workday®

Workday Release Best Practices

How to Enable Continuous Feature Adoption

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Always innovating.

Workday regularly delivers features designed to provide greater value to your organization and help you adapt in a changing world. Features are influenced by customers like you, industry and market trends, and regulatory requirements.

Software releases are included in your existing subscription and delivered to all customers at the same time. You can realize ongoing value with Workday by ensuring that your organization is taking advantage of each release. This guide includes best practices for understanding the software release schedule, insights on our ongoing feature release and evaluation, and resources for the adoption and utilization of Workday.

Understanding Workday releases.

Workday delivers new features in two ways: weekly service updates and feature releases.

You may or may not realize that Workday is updated every week. But our single codeline approach to development allows us to push out a number of changes weekly to continuously improve our system.

The most significant changes are grouped into larger twice-yearly updates so you can plan for these new capabilities.

Workday feature release schedule:

- 🟠 Plan for Upcoming Feature Release
- 🔵 Delivery of Feature Release
- 🔵 Extend and Optimize Window

WEEKLY SERVICE UPDATES	FEATURE RELEASES
• Software and regulatory fixes • Small enhancements • Disabled by default, so your team does not need to test every week	• Delivered typically every March and September • New and enhanced features for your existing Workday subscription • New products to which you may not be subscribed • Mostly disabled by default, so your team can plan to test and enable later

You can learn more about updates and releases here.
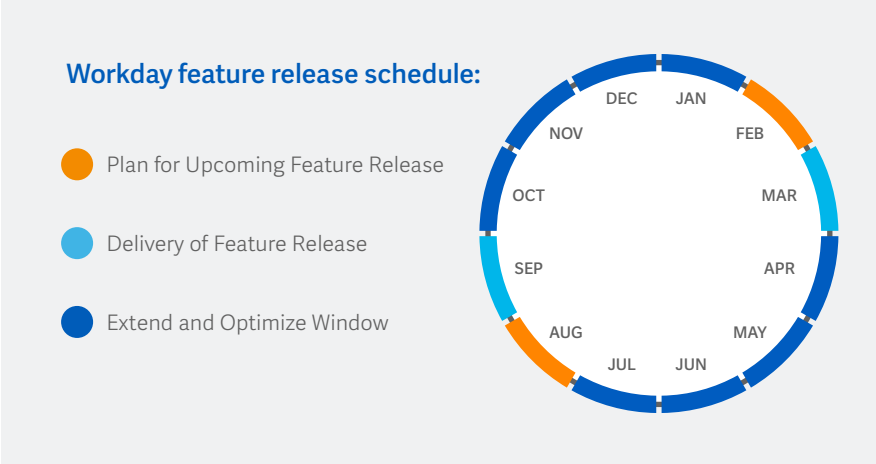
Testing feature release items.

Your team can test releases during the five-week release preparation window.

New functionality is enabled in your Workday sandbox preview environment, which is a copy of your production tenant and a safe place to test new features and business processes. This is also where you can provide feedback to Workday. Testing allows you to get a jump-start on training and job aids prior to new features moving into production.

During testing, your team should focus on key integrations, key business processes (hires, transfers, payment processing), and critical custom reports.

In addition, Workday does planned maintenance: four hours each week, month, and quarter. The full Workday SLA policy can be found on Workday Community. We are proud to be the only partner in our space who offers a performance SLA for all customers, regardless of size or industry.

Benefits of continuous development for customers.

Workday updates more than 3,400 customers around the globe all at once, within a four-hour window. We have invested in a continuous development and delivery pipeline that delivers the latest features to customers without disrupting their operations.

1 **Faster response to regulatory and compliance changes.**
   Continuous development and weekly service updates allow us to respond to changes in government regulations and compliance. We can make updates to support new and changing laws in the preview tenant, verify with customers that they are working as intended, and then turn on those changes in production. See our response to shifting regulations in action.

2 **Updates without the disruption.**
   We deliver innovation to our customers only when it's ready. The same way consumer internet companies push out small, incremental updates, we progressively roll out changes and features that enhance the customer experience and avoid regressions. Learn more about just how easy updates are with Workday.

3 **More time spent innovating.**
   Instead of maintaining multiple codelines, we focus most of product management, development, and QA on improving functionalities (or creating new ones) and underlying supporting technologies. Hear what Nextdoor has to say about our continuous delivery model.

Take a deeper dive into Workday feature releases.

Taking advantage of feature adoption planning.

Adoption planning enables you to manage the evaluation and uptake of features and enhancements found in the "What's New in Workday" report. Adoption planning consists of a dashboard, tasks, and reports that you can configure to manage your overall adoption workflow.

