Q3 2018
SuccessFactors Review

Employee Central Service Centre
- Stephen Millard, Consultant

We're over halfway through 2018 and in this release, we see SAP pull back a little and work on stability and tweaks rather than lots of new features. But while there's no game-changing functionality in this Employee Central Service Centre (ECSC) release, we do see some notable incremental changes and some important news for the future.

Let's dive straight in with a look at what's new for employees in Ask HR.

Updates in Ask HR

Ask HR is the employee user interface to ECSC and there are several small enhancements to be aware of in this latest release.

Internal Attachments

Within the SAP Hybris Cloud for Customer (C4C) system, that provides the ticket management back end to ECSC, there is functionality for service agents to add file attachments and specify them as not visible to end users. They can do this by selecting "Internal Attachment", rather than "Standard Attachment". This fix is an important update and one which all service agents should be made aware of.

C4C Notes

In addition to internal attachments now being filtered from Ask HR, the 1808 deployment of the Ask HR application will also filter out notes from the Ask HR interactions list. Service agents adding notes in C4C see them in the interactions list, but these shouldn't have been

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making their way through to Ask HR as this is where the agents are supposed to be able to enter information that does not need or should not be shared with the employee. It's good to see this one resolved.

Unfortunately, e-mail interactions (agent to and from the employee) still aren't visible within Ask HR. SAP has had some technical challenges with this issue, but the development team are hopeful we'll see the resolution in the Q4 2018 release.

Closed Tickets

Ask HR now supports employee support tickets with a status of 'closed'. Usually, tickets would end up in a ticket status of 'completed'. Status 'closed' was previously used for historic tickets imported from other systems that would therefore never change. Closed tickets are

effectively set in stone, whereas completed tickets can continue to be worked on should the need arise.

Once a ticket in Ask HR has transitioned to 'Solution Confirmed' (a 'Completed' ticket status), the employee is no longer able to update the ticket in Ask HR. However, an employee could still add additional information to the ticket by e-mailing into the system. If the ticket were instead set to a 'Closed' ticket status, then no update interaction at all should be possible. See *Figure 4.1*.

SAP noted that this was important regarding its impact on Service Level Agreements (SLA), but if a ticket has 'Solution Confirmed' as its status, and an employee updates the ticket by e-mailing in, the status does not change, and so there should be no impact on SLA.
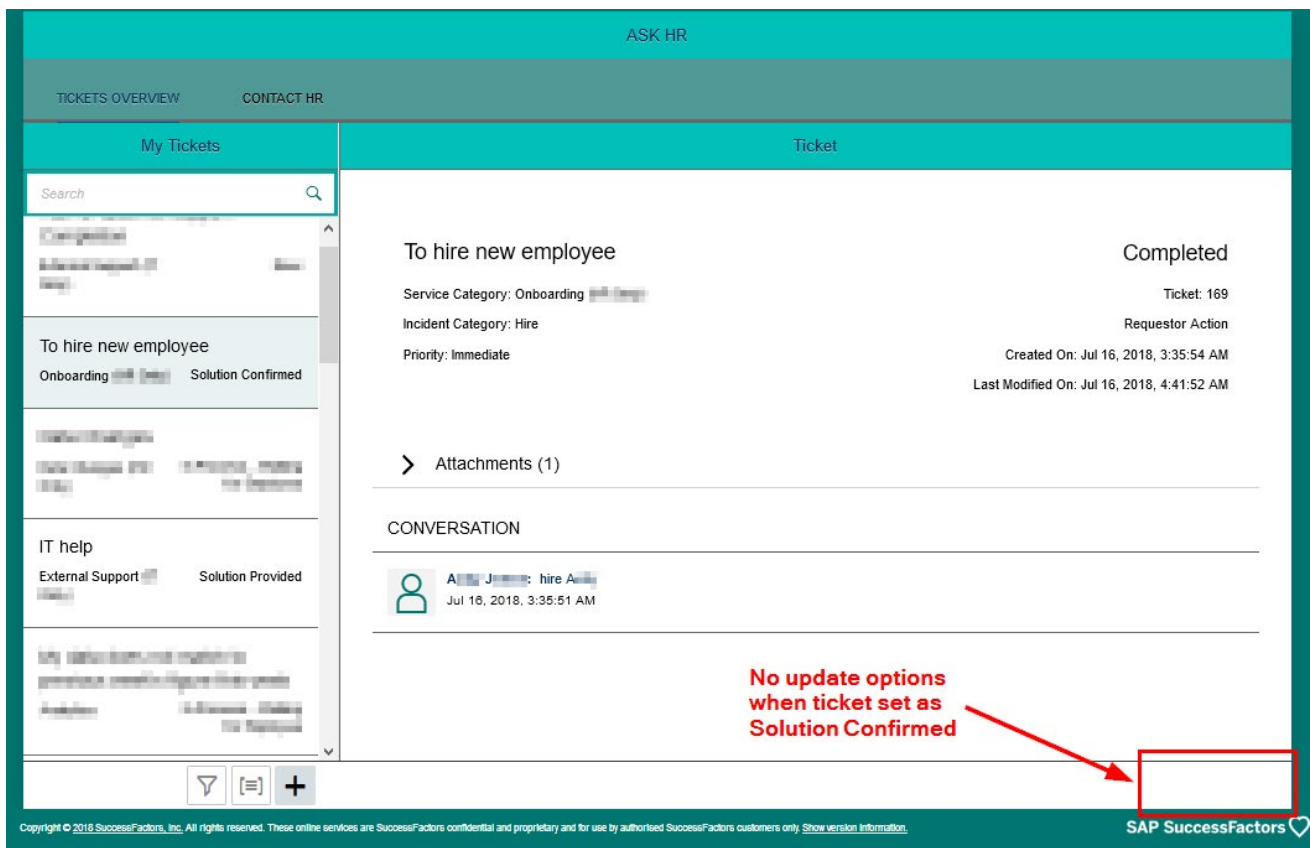

