



Supermarket Automates Time and Attendance; Cuts Time to Prepare Payroll

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Frank Shumpert

Pelion IGA supermarket dramatically cut the time to prepare payroll for over 65 employees by automating time and attendance tracking. The store no longer spends hours each week re-entering employee data for payroll, or tracking down lost time cards. The store benefits from a more efficient and accurate process, and improved the archiving of important employee wage information.

About Pelion IGA

The family-owned Pelion IGA, located in Pelion, South Carolina, employs over 65 hourly and salaried workers in a state-of-the-art 30,000 square foot retail facility, constructed in 2004.

The supermarket is part of the Independent Grocers Alliance (IGA). An independently owned network of grocery stores in 48 of the United States and more than 40 countries, the Alliance includes more than 4,000 stores worldwide, supported by 36 distribution companies and more the 55 major manufacturers, vendors and suppliers. Marking its 80th year of operations in 2006, IGA ranks in the top 10 in world food supermarketing.

When Pelion IGA tracked employee time and attendance data with manual paper time cards and punch clocks, it was a cumbersome process to assemble payroll totals each week. Once the weekly pay period ended, the payroll administrator reviewed over 65 punch cards for missed punches, and then spent several hours each week locating those employees with missing information, tracking down misplaced cards, and then re-keying that information into a manual spreadsheet for payroll processing.

Time, Accuracy Problems

According to store owner Frank Shumpert, not only was this a time-intensive process for the administrative staff — accuracy was also a concern. “We had to consider that any time financial information is handled manually, there is the potential for a missed key stroke or a transposed number. This had the potential to compromise accuracy of our payroll totals.”

Another issue was maintaining accurate employee archive records. Explains Russel Stansell, store manager, “In past years, it was a problem to search through the drawers of time cards for federal or state unemployment reporting. This was a challenge for us when an issue would arise with a current or former employee.”



Looking for a Better Way

Shumpert and his team at Pelion IGA turned to American Time Data, Inc. (Columbia, South Carolina) for assistance in locating a time and attendance solution that would address the past challenges, automatically interface with payroll, and offer the store much needed reporting capabilities.

American Time Data suggested Attendance Enterprise from InfoTronics, Inc., a Web-enabled system designed to automate employee time tracking and scheduling. Attendance Enterprise meets the needs of diverse organizations, including retail grocers, and is cost-effective, scalable and easily deploys into existing Microsoft computing environments.

Once American Time Data installed an advanced bar code reader, and the Attendance Enterprise system on a PC, the Pelion IGA automated many of the past manual methods. Now, employees swipe their cards, which also conveniently serve as their nametags, at the start of each shift. The system automatically tracks start and end times, applying the appropriate pay rates and other wage data. That information is then automatically assembled via a custom interface and wide area network to the store's payroll system at the end of every pay period.

Saving Time, Reducing Error

By far the biggest benefit is that the Pelion IGA totally eliminated the manual assembly of employee time and attendance each pay period. "We don't have to suffer through the manual data-entry each week, and accuracy is no longer a concern," notes Shumpert. "Paychecks are much easier to process. Plus, our staff can easily track down missed punches, which means we save time chasing down lost cards."

Another key benefit is the automatic archiving of employee data. Attendance Enterprise maintains historical records of attendance and pay in the form of electronic time card archives. Detailed historical reporting is indispensable for wage and hour claims, and other legal inquiries.

Notes Stansell, "Just recently we were asked to look back into our employee archives to verify wage information of a former employee. We were able to instantly pull this data up from the Attendance Enterprise system and provide it to the State, instead of rifling through drawers full of time cards and paper reports." The supermarket also benefits from the enhanced labor reporting including daily labor totals, summary sheets, departmental hours per period and missed punch reports.

Pelion IGA is also considering Attendance Enterprise scheduling features. Retail grocers can choose from comprehensive feature set including flexible employee/group scheduling. Other labor analysis tools include over 40 standard reports to access and organize labor data; labor trend analysis; and simplified data transfer with over 250 payroll interfaces.

Conclusion

All told, Attendance Enterprise lets Pelion IGA operate far more effectively. Less time is spent correcting time cards and assembling payroll. As Frank Shumpert explains, "Automating this process frees us up to handle more meaningful tasks. Payroll is completed faster than before, and we look forward to tapping into other features."