Employee-Managed Time Tracking

Encouraging Employee Accountability with Time Clocks

Summary

Accurate time tracking offers obvious benefits and significant challenges to every organization. And because organizations—as opposed to employees—benefit most from accurate time tracking, employers typically bear the burden of managing time tracking activities. However, with the right time clock, employees can be empowered and encouraged to better manage their time-related activities including addressing errors, reviewing schedules, requesting leave time, and taking breaks and meal periods of the appropriate length. Additionally, the right time clock offers benefits to supervisors as well by streamlining time tracking activities and employee management.

The Benefits and Challenges of Time Tracking

Accurate time tracking is crucial to every organization employing workers because it offers a number of benefits, including:

- Correct, timely payroll
- Ability to track and predict labor trends
- Better labor cost budgeting
- Automated leave accrual
- Accurate historical records
- Government compliance
- Avoidance of wage-and-hour litigation

But accurate time tracking also comes with challenges:

- Incorrect time entry
- Adequate length on lunch periods or breaks
- Missing punches
- "Buddy punching" (where an employee punches in or out for a co-worker who is not present)
- Accurate time accounting among workgroups or departments
- Provision of individual leave time balances
- Coordination of leave requests, including requesting, granting and tracking them

Shifting Accountability for Time Tracking from Employer to Employee

In most cases, handling the challenges of time tracking falls squarely on the shoulders of the employer since these challenges create problems that primarily affect the organization, not the employee. In fact, from an employee's point of view, the single most important benefit of time tracking is making sure a paycheck correctly reflects worked hours. But it's possible to encourage employees to actively manage their own time without relying on ineffective techniques like emphasizing the organizational goals for time tracking (trained as consumers, employees are left asking "How does that affect me?") or threatening late paychecks if time is not correctly tracked (typically employees are already aware of this and do what they can to mitigate that risk).

Additionally, once employees are empowered to be more accountable for individual time tracking issues, employers will find some of the administrative burden and challenges of time tracking lifted. Freed from day-to-day headaches such as tracking down missing punches, ending early punches, thwarting "buddy punching," ensuring time is accurately assigned to appropriate workgroups or tracking leave requests and vacation time, supervisors and HR staff can focus on more strategic, long-term priorities.

So, how can employees be positively motivated to actively and accurately manage their own time tracking, taking some of the administrative burden off employers?

Increasing Employee Accountability with Time Clocks

Many employers view time clocks merely as a way to automate the punch in/punch out process. But today's time clock technology offers significant advantages beyond electronic punching, including encouraging employees to manage their own time and attendance records.

What time clock features should employers consider to best empower employees to manage their own time?

- *Touch-screen technology.* Time clocks with a touch-screen interface generally offer a more intuitive experience, making it less likely to confuse employees and introduce inaccuracies due to incorrect usage.

- *Error alerts.* Most critical to increased employee accountability are alerts that indicate action or information is required from the employee. Because an employee is likely to use a time clock anywhere from two to multiple times per workday, time clocks with alerts prompt employees to take immediate action on important information such as missing punches.

- *Missing punch entry.* Once an employee is alerted that time-related information is incomplete, a time clock easily allows the employee to enter missing punch information immediately on-screen. This encourages faster resolution of missing information.

- *Department transfer.* Employees tracking time between multiple workgroups, teams or departments need a simple way to allocate time accurately according to their schedule or workday rhythm. Time clocks that easily accommodate department transfer encourage accuracy on the part of employee and better labor cost management since time is correctly correlated to appropriate group cost centers.

- *Schedule review.* Time clocks that provide the ability to review schedule and work hour information make it simple for employees to be aware of when and where they are scheduled and to identify any discrepancies, errors or the need to request leave as soon as possible.

- *Leave balance and benefits review.* A common time-related request from employees is leave balance and benefit information. Time clocks can easily make leave accrual, leave balance and leave time taken available to employees securely and at the touch of a screen.

- *Leave requests.* Time-off requests can be a major administrative undertaking, especially during popular times such as holidays. Time clocks that offer the ability for employees to request leave through the interface encourage earlier requests (giving supervisors the ability to better plan their department schedules) and to track their supervisor's response.

- *Tip entry.* Employees in the hospitality industry benefit from time clocks that prompt tip entry for their completed shift since tip entry functionality encourages accurate and immediate tip reporting.

- *Automated employee identification.* Using biometric scanning, a time clock can readily identify individual employees, protecting an employee's personal information and making "buddy punching" an impossibility.
- *Break punch restrictions.* Early return from government- or union-mandated breaks or meal periods puts organizations at risk for compliance violations. Time clocks with "minimum time out" punch restrictions do not allow the employee to punch in from a break until the mandatory time minimum for the break is met.

Easing Administrative Tasks for Supervisors with Time Clocks

The right time clock offers significant benefits to supervisors and managers, helping to streamline administrative tasks associated with managing employees' time-related information. Useful functionalities include:

- Adding missing punches to employees' time cards when necessary
- Crediting dollars or hours to individual workers
- Marking lunches as paid
- Enabling or disabling punch restrictions
- Transferring employees between workgroups or departments

These features are designed to make typical administrative tasks easier and faster for supervisors, but ultimately the right time clock puts error detection and correction at the fingertips of the employee.

Conclusion

To assume time clocks are simply a tool to automate punching in and out is to sell short today's multifaceted, multifunctional technology. The right time clock can be a robust tool that encourages accountability and empowers employees to better manage time tracking to the benefit of the individual worker and the overall organization. Allowing employees to address time-related issues individually frees supervisors and HR staff from many day-to-day time administrative tasks and ensures the organization has ready and ongoing access to accurate time-tracking records.

About Attendance on Demand, Inc.

Attendance on Demand supports the labor management needs of thousands of companies and more than a half million employees across North America. Launched in 2006, Attendance on Demand is a rapidly deployed, cloud-based solution that minimizes a company's risk and technology investment while providing advanced features for securely managing labor data—calculating pay rules, scheduling employees, budgeting labor, and automating recordkeeping for labor law compliance. With standard uptime over the industry average of 99.995% and above average customer retention rates, Attendance on Demand removes the worry of maintaining expensive infrastructure. An extensive North American distribution network helps organizations use Attendance on Demand to reduce labor expenses and improve decision-making.

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