Figure 4.1

While it is nice to have a choice, I don't currently see any reason to recommend using 'Closed' tickets except when bringing in historic ticket data to C4C.

Styling Updates

In Ask HR v1.52, SAP has updated some of the user interface styling to align with the rest of the SuccessFactors suite. Unlike the other updates listed in this section whose functionality is delivered "to" the Ask HR application rather than purely "by" the application, this styling update requires a newer version of the application to be deployed. Currently, I think the effort of updating for existing customers is more than the benefit delivered, and I'd recommend just taking advantage of this later when there's a bigger benefit in updating.

SAP Jam Knowledge Base

For anyone using SAP Jam to provide employee knowledge base functionality to Ask HR, there is now an option to sort results returned by the knowledge base. These include sorting by relevance, by number of views and by likes.
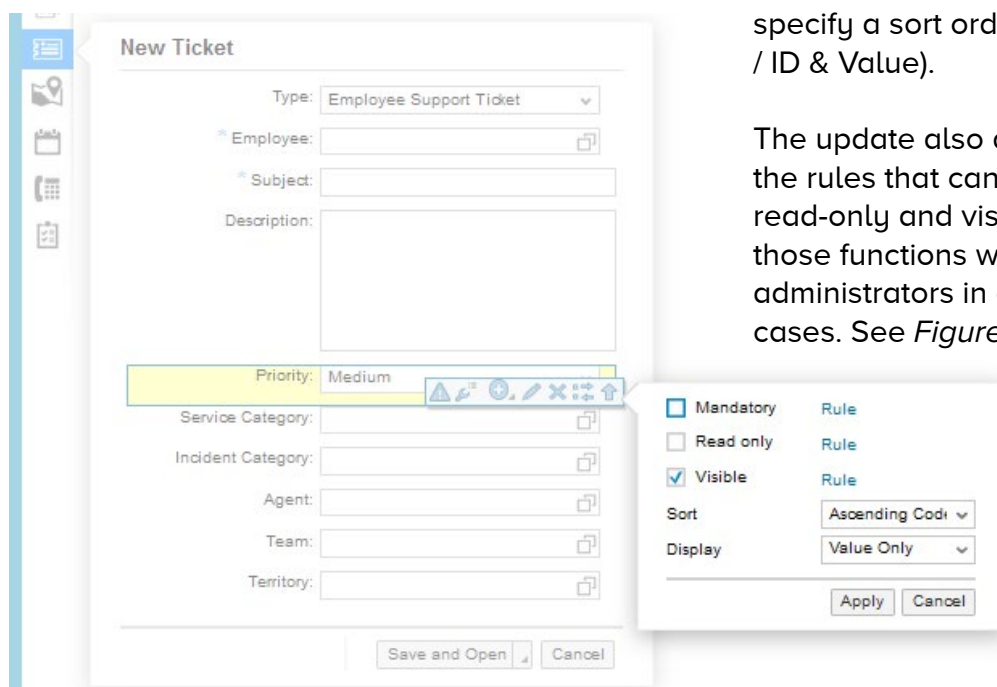
I would expect the default behaviour of the search to be to return the entries in relevance order. Any of the other options seem to provide little benefit to someone searching for an answer. Just because something has received a lot of views or likes does not make it somehow more relevant to an employee in answering their question, whereas relevance is precisely what matters.

