Boost Your Bottom Line: Make Every Minute Count

The profit potential of software-based time and attendance management

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For additional information, contact:

Acroprint Time Recorder Company
5640 Departure Drive
Raleigh, NC 27616

(800) 334-7190
www.acroprint.com

Boost Your Bottom Line: Make Every Minute Count

Acroprint's mission is to help our customers add profit to their bottom line through implementing an effective time and attendance solution. This white paper focuses on the benefits of software-based time and attendance systems for small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs). Typically, this type of system offers a fast payback period and a positive long-term return on investment.

History and Background

Time and attendance solutions have a long history. We are probably all familiar with the mechanical punch clock, which records on a heavy paper card the time an employee punches in and punches out. When the age of computers dawned, it was widely assumed that the punch clock would simply disappear.

However, the mechanical punch clock is still a mainstay in many work environments today. Why? They are economical and easy to use — plug the clock in and it's ready to be used. Heavy-duty models can stand up to the most demanding work environments. With battery-operated versions available, these clocks can even be used in areas where power is unavailable or not reliable.

The Acroprint Model 125 time clock is an example of a heavy-duty mechanical punch clock that uses paper time cards to record punch in and punch out times. The clock is so well known that it is known simply as "The Green™ Clock." (Fun Fact: the color Green™ is a trademark of Acroprint Time Recorder Company as applied to job time recorders, attendance systems, electronic time recorders, and attendance recorders.)

The Promise of Software-Based Solutions

The promise of software-based time and attendance solutions is that businesses can save time and money by reducing the amount of manual effort needed to transcribe information from paper cards to payroll systems.

Many organizations have also discovered that capturing more detailed data about what is being done during the work day helps them improve operational efficiencies.

The Acroprint Time Q +Plus time and attendance system features a badge-swipe terminal. The terminal can be connected to a PC for data review and transfer to a payroll system, or it can operate as a stand-alone device connected directly to a printer.

A wide variety of software-based solutions are now available for small business time and attendance tracking. These solutions range from basic time and attendance applications that run on a single PC… to sophisticated networked solutions incorporating a variety of input terminals and features… to web-based and telephony applications.

Acroprint timeQplus is an advanced software-based suite of products offering a range of input options including PC punch, proximity badge terminals and biometric input.

Time and attendance solutions have historically been viewed as a relatively low priority by many small businesses. However, many are now coming to realize implementing effective time and attendance management has a significant impact on business profits.

This whitepaper addresses the following issues:

- What are the expected benefits of improving your time and attendance solution?

- What are the important features of a time and attendance solution?

- How do you choose the solution that is best for your organization?

What are some of the expected benefits of improving your time and attendance solution?

Businesses of all sizes are challenged in today's economy. The pressure on profits is intense, whether you are a small business dealing with local or national competitors or an international corporation grappling with low-cost offshore competition.

A modern time and attendance solution can benefit your company in many ways:

Reduce costs associated with clerical errors — Studies by the American Payroll Association indicate a higher than expected rate of human error in data manipulation. Eliminating these problems typically yields a positive return on investment (ROI) in less than five months.

Reduce payroll processing costs — You save two ways by automating your processes. First, when your time and attendance solution interfaces with your payroll system (e.g. QuickBooks, ADP, Paychex, etc.), you can prepare payroll faster and with less manual intervention, producing substantial cost savings for your business. Second, automated processing frees your supervisors from clerical time-keeping tasks, allowing them to focus on more productive work.

Reduce "time theft" — In a recent survey, 21% of employees admitted to cheating on their timesheets. Many businesses report a reduction of up to 90% in "time theft" when they start using a time tracking system that automatically records employees' arrival and departure times instead of relying on handwritten records.

Eliminate "buddy punching" and increase security — Biometric fingerprint and hand measurement devices are available to verify employee identity prior to recording a time punch, thus eliminating costly "buddy punching." This can potentially save your organization up to 20% of your payroll costs. With some time and attendance systems this positive identification can also be tied to access control devices that limit entry to sensitive areas.

