touchstar
access | time | CCTV

SELECTING TIME & ATTENDANCE SYSTEMS:

A GUIDE FOR SMALL ORGANISATIONS

WHITE PAPER

MARCH 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purchasing a Time & Attendance system can be a major decision for any organisation irrespective of its size. Many purchase criteria must be considered - everything from functionality to integration to cost must be weighed carefully when evaluating your system.

A good Time & Attendance system should be able to address all major concerns like buddy punching, manual attendance calculation, manual entry in the payroll system, flexibility in attendance marking for different employees etc. Ultimately it should help to save time, reduce errors, improve employee morale, improve productivity and most importantly add value to the business.

This White Paper will provide some useful hints which small organisations can use for selection of Time & Attendance systems.

touchstar
access | time | CCTV

DIFFICULTIES IN EVALUATION

It is never an easy process for selecting right Time & Attendance system for the orginsation. In the market there are many vendors are available who are offering similar types of solutions with confusing specifications at different price points. If the decision maker is not familiar with the system, it can be a confusing process for the following reasons;

NUMBER OF SUPPLIERS IN THE MARKET:

Time-attendance is a very unorganised market with many local players and imported devices. It should be noted that a Time & Attendance system is a complete solution not just a box product like a mobile handset. So vendor selection should be based on the ability to customize, local support, proper training and ultimately matching with the organisation wider IT needs.

CONFUSING SPECIFICATIONS/FEATURES:

At the first sight all the features offered by different vendors are look similar. However the depth of feature and flexibility each feature provides is different from vendor to vendor. So depending upon the organisations need a detailed evaluation of the system's capabilities should be performed.

PRICE VARIATIONS:

As mentioned earlier, the Time & Attendance market is very fragmented. Many imported players are offering Time & Attendance solutions at very low prices while some very credible vendors are selling their solution at inflated prices. The sensible approach is to consider the total cost of ownership of the solution. Total cost of ownership includes actual product cost, installation charges, after sales support, customisation charges, warranty, down time costs etc.

PREPARE A REQUIREMENTS LIST

PREPARE A DETAILED TIME & ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS LIST

Time & Attendance is very dynamic in nature. No two organisations have identical attendance and leave policy. The same organisation may follow different timings and holiday for its different facilities. Various departments like manufacturing, marketing, R&D within an office often differ in their timing, grace period and overtime calculations. Often people working in the same department need different time-attendance flexibility.

In short, when approaching a time & attendance vendor, you should be ready and clear with your organisational requirements in detail. HR and IT team will have the most influence on system selection... but ultimately a Time & Attendance system is HR's baby!

HR SHOULD HAVE COMPLETE CLARIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE POLICY WITH:

- Number of Doors Used for Entry and Exit
- Number of Business Entities
- Working Hours
- Shift Timings (if applicable)
- Weekly Offs
- Late-In Policy
- Early-Out Policy

- Overtime Policy
- Holiday Leave Policy
- Official Out
- Types of Reports required
- Payroll Integration requirement
- Others if any...

touchstar
access | time | CCTV

QUESTIONS FOR ENSURING CORRECT SYSTEM SELECTION

An HR or IT person address the questions below when evaluating different vendors in the market.

IS THE SYSTEM FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO FIT OUR REQUIREMENTS?

When it comes to working hours, leaves, late-arrivals, early-departures and overtime, all organisations have their own policies and rules. These are like customs and traditions of a culture. They have evolved over a period of time and served you well over a period of years. It is neither advisable nor necessary to change them overnight. Therefore, you need a T&A application that can adapt to your systems with minimum change and disruption. Is the software flexible enough to adapt to your organisation's practices and policies?

CAN THE SYSTEM MEET OUR EXACT NEEDS?

The power of the T&A solution is derived from its software. The first and most important question is 'is the software designed for your country, region and application?'. T&A applications are always localised due to many factors including national laws, culture, industry, company size, etc. There is no one universal size that fits all. Therefore, it is necessary that the T&A application should be designed specifically to address all your needs without compromises. It would be a mistake to buy a T&A solution that offers "universal" or "standard" software designed to work in Asia, Africa, Middle-East and the rest of the world.