Updates in Cloud for Customer (C4C)

Cloud for Customer is the core part of ECSC providing the hub for the ticket processing and the user interface for service agents working in HR. The latest updates provide very little obvious benefits to the end user, but there are some interesting things available for administrators and technical support staff.

Code List Listings

Within the C4C user interface, there are many drop-down lists (a.k.a. pick lists in SuccessFactors parlance) that are based on sets of data in the system known as code lists. These code lists map a unique identifier to a piece of text and perhaps other data as well. The update enables some additional features for these fields. They include being able to specify a sort order, what to display (ID / Value / ID & Value).

The update also adds some new functions for the rules that can be applied to the mandatory, read-only and visible attributes; but I expect those functions will only be useful for ECSC administrators in a small handful of edge cases. See *Figure 4.2*.

Figure 4.2

Transport Functionality

SAP continues to expand their transport functionality which is used to move configuration and data between systems. The more they improve this, the quicker and more reliable system updates into production (and other environments) become.

Transport requests can now be copied regardless of transport status. However, this means that any transport that is currently inactive and was created before the quarterly update (1808) will need to be copied for it to be transported. This is simply because the underlying framework was updated and is not directly forward compatible with the revised transport process.

Additionally, business roles can now be transported, and administrators can even add notification workflows to act on transports, though I would imagine I'd want to have more control and oversight on the transports than just what a notification provides.

Finally, there is a nice little user interface (UI) change that has improved the target tenant selection list. Available tenants are now specified along with their system ID and type.

HTML5 User Interface End of Life

Finally, this isn't an update to C4C, but rather an update on the future of C4C. SAP has announced that all HTML5 UI features will be available in the RUI (Responsive user interface, the Fiori style interface for C4C) by the May 2019 release and by November 2019, the HTML5 UI will be fully deprecated.

With support for employee service tickets

due in RUI by the end of 2018, this means that organisations using ECSC will have nine months to switch over.

I would recommend starting the verification process as close to the November 2018 release as possible. This will give SAP the best chance to address any HTML5 functionality they may have overlooked.

The sooner an organisation can transition, the sooner they'll be able to make use of the latest functionality that is only available in RUI. For example, SAP has put a lot of working into the reporting and analytics in RUI over the course of the last year.

But, we also know that SAP is planning some interface changes in RUI for the February 2019 release — specifically moving and reorganising the action menus. As a result, I wouldn't recommend moving onto RUI before then unless there is other functionality that your organisation wants to take advantage of.

Conclusion

2018 Q3 isn't a gangbuster of a release for ECSC, but there is ongoing development of Ask HR, and the administrative features of C4C continue to get attention.

I don't expect much change in the functionality in C4C for the next release. I suspect it will mainly be focussed on more RUI improvements but that's not a bad thing. I sincerely hope that we'll see the e-mail interaction issues in Ask HR resolved in the next release. I still feel that SAP should really have launched Ask HR v2 with feature parity to Ask HR v1, but at least we see changes for the better and longer-term v2 of Ask HR will be a better platform than v1.

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- **Business Process Services** - for if you are looking for operational support with your HCM processes.
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