Reduce the risk of wage and hour violations and employee time disputes — Recent years have seen rapid growth in the number of wage and hour lawsuits filed against businesses of all sizes and in all industries, as well as significant increases in enforcement efforts by both state and federal governments. The highly accurate time records provided by a properly-configured time tracking system help reduce the potential for inadvertent wage and hour violations. When employees are confident their work time is being accurately recorded and paid, the potential for time-related disputes and lawsuits is also reduced.

Increase revenue with accurate job costing — Many organizations charge their clients by the hour for services rendered. Others rely on job costing to determine the final price or standard cost variance of their products. The accurate and detailed employee work data available with a properly-configured time and attendance system can help insure your products are correctly priced and your clients are billed for all time expended on their behalf. This results in increased revenue.

Continuous improvement support — Continuous improvement programs analyze current business processes with goals of improving customer satisfaction, reducing cycle time, increasing sales and reducing costs. Time and attendance solutions can help measure the impact of business process changes to verify you have actually realized the anticipated benefits.

What are the important features of a time and attendance solution?

Time and attendance systems are more complex than simply "punching in and punching out." There are many variables that can affect how and to what level of detail your employees' time is recorded — and, ultimately, how much they are paid.

The specific features that are important to you will depend to a large extent on the nature of your business, your industry, your work environment and your locale.

In general, however, there are certain characteristics that most businesses find useful in a time and attendance solution.

Here are some important issues you may wish to consider when evaluating a time and attendance system:

Payroll processing rules — What are your normal shifts, work hours, scheduled work days, lunch times, and rounding rules?

> *Your time and attendance system should accommodate your existing business processes and standards as well as conforming to local, state and national wage and hour laws.*

Time approval and reporting — What features are available to review employee punches and make necessary adjustments? What reports are available?

> *It is a given that employees will occasionally forget to clock in or out, or that other adjustments will be necessary from time to time. At the same time, it's important to maintain an audit trail to help prevent or mitigate the effect of a wage and hour audit. Your time and attendance system should be easy to edit, while providing sufficient reports to protect you from needless, costly litigation or fines.*

Interfaces to other solutions — Does the proposed time and attendance solution offer a built-in interface with your existing payroll, accounting and/or human resources solutions?

> *Eliminating duplicate data entry reduces clerical errors and decreases the amount of time you need to process payroll — thereby saving you money. To allow you the greatest flexibility, your time and attendance system should provide a built-in interface with many popular payroll processing solutions. You shouldn't be required to migrate to a new time and attendance solution simply because you decided to start using a new payroll processor.*

Expandability — Business expansion is the eventual goal of many SMBs. While a low cost, limited-capacity time and attendance package might be adequate for your needs today, you should take into account your plans for growth in the future.

> *Migrating from one time and attendance solution to another can be expensive and time-consuming. An expandable or upgradeable time and attendance solution that can easily grow with your business may prove to be more cost-effective in the long run.*

Flexible input options — Today's time and attendance systems offer a variety of input options, including: punching in and out at stand-alone or networked PCs; swiping proximity, bar code or infrared badges at stand-alone or PC-connected terminals; or using biometric profiles such as fingerprints or hand measurements to verify employee identity and record punches. Some systems depend on a single input method, while others can support a number of options.

> *The input method(s) suitable for your business will depend on the number of employees, the work environment, your budget, and your and your employees' comfort level with technology such as biometric verification. A flexible time and attendance system can accommodate a variety of input options, allowing you to choose those method(s) that make sense in your specific situation.*

Positive employee identification — Do you want or need to implement fingerprint or hand measurement systems to verify employee identity?

> *Many businesses are turning to biometric verification systems to combat costly "buddy punching" and increase the accuracy of their time and attendance data. Even if you don't have a need for biometric verification now, you may want a system that can accommodate the technology in order to maximize your options in the future.*

Job costing — What are your requirements for capturing labor data (e.g. department, project number, charge code, time reporting code)?