DOES THE SYSTEM OFFER ADEQUATE REPORTING?

A good Time & Attendance solution is as good as the output it offers in terms of reports and charts. A well-defined report or chart can reduce data analysis time drastically and improve efficiency. All vendors offer many kinds of time & attendance reports but you should check whether the exact reports required exist or on their 'development list'! Reports should be informative and in a format that can be easily exported into other applications for salary calculation or other purposes.

HOW DOES THE SYSTEM HANDLE DATA MANAGEMENT?

A standard time & attendance solution manages all entries, exits, attendance, overtime, holidays and other such transactions, analysis and summaries. All organisations maintain this data for a long time for their internal HR management and sometimes for legal compliance. In a way, this data is as important as accounts and financial data of the organisation. It is imperative you need easy and fast access to both current and historical data. Your T&A solution should support strong storage, backup, archival and retrieval methods.

touchstar
access | time | CCTV

HOW VERSATILE IS THE SYSTEM?

Many technologies are available in the market for Time & Attendance all with their own 'pros and cons'. As a smart buyer you should know which technology is suitable for your application. If you are selecting one technology today but wish to switch / mix at a later date (e.g. fingerprint & card-based) what would be the cost implications? Is it just addition of card module cost or complete hardware replacement cost? For basic access control application, does the system have a door relay port to connect an electronic lock as standard?

HOW EASY IS THE SYSTEM TO CONFIGURE AND MONITOR?

If you want to get the most out of your Time & Attendance system, it must have user-friendly hardware and software configuration. You should not expect any complex learning on its core functionality. Once operational the system should have the facility to display all important data like total absent users, leave detail, real time user data with detail, holiday list, shift information etc. on a 'dashboard' page. This will save valuable time for the HR person.

PRODUCT DESIGN

Any system you select should add value to your office interior. It should not look like a blemish or afterthought. A good design is not only aesthetics but also should have proper audio-visual notifications, be environment friendly, dust proof etc.

SUPPORT AND SOFTWARE UPGRADES

Is the product backed up by long-term support, with a clear upgrade path? Change is the only constant. With time and business growth (or shrinkage) everything will change – number of people, organisation structure, policies etc. You need to check whether the T&A solution you are considering can evolve with your changing needs? Will the vendor be around on a long-term basis? It should be that the financial investment made is ever wasted. There should be no need to scrap the solution and have to reinvest in another one in just a few years.

MANUFACTURER'S CREDIBILITY

After understanding the core features of a product, you should also check manufacturer's general credibility in the market. Who are their existing customers? Are they are satisfied or not with the solution? How is their support regarded? How is their R&D track record? etc. These questions will give you confidence in your decision making.

HARDWARE RELIABILITY

High quality materials like gold flash PCBs, industrial grade components, engineering plastic etc. will add value into the product and increase its life and performance. Many foreign vendors are offering their solutions at half the prevailing market price but with a lack of product depth and performance. In short, selection should not be on the basis of one-time cost but on the total cost of ownership.

CONNECTIVITY OPTIONS

For user punch data transfer and device configuration, connectivity is required between device and software. Before you select any device you should have an idea what type of infrastructure is possible within your organisation. There are products available with multiple connectivity options like Ethernet, Wi-Fi, GPRS, mobile broadband, PoE, manual transfer using USB drive etc.

HEAD OFFICE

TouchStar
Access | Time | CCTV
Maple Barn,
Beeches Farm Road,
Uckfield,
East Sussex TN22 5QD.

PHONE

0845 3379 155

EMAIL

info@touchstar.co.uk
support@touchstar.co.uk
finance@touchstar.co.uk

WEB

www.touchstar-atc.com

REPAIRS

TouchStar
Access | Time | CCTV
Unit 49,
Vinehall Business Centre,
Vinehall Road,
Robertsbridge
East Sussex TN32 5JW

INSTALLATION CENTRE

TouchStar
Access | Time | CCTV
Pheasant Oak Barn,
Hob Lane,
Balsall Common,
Nr Kenilworth CV7 7GX