be maintained as a side activity by local HR professionals. A global compensation team is needed that works exclusively on this, continuously updates the data and responds to feedback.

Two typical traps to watch out for:

- Without HRIS integration, the job catalogue is just paper. The real value is created by automation and connectivity.
- If the system is not globally consistent, the common language is lost. Comparability is the foundation of the whole logic – local exceptions cause it to collapse.

Trade-off and surprise: the system is not inflexible – pay ranges and expectations can be adapted locally – but the structure is globally fixed. The surprise: once the framework exists, local HR professionals experience it not as a straitjacket but as liberation – because finally there is something to align to, and the rationale behind decisions is easy to communicate.

8. If You Were to Adopt Something from This Good Practice...

Minimum viable version (you could start tomorrow)

1. **Organise job families:** Group your existing positions into job families and assign levels to them – even in a simple spreadsheet. This alone creates a common language.
2. **Anchor pay ranges to market data:** If you have not done so yet, start looking at market benchmark data for your key positions. One or two consultancy databases (Hay, Mercer, Korn Ferry) will show you where your company stands relative to the market.
3. **Introduce a standard job description template:** Introduce a consistent format: duties, requirements, level, reporting line. This is the foundation on which the grade system and pay ranges can later be built.

If you were starting now: 3 steps

1. **Decide what the system is for:** pay transparency, faster recruitment, succession planning – or all three. The focus determines the sequence of the rollout.
2. **Shift the focus from job titles to content:** The title does not matter; what matters is the level, the accountability and the expectations. A grade system makes these measurable and comparable.
3. **Ensure dedicated background support:** This is either an internal team or a consultant – but someone needs to work exclusively on this. Such a system cannot be maintained in parallel with the daily work of local HR professionals.

Minimum conditions

- Basic HR data must be in order: positions, salaries, headcount – without these, there is nothing to assign grades to.
- Senior leadership buy-in, because the system only works if managers also use and accept it.
- Patience: building and embedding such a system takes 6–8 years – but the first steps pay off within the first months.

What not to overcomplicate

- Do not try to organise all job families at once – start with the critical areas (e.g. manufacturing, sales, HR).
- Do not wait for perfect data before launching – the system refines itself over time; the key is to get started.
- Do not make major restructures every year – stability is just as much a value as freshness.

Summary: What Makes a Successful Global Job Architecture

Element	Details
Timeline	6–8 years of gradual build-up and development
Critical resources	Dedicated compensation team (8–10 people) + external consultants + HRIS integration
Greatest benefit	Global consistency, transparency, automated HR processes, common language
Greatest challenge	Pay range management in hyperinflationary countries, change management, gradual pay equity
Technology support	Workday HRIS + AI tools (radical acceleration in the past 1–2 years)
Success factors	Global leadership commitment, cross-functional collaboration, continuous market benchmarking

“The success of a global job architecture does not depend on what software you use. It depends on whether there is a dedicated team that continuously maintains it, and whether every manager understands the same thing by it. Once that is in place, everything else – pay transparency, recruitment, succession planning – practically takes care of itself.”