> *Your time and attendance system should allow you to track data to an appropriate level of detail for your business.*

How do you choose the solution that is best for your organization?

As we have seen, there are many variables to consider when choosing a time and attendance solution.

When reviewing the available solutions, you may find the following questionnaire helpful.

1. **How many employees are in your organization? What are your plans for expansion in the near term? What are your long term growth projections?**

   Make sure the solutions you're considering can accommodate your current employees and at least your projected near-term growth.

2. **Where would data entry terminals or PCs be most conveniently located?**

   Employees are more likely to clock in and out regularly if the location is convenient. Some types of terminals need to be plugged in to an electrical outlet; others need to be connected to a PC. Make sure that your chosen solution will work with your physical layout. Systems that offer a variety of options will allow you to change your business's layout much more easily if the need arises.

3. **How do you want your employees to clock in and out?**

   There are pros and cons to each type of input option. Evaluate your work environment and your specific needs to determine which option(s) are suitable for you. A time and attendance system that accommodates multiple input options allows you the flexibility to modify your system in the future if your requirements or work environment change.

4. **What special features or functions do you require from your time and attendance system?**

   All professional-quality time and attendance systems can record employee punches and produce basic reports of time worked. Do you need additional functionality, such as job costing or scheduling? Do you need to be able to segregate your employees by department or work group? Do you have unusual work rules or business processes that must be accommodated by your time and attendance software? Do you need your system to perform other functions such as access control or signal control?

5. **How will the supervisors, managers and system administrator(s) typically access and use the system?**

   Will you want or need more than one system administrator? Do you want managers and supervisors to approve punches before they're exported to payroll? Do you plan to have a single individual run and distribute reports, or would you prefer managers to be able to run their own reports at will? Do you need different levels of security for different types of administrative or managerial users? Be sure the systems you're considering can support the way you organize and manage your business.

6. **What reports will you want the system to produce? Which of this information is crucial to your business operations? Which is "nice to have"?**

   Ensure that the systems you're considering can provide the types of information that you need to manage and grow your business. A good time and attendance system will provide you with a variety of built-in reports and/or allow you to create custom reports and/or allow you to easily export your data, allowing you access to your business data in different permutations and combinations.

7. **What other in-house system(s) or service providers would you like to integrate with your time and attendance solution?**

   If your time and attendance system already provides a built-in interface for your chosen payroll system or service provider, the integration process is much easier. A strong time and attendance system will come with built-in interfaces for many popular payroll solutions, allowing you to change from one provider or application to another as your business needs dictate — without having also to change your time and attendance system.

Acroprint offers a wide range of solutions for businesses of all sizes and stages of growth

All Acroprint solutions support weekly, bi-weekly, semi-monthly and monthly pay periods and overtime. They all offer automatic adjustment for Daylight Savings Time. Each system features easy punch review and editing for supervisors, managers and system administrators, and password protection of the administrative functions for greater security. Acroprint time and attendance systems interface readily with most popular payroll applications and service providers such as Quickbooks, Peachtree, ADP, Paychex and more.

timeQplus V3

Priced to be easily affordable by small business but offering powerful functionality usually found only in more advanced solutions, the timeQplus Version 3 suite of products includes software (PC-punch), proximity badge and biometric options, and can be configured to display in your choice of English, Spanish or French.

The software is suitable for use by both hourly and salaried employees. Terminals connect to your PC or network via serial port, RS232 or Ethernet. You can add more terminals at any time, even mixing different input types on the same system, to allow a great deal of flexibility in configuration and physical layout.