With adoption planning you can:

- Manage your adoption process within Workday

- Create, prioritize, and categorize adoption items to help you better manage the uptake of new features and enhancements

- Assign adoption items for testing and implementation

- Create a roadmap timeline to track deadlines for feature implementation by your teams

- Collaborate more efficiently with your teams on adoption

Adoption planning use case: benefits.

Let's say Workday adds benefits enhancements to your preview tenant. From there, you can create a benefits adoption item. Next, you can add relevant rows from the "What's New in Workday" report to that adoption item. Then, you can send that adoption item to your benefits team for testing before the enhancements move into your Production tenant.

You'll also need to evaluate recent Workday updates for benefits that are already in production, so you can use the "What's New in the Last Six Months" report to find new enhancements. You can then add these "What's New" items to an adoption item and assign it to your benefits team for evaluation.

Get a closer look into feature release planning.

Feature adoption blueprints.

A Workday feature adoption blueprint is an important communication tool that provides transparency, alignment, and accountability across the organization. With it, your team can capture and align priorities over a 12- to 18-month period with a frequency evaluation process, typically aligned with the Workday six-month software release cycle.

Key events and initiatives in a blueprint can include:

- Annually recurring organizational events (annual compensation cycle, budget cycle)

- One-time organization events (growth initiatives)

- Functional and systems activities (rearchitecting job catalog, system upgrades, contract expirations)

- Workday optimization initiatives, feature release innovations, and events

Learn more about how your organization can meet strategic objectives.
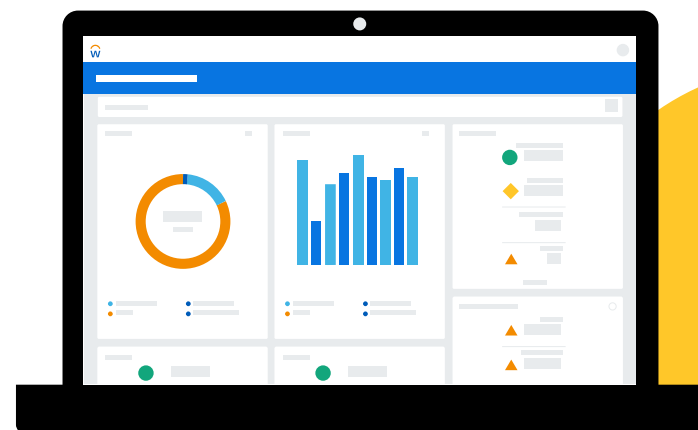
Best practices to take full advantage of Workday software releases.

- Develop a feature adoption blueprint that accounts for annually recurring organizational events (for example, annual compensation cycle, budget cycle), one-time events (growth initiatives), and functional/systems activities (such as rearchitecting job catalog, system upgrades, contract expirations), and Workday-related activities.

- Include key collaboration events, such as Workday Rising (our annual customer conference), user groups, and product groups. Also participate in Workday Community to share valuable insights with fellow customers and understand product strategy and roadmaps.

- Confirm that the feature adoption blueprint maps out the next 12 to 18 months with frequent reviews to ensure alignment and accountability. Consider interdependencies and the impact of change.

- Assess your team's capacity and capabilities to determine if investments need to be made in consulting, training, or Workday Partners.

- Set up Workday usage metrics to view current functionality.

Maximizing your investment.

Leading customers get the most value from their Workday investment in the following key areas.

		BENEFITS	KPIs	FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR VALUE
1	**Technology Simplification:** The ongoing consolidation of external applications, processes, and analytics.	• Support larger scope and scale, improve reliability and security, and roll out new services more quickly • Assess where new Workday functionality can meet evolving business needs • Respond to business needs more quickly with less reliance on IT	• The number of decommissioned systems • Reduced integration costs • Increased productivity of technical resources	• Which additional external systems and applications can migrate to the Workday platform? • Is the governance structure, processes, and team in place to adopt new features quickly? • Are business analysts and functional resources system-capable and self-reliant in serving the business?
2	**Operational Efficiency:** Process improvements and ability to shift resources to more strategic work.	• Shift resources previously spent on processing and auditing transactions to strategic partnership • Increase scope and impact of finance and HR with automated transactions • Move from a transactional approach to a more strategic focus, increasing productivity and driving business transformation • Increase speed and quality in processes	• Increased in scope of services provided by finance and HR with the same number of full-time employees • Increased percentage of time spent on strategic efforts due to reduced manual efforts • Increased scalability, delivering more services with the same number of resources	• Which additional processes can be automated with Workday? • How can finance and HR operating models be modified for more effective partnerships with business leaders?

