

# A Conversation About Compliance

With Brian Butler, Director of HR, City of Tuscaloosa

As the public sector continues to bounce back from the recession, labor costs still remain a concern. Yet most state and local government organizations continue to use manual time and attendance systems to track labor. This provides little visibility and control around labor law and union compliance enforcement when it comes to such mandates as FMLA and military leave. Poor union and compliance tracking can lead to negative and very visible lawsuits when employee pay is inaccurate. In addition to noncompliance, these organizations also risk loss of productivity and potential budget waste.

The City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, recently implemented an automated workforce management system, which has resulted in more accurate audit tracking, improved accountability, and fewer misinterpretations of labor laws and union agreements.

**The following questions were posed by Kronos Incorporated to Brian Butler, Director of Human Resources for the City of Tuscaloosa.**

**Q. Prior to implementing an automated workforce management system, what were some of the challenges you experienced?**

A. Our old time and attendance system was no longer being supported, and the interface into our payroll system was very weak. We had an exception-based system, meaning that the system paid you unless you told it differently — that you were absent or on some type of leave. That created a lot of inaccuracies and inefficiencies for us in calculating annual vacation and illness leave, payment of shift differentials, etc.

In addition, our complex pay and work rules were very difficult to process through our old system. And we had several inconsistent time collection and reporting methodologies. So the intent with moving to an automated system was to increase efficiency, reduce the amount of time it took to process payroll, and replace many of the slow manual processes that were necessary with the old system.

**Q. What are some of the benefits the city has realized so far from using an automated workforce management system?**

A priority for us was automating calculations that had been done manually to improve accuracy. The new system has audit trails that capture who, what, and when events were applied to a timecard. If any manual adjustments have to be made to a timecard, the audit trails track that. In addition, the system has payroll engines that apply the proper calculations to hours worked. And through this system we're able to proactively monitor and identify different individual and group patterns as it results in payment of salary and benefits.

We've also had success in eliminating duplicate systems and processes. Before, we had Excel and Word documents and paper calendars to keep up with time. We had employees keeping up with their own time on different processes — manual attendance tracking. We had some of our hourly employees filling out their timesheets, and some actually filling out only time missed. So again, a lot of duplication of effort, and a lot of error-prone manual processes.

The city also had some departments keeping time off the books, or keeping timesheets a different way, so when it came to data process payroll, they'd have to transpose that information to the HRIS. So again, a lot of potential for error. And in a government, we're trying to make sure we are good stewards of the taxpayers' money. This system helps us ensure better accountability of employee time.



**Q. So let's talk about compliance. How did the city handle compliance challenges with your old system and how has automation changed that?**

A. With the old system, we were manually tracking the federally protected leave that is afforded to our employees. The new system allows us to create leave cases using the Leave Manager module to track those employees with better accountability. Sometimes, when employees were out via the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or other type of medical leave, we in HR didn't even know it. So we weren't tracking them and we weren't making sure the appropriate documentation was being submitted pursuant to FMLA. This system allows us to manage that, be the leave managers for people, and again, have better compliance with FMLA.

For complying with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the new system allows us to track employee time better. And if employees are working, then they're getting paid in this system. No working for free or coming back two years later saying, "Hey, I worked 15 minutes over three days a week for the last three years, and I need to be paid for that." So by having this active, automated system, we're better able to track and properly account for time and have a defense against the FLSA claims or lawsuits.

**Q. With new legislation constantly being implemented, the burden of keeping policies and records in better order is critical. If policies need to be revisited, how often should it happen?**

A. When we implemented the automated timekeeping system, we were forced to look at our policies, because that's the first thing the programmers wanted to know. So we looked at those, made changes and edits, and consolidated different types of policies.

Once we went online with the automated time and attendance process, we made a commitment to revisit our leave policies, our compensation policies, at least once a year. We can go back as needed any time different laws change and review our policies. But at a minimum, we're looking at ours once a year to make sure that, again, we are operating as efficiently and effectively as we can.



State and local governments such as the City of Tuscaloosa are making the change to an automated workforce management system to:

- » Upgrade to meet compliance demands
- » Integrate to streamline processes and workflow
- » Gain robust reporting
- » Enable customization for unique requirements



Without the right workforce management tools, you don't have the information or visibility to foresee that your organization could be at risk for unnecessary litigation and subsequent financial challenges. Kronos helps you minimize compliance risk by providing high-quality information that's centralized, comprehensive, and available in real time.

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