After the Sale

What To Expect From Your Time and Attendance Vendor

Summary

The promise of a new time and attendance system is exciting, especially in the sales stage. Increased productivity, efficiency and satisfaction are just a few of the things every organization hopes a new application will inspire. However, one of the most important factors determining that level of success is what happens after the sale. Transitioning from one system to another doesn't happen with a flip of the switch—your vendor must have a plan in place to ensure the process goes as smoothly as possible. This paper examines features to look for in your vendor's transition plan to set the stage for successful use throughout the system's lifecycle.

What Happens After the Sale?

The glossy vendor presentation has ended. Beautifully designed documentation tiles the conference table. You and your stakeholders are certain this new time and attendance system will improve productivity and data capture and reduce time theft and attendance problems. Right?

Right. But only if your vendor's transition process is as thoughtfully crafted as its sales presentation. Chances are your vendor talked about the transition process, but it's worth following up to ensure your organization receives the attention and support it needs for the smoothest transition possible.

Why Update Your Time and Attendance System?

Transitioning to new software processes and hardware can be a challenge even when things go well. Unforeseen complications and new issues can arise, calling the success of the transition into question and potentially causing some stakeholders to debate the value of a new system altogether.

In most cases, transitioning to a new time and attendance system for most organizations is a smart move. As federal and state legislation increasingly specifies the types of time and attendance data organizations need to provide, a "legacy" timekeeping system—once ideal for the organization's needs—may no longer fit the bill. Advances in technology, such as web-based applications, have made it possible for new time and attendance systems to easily keep pace with these demands through cloud hosting, automatic updates and virtually uninterrupted uptime.

With time and attendance, as with other application-based tasks, transitioning to a newer system that better meets an organization's needs is inevitable. What's the best way to measure how successfully that transition takes place?

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Transitioning to a New System: Success or Sabotage?

User adoption is one of the most important metrics when it comes to assessing a successful transition. This data paints a picture of when, where, and how the new application is being used and can be especially telling when compared to user metrics from the previous system.

The problem is that user adoption is easily sabotaged by a number of factors, including:

- Poor project management
- Unclear roles and responsibilities between the vendor and the client
- Botched installation
- Inadequate training

Although incredibly rare that all of these things occur simultaneously, each factor on its own can be fairly common. That's why it's important to ensure your time and attendance vendor knows how to combat these pitfalls.

How Effective Vendors Combat Transition Pitfalls

Reliable vendors will both be aware of common transition issues and have a post-sale system in place to insulate your organization from these problems as much as possible.

What should you look for in a vendor's post-sale service plan to ensure a smooth transition for your organization?

9 Post-Sale Service Plan Features for Smooth Transitions

Here are nine features you should look for in your vendor's transition plan:

- Client/project team introductions
- Customer and site surveys
- Pay rules configuration and validation
- Data conversion and uploading
- Testing
- Parallel systems testing
- Administrative and user training
- Punch/payroll processing and verification
- Ongoing maintenance and support

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Let's look at each individually.

Client/Project Team Introductions

The first sign a vendor understands the elements of a smooth transition is if it works to establish a relationship between its project team and your internal transition team. Communication is vital throughout the entire transition process, but ensuring your team knows who to contact when questions or issues arise demonstrates the vendor's commitment to your organization's needs from the start.

Customer and Site Surveys

Assessing the contextual environment in which the application will function is an important part of configuring your new system properly. This generally requires two different types of assessment: (1) customer surveys and (2) a site survey.

Customer surveys help your vendor identify who will be using the application and in what ways they will be using it. This ensures the application is appropriately configured to the needs of your personnel.

A site survey is an assessment of your organization's technical environment. In order for the application to function most optimally, your vendor must consider—and work within—your organization's technical requirements or constraints.

Pay Rules Configuration and Validation

One of the most important parts of your time and attendance transition is properly configured pay rules. A reliable vendor will work closely with you to understand your organization's unique pay rules and configure the application to automate them.

Vendors that ask you to retrofit their standard pay rules instead of configuring their system to meet your needs unnecessarily shortchange your organization—since the technology to configure pay rules is readily available to organizations of any size—and limit the productivity gains a new time and attendance system can offer.

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Data Conversion and Uploading

Your new application must allow you to access, manipulate and report data from your previous system. This generally occurs in two steps: first, data from the previous system is converted to be "read" and understood by the new system. Second, this newly converted data is uploaded into the new system without introducing errors or corrupting the existing information.

Testing

Once pay rules are configured and previous data is uploaded, your vendor will test the system to ensure it is working correctly. This trial run allows the vendor to fix any bugs or errors and optimize the system's performance for your technical environment and the needs of your users.

Parallel Systems Testing

An important part of the testing process includes parallel systems testing. This process entails running the old and new applications side-by-side to ensure results are the same. Parallel testing assures your organization that the new system is as accurate and functional as your previous system, further smoothing your transition.

Administrative and User Training

In terms of the transition process, training is where the rubber meets the road. Efficient training increases user adoption, satisfaction and productivity, ensuring your new application will be used effectively from the beginning.

It's important that your vendor's training program has two pathways: regular user training and administrative user training. Why? Administrative users employ the application in different ways. Where regular users typically track and log hours worked, submit time cards or check benefit balances, administrative users have higher level needs such as managing department scheduling, approving time cards and leave requests, and running reports. Both groups need customized training to make the most of your new application.

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Punch/Payroll Processing and Verification

Punch and payroll processing and verification ensure the accurate capture and calculation of time-related data. This process checks that employees' punches at the clock are recorded and verifies that hours and paid overtime are calculated accurately. It also ensures integration with the payroll system is working properly to support timely and error-free payroll processing.

Ongoing Maintenance & Support

Once the system has been configured and tested and your personnel trained, it's time for your vendor to transition to ongoing maintenance and support. Although this may look different for every vendor, your organization must be provided a few specific services:

- Ongoing service representative who works with you to ensure the application continues to meet your needs.
- Contact person(s) in the event of a technical issue.
- Support tickets or a tracking system to look up issue status or historical support call handling.
- Communication methods to alert you to planned system updates or events.
- Training tools for new hires or staff turnover.

Conclusion

The nine features above help create a post-sale service plan that promotes user adoption, a key metric in transition success. Smoothly transitioning to a new time and attendance system—or any HRM application—is crucial to increased productivity and efficiency. Understand your vendor's transition plan and ongoing support model before the sale closes, and you'll help ensure your new system's ROI.

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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