BENEFITS	KPIs	FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR VALUE
• Increase agility and responsiveness to change, such as completing acquisitions and other organizational changes more quickly • Gaining greater insights with Workday analytics and transactions with a unified system • Supports data-driven decision-making with greater confidence in the quality and availability of data • Increase user adoption with direct-access and mobile capabilities	• Reduction in the number of days required to perform organizational changes or integrate acquisitions • Faster financial close with increased accuracy, reduced errors, and more streamlined processes • Reduction in time to fill open positions	• Which business processes would benefit from faster resolution (close, turnaround) times? • What decisions can be made leveraging Workday data to drive growth?

3 Business Effectiveness: Strategic ability to take advantage of new opportunities and scale for growth.

Key actions to maximize your success with Workday.

- Periodically review and evaluate opportunities to consolidate applications and further automate external processes.

- Continually assess available and newly released Workday features to meet evolving business needs.

- Empower functional analysts to be more self-reliant by taking advantage of Workday Community and other training resources.

- Assess finance and HR operating models to identify opportunities for more effective partnership with business leaders.

- Ensure that Workday users have access to the insights needed to make data-driven decisions.

- Fully leverage Workday self-service and mobile capabilities to increase productivity.

Learn how you can gain greater Workday value.

Building your Workday support team.

A successful support team is key to getting the most out of your Workday investment. This team is what will allow you to be flexible and strategic enough to respond to current business needs while looking to the future. The right team can help you engage and align with stakeholders and drive continuous adoption and innovation.

The key to a successful partnership with Workday requires:

- A team of the right size, with the right skills and clear roles and responsibilities
- Well-defined support processes and tools to support both day-to-day and strategic work
- Strong governance process, including alignment and engagement with stakeholders for prioritization and decision-making
- Thoughtfully designed and planned vision for recognizing value and ongoing optimization

Support team models.

When you build your team, it can take on two forms: centralized or decentralized.

CENTRALIZED	DECENTRALIZED
• Rolls up to one leader	• Rolls up to various leaders
• Team members may or may not be distributed to various locations	• A small core team may be responsible for universal impact changes, but each organization leader has their own roadmap and plan
• One team for primary support	
• Most common model across our customer base, particularly with large organizations (more than 5,000 employees)	• Most often used for small organizations

Team alignment.

Your team should be aligned in a way that works for your organization. Here are some questions to consider:

- Which organization pays for the application?
- How is the support team structured today, and do we like it?
- Is there a clear overall executive leader who the team would align well with?
- Are there other systems the teams support?

However your team is aligned, the most important factors for success are good governance, collaboration, and communication among leadership and team members.
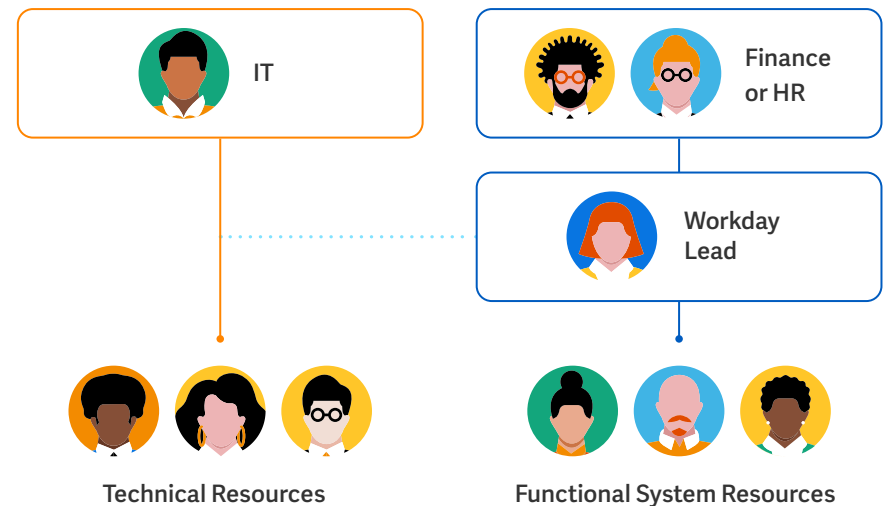
Governance models.

The governance model of your support team provides a framework for decision-making and identifying and incorporating key stakeholders. Below is a sample structure that customers often use.*

Approvals	**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** Strategic	**Members** Business executives, finance and HR leads, C-suite **Meetings** Semi-annually or annually	**Purpose:** • Provide strategic direction and promote joint commitment • Evaluate recommendations for services and scope expansion • Approve budget requests for technology and resources
Informed Decisions	**STEERING COMMITTEE** Tactical	**Members** Finance and HR leads, business partners and COEs, end users, finance and HR operations, shared services lead, change lead **Meetings** Monthy or quarterly	**Purpose:** • Joint roadmap and resource planning • Project prioritization • Direction and decision for cross-functional topics
Quick Decisions	**CORE WORKDAY TEAM** Operational	**Members** Workday team, IT, change management **Meetings** Daily, weekly, and/or ad hoc	**Purpose:** • Data standardization and quality • Process configuration consistency • Impact analysis • Change control

*If you have both finance and HR subscriptions, both groups need to be represented in the executive and steering committees.