The base timeQplus V3 software can accommodate 50 employees. Upgrades are available to expand capacity up to 250 employees. Allowing employees to punch in by keying their identification number directly in to a PC, timeQplus V3 software can provide an ideal time and attendance solution for companies that don't need remote input terminals. With a network upgrade, employees can conveniently clock in and out at any networked PC, including the PCs on their own desks.

timeQplus V3 Proximity offers all the features of network-enabled timeQplus V3 software for 50 employees (expandable up to 250 employees) plus a proximity badge terminal. Employees quickly clock in or out simply by waving their badge in front of the reader. Durable proximity badges can save you money in two ways: they generally last longer than standard bar-code badges, and they eliminate the need for constant repurchases of paper time cards.

timeQplus V3 Biometric offers all the features of network-enabled timeQplus V3 software for 125 employees (expandable up to 250 employees) plus a biometric finger-scan terminal. Employees easily clock in and out by placing their finger briefly on the scanner. Because of the nature of fingerprint biometrics, this solution is particularly suited to professional offices and other relatively clean environments.

For more information: www.acroprintstore.com/info-tqp3.html

Time Q +Plus

Our original Time Q +Plus system features a badge swipe terminal well-suited to an industrial or warehouse environment, but equally at home in a professional office. Up to 120 employees use badges to clock in and out at a single data collection terminal, which can be connected to a Windows PC for punch review and data transfer to a payroll system, or used as a stand-alone device connected directly to an 80-column printer.

With a selectable English or Spanish format, Time Q +Plus automatically displays the employee's hours worked on the terminal panel with each punch. The system also provides the option of signal control for up to 24 signals per day.

For more information: www.acroprintstore.com/info-tqp.html

timeQplus Biometric V2

Our second-generation timeQplus Biometric V2 system features a finger-scan biometric terminal best-suited for professional offices and other relatively clean environments. Biometric technology requires employees to be physically present when clocking in our out, eliminating costly "buddy-punching."

With timeQplus Biometric V2, your employees simply use their fingers to clock in and out, eliminating the costs of time cards or badges. The system can accommodate multiple terminals, so you can allow employees to clock in and out where ever convenient. You can configure the system in your choice of English, Spanish or French.

For more information: www.acroprintstore.com/info-tqpbio.html

Pendulum™

The Acroprint Pendulum Enterprise system accommodates an unlimited number of employees and allows for multiple terminals or locations. Job costing, access control, and signal devices are available as options. The system is best suited for mid to large sized businesses, and can be configured for multiple companies and multiple pay periods.

Designed to integrate smoothly with our DC7000 data collection terminals, Pendulum supports a wide variety of data collection devices. Biometric devices such as the hand reader and fingerprint reader can be connected via RS232, RS485, and modem communications.

For more information: www.acroprintstore.com/info-pendulum.html

Why Acroprint?

Acroprint Time Recorder Company, a family-owned company based in Raleigh, North Carolina, has a proud history of producing time clocks, time and attendance systems and document control stamps suitable for all types of businesses and all sorts of environments.

Acroprint's goal for the past 40 years has been to help small businesses save time and money. We understand lost minutes equal lost dollars.

Wilbur Robbins founded Acroprint in 1969. Robbins introduced a time recorder, the heavy-duty Acroprint Model 125, which would stir the market by offering a high-quality, low-cost product. The Model 125 quickly became known for its durability.

Robbins' son Glenn joined Acroprint after graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1973 and became President in 1986.

Wilbur Robbins

Glenn Robbins

Today the company's distinctive green-colored punch clocks are widely recognized throughout the world. These clocks have been seen in movies, television shows, print media, online and even in DreamWorks® animations. The clocks are still manufactured on site at Acroprint headquarters in Raleigh.

We are a leading global manufacturer and distributor of time and attendance solutions with more than 1,000 dealers/distributors across the United States and products that are exported to 70 foreign countries. In addition to traditional mechanical and electronic time recorders, we offer advanced software-based time and attendance solutions featuring badge-swipe and biometric input options to meet the needs of today's fast-paced business environments.

Acroprint wants your business! Our products and services are designed to be durable and easy to use.

Contact us today to learn how you can add profit to your bottom line with an Acroprint time and attendance system. At Acroprint, it's always *Time For Business™*.