TIME AND ATTENDANCE:
5 KEY CONSIDERATIONS
FOR DATA COLLECTION
(CLOCKING & ACCESS CONTROL) DEVICES

Choosing the right time and attendance system is often a detailed and exhaustive process for many organisations, however, sometimes the selection of the key means of data entry (clocking and access devices) receives much less attention and the choice offered by any one vendor is usually limited. However, this is a critical aspect of the overall solution; without it the system cannot provide any of the benefits and ROI that it was procured to achieve.

Indeed, the main issue we find when consulting for companies is that the data collection devices do not meet the needs of the organisation. Often the issue isn't that the device does not work, rather it doesn't meet the specific needs of the organisation. **The needs can be divided into 5 categories:**

1. HIGH TRUST VS LOW TRUST

Each organisation has its own "trust-level" which whilst not formalised has developed over time and in response to any abuses (perceived or actual) that the organisation has identified. Within Time and Attendance, these tend to centre on "Buddy Punching" where a colleague clocks in/out on behalf of an absent employee and "Time Theft" where overtime hours are "inflated" and lateness is under-reported or "deflated". The type of device selected needs to address the trust-level requirements of the organisation.

HIGH TRUST DATA COLLECTION	LOW TRUST DATA COLLECTION
Self Service (e.g. via web)	Biometric Devices (Finger/Hand/Palm/Face/Iris)
PIN	Mobile Applications with Geotracking
Card	
Telephony	

2. LIMITED VS EXTENSIVE FUNCTIONALITY

When investing in data collection devices for Time & Attendance, there are two errors that can be made in selection: The first is "tunnel vision" where significant sums are invested in "single purpose" devices when they could have improved productivity and communication through "multi-functional" devices that can capture more data and provide information and self-service functionality to staff. The opposite is also true where organisations over-reach in purchasing much more expensive devices that can do everything, but in reality, the requirements are limited. Each organisation is different and should consider whether the additional functionality will be beneficial to the organisation – some of the main areas to consider are listed below;

FUNCTIONALITY	BENEFIT
Task/Productivity Recording	Productivity Improvements
Job Tracking	Recharging and/or costing improvements
Access Control	Restrict access to sensitive physical locations
Self Service	Reduction in queries to HR/Payroll
Temperature Checks	Infection control.
Communication	e.g. vacant shifts, overtime requests

3. HOSTILE VS NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS

Another aspect of device selection relates to the physical environment where the devices will be located. The device may look great but if it is a factory with high dust/oil and rough treatment by staff then it will not last or worse will not function at all. Similarly, in food manufacturing environments where washdowns are common, an IP rated device is a must. A simplified guide of the types of devices for each environment is listed below;

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS	NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENTS
Ruggedized casing (Robust Environment)	Finger
IP Rated (Washdowns/outside building)	Face
Hand Readers (Dirty, Dusty, Oil)	Card
Proximity Readers (contactless)	Palm

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4. LOW VS HIGH HYGIENE

Hygiene has always been critical for many industries (e.g. Food Manufacturing) but is now being more widely considered due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Even before this, it is best practice – and cost effective – to consider infection control within any business (Each year Flu costs UK organisations £1.35 billion due to 7.6 million). Some devices are more prone to infection spread than others.

LOW HYGIENE	HIGH HYGIENE
Finger	Iris
Hand reader	Face with option of temperature validation
Card	Palm
	Prox

5. LOCAL VS REMOTE

Companies also need to consider whether their staff are working remotely as this impacts on data collection choices. By remote this maybe working from home, at a client location, in a construction site or remote office that isn't connected to the internet. Another consideration is whether the device will be connected to local software or cloud software.

LOCAL	REMOTE
Lan based units	Telecheck
Self Service	Mobile Application
Local PCs	Device with 3G enablement
	Device with "outbound" data transfer
	Mobile-battery backed units

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SUMMARY:

The right device is often the result of combining and prioritising the choices in response to each of the 5 areas detailed above. There are always trade-offs to be made during the selection process, but the wrong choice can seriously impact both the successful adoption of the solution and the value derived. It is also not a "one size fit" all approach. Within many organisations there are different cohorts (e.g. office staff, manufacturing staff, logistics) and environments, each with specific requirements that differ from other environments and cohorts, so a "mix and match" approach may well be appropriate in these situations. Again, with each solution, it is important to consider costs, benefits, GDPR and practicality in deciding on a specific device.

CHALLENGES:

There is a huge range of devices on the market, with new ones appearing each month. Biometric devices alone encompass Fingerprint, Finger Vein, Face, Hand, Iris and Palm. There are also over 100 different types of card formats available and often not all are supported by a single device manufacturer.

The challenge though is a) selecting the right device and b) the lack of choice offered by many time and attendance/workforce management providers.

THE SOLUTION:

A similar challenge was solved many years ago within the IT market with regard to Printers. Organisations wanted to be able to choose their printer independently of the software (e.g. Word processor) they used. Their requirements differed between departments; for instance, marketing would need a high-quality colour laser printer, finance might want a fast monotone laser and home workers could function perfectly well with an inkjet solution. They wanted to mix and match and avoid being "locked in" by the software provider. The solution was a "printer driver" that provided middleware between the software and the hardware.

HFX have taken a similar approach with EveryOneCloud which provides middleware between any device and any software solution. It currently integrates with hundreds of devices (increasing each month) and enables organisations to mix and match their devices across their different environments and cohorts. It also means that customers are not locked into a specific software or hardware vendor and can change either one without impacting on the other. This smart approach enables organisations to be agile and adaptive.

The EveryOneCloud solution does not simply provide integration, but manages the devices, error management, secure template propagation as well as provides asset location and tracking. The solution can also enrich or transform data on demand to provide additional information in real-time.

Customers can also take advantage of the HFX Hardware Deployment and Support Service to both install and maintain the device estate through our UK wide engineering teams.

COVID-SECURE

Our Covid-secure datasheet explains our special terminals for a Covid-secure workplace in more detail.

View our Covid-secure solutions datasheet here.

SERVICES:
- Device Consultancy
- Integration Services
- EveryOneCloud Middleware
- Hardware Deployment
- Support and Maintenance Services