New areas of work.

Once you've assembled your team, you might notice that support roles and responsibilities will look and feel different with Workday. Activities will generally fall under day-to-day management and optimization and innovation.

- **Day-to-day management:** Business-as-usual activities that must be conducted to support the upkeep of Workday, employees, managers, and business partners.

- **Optimization and innovation:** Activities that allow for the enhancement of Workday and drive business value and maturity in the product lifecycle.

As you start to manage these activities, you should also consider:

- Which work exists to support and enhance Workday?

- Which work is considered day-to-day or business as usual, and which work is more focused on optimizing and innovating?

- Which activities are more hands-on?

- What are examples of the work that must be completed?

- When scoping for this work, what compliance considerations should we think about?
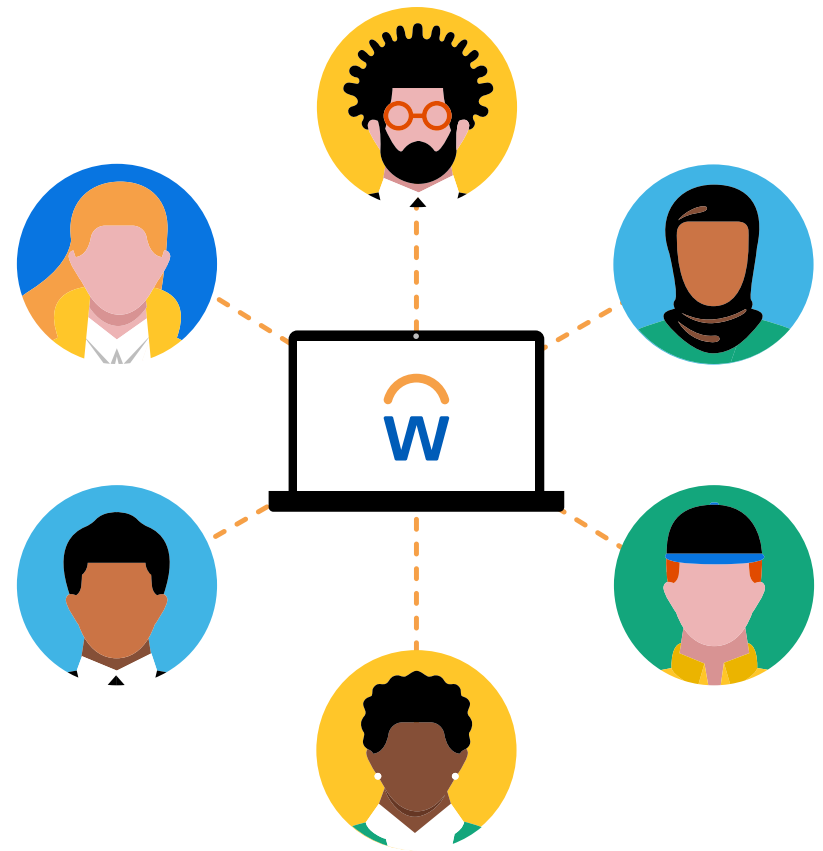
Supporting your success at every step.

If you need additional support and resources, we are happy to help you. Our success plans offer a mix of educational resources, tools, and expertise that you can choose from based on your needs.

Whether you're looking for tactical, ongoing training and coaching or a more hands-on, personalized approach, you'll find flexible options for operations and strategy. Success plans are designed to help you reach your organization's goals and empower your team.

With these success plans, you can:

- Discover Workday capabilities, innovations, and benefits through educational tools and resources

- Define and align your key objectives with Workday capabilities while leveraging the expertise of your team and ours

- Adopt new innovations with personalized guidance and opportunities, giving you insight into leading practices and solutions

Learn more about our success plans.

Education, tools, and expertise at the moments that matter in your Workday journey.

Align   **Adopt**   **Discover**

Thanks for being a part of our community.

At Workday, we're motivated by our customers to deliver continuous innovation. Customers like you inspire new features and functionality that are changing the way organizations work all over the world. We hope this guide helps you fully reap the benefits of software releases and drive even more value for your teams.

To get started on your adoption plans, reach out to your customer success manager.

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