How to choose a time and attendance system

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1. Introduction to this guide

Time and attendance can make a world of difference to your business, especially your profitability and productivity.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced businesses to operate in new ways. It's never been more critical to have a range of cloud-based technology available to remote workers, or to understand who is working, and when.

Time and attendance software provides you with an instant snapshot of who clocked in and at what time. Everything is recorded in one secure place, meaning there are no more lost hours due to late starting times, no more confusion over hours worked or shift swaps, and no more double-booked annual leave. Time and attendance software can be the key to keeping everything running just as it should.

Of course, not all time and attendance systems are the same. And with different types of suppliers and varying requirements, selecting the right system can be a daunting task. But it doesn't have to be. This guide gives you all the information you need to tackle your time and attendance needs, whether you're:

1. Managing it in-house and making a simpler solution

2. Looking to upgrade to the next level of detail

3. Evaluating whether you're making the most out of the system you already have

2. Why you need a time and attendance solution

The right time and attendance system can save time, reduce payroll errors and improve workforce productivity. In turn, this can help you to build employee trust, drive value within your organisation, and help you navigate these challenging times. But the wrong system can have the opposite effect.

In simple terms, a time and attendance system is used to track working hours. Employees can clock in and out from electronic terminals (using swipe cards, proximity fobs, or biometric terminals) or software accessible through their PC, online portal or mobile.

The data collected from attendance-clocking can then be instantly imported to your payroll solution, providing you and your employees with confidence in the accuracy of their payroll run.
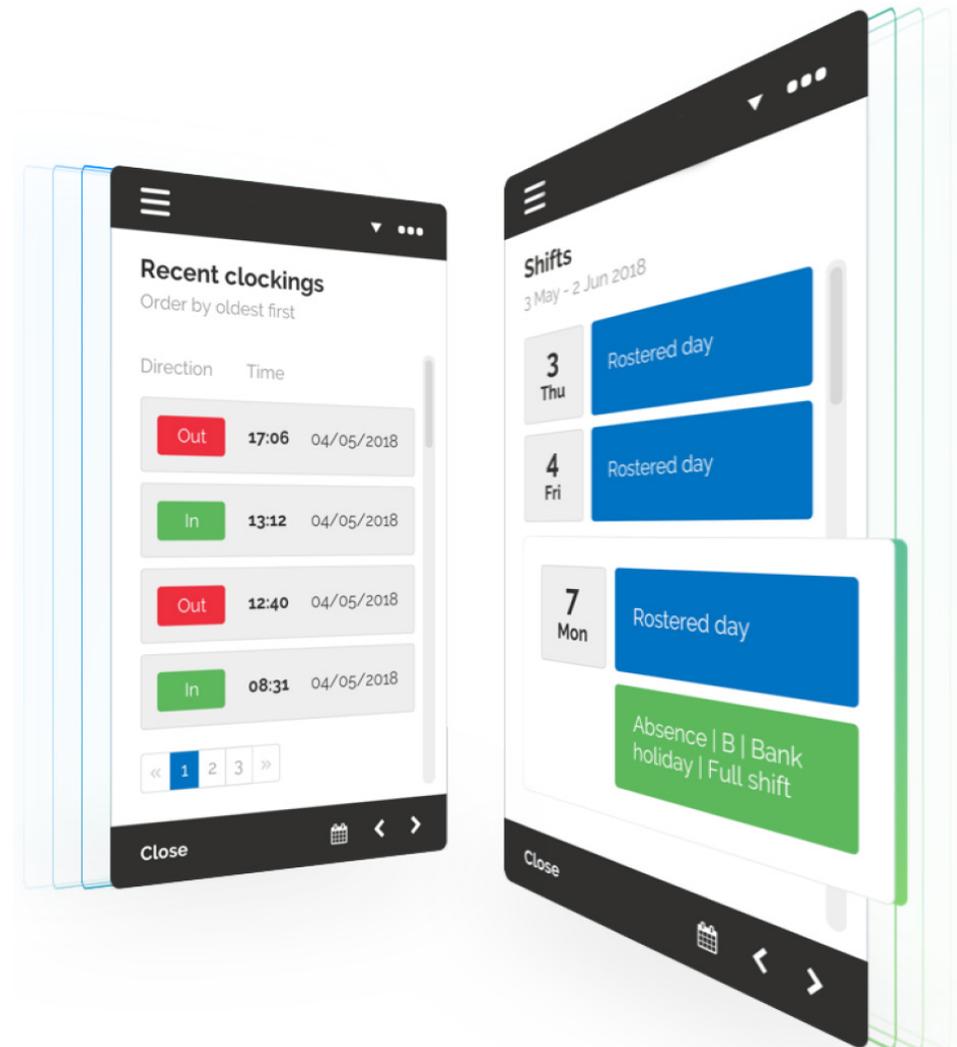
Time and attendance systems can also:

- Calculate paid time off and holiday accruals
- Create individual employee absence profiles
- Manage team schedules
- Assist in employee management activities
- Give employees more control over their working life

4.4 days per employee is lost
to unplanned absence[*]

The ability to log attendance quickly and easily, no matter where employees are based, has become particularly important since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we look to the future, remote work is shifting from a nice-to-have to a necessity in many businesses.

Absence costs businesses **£570**
per employee per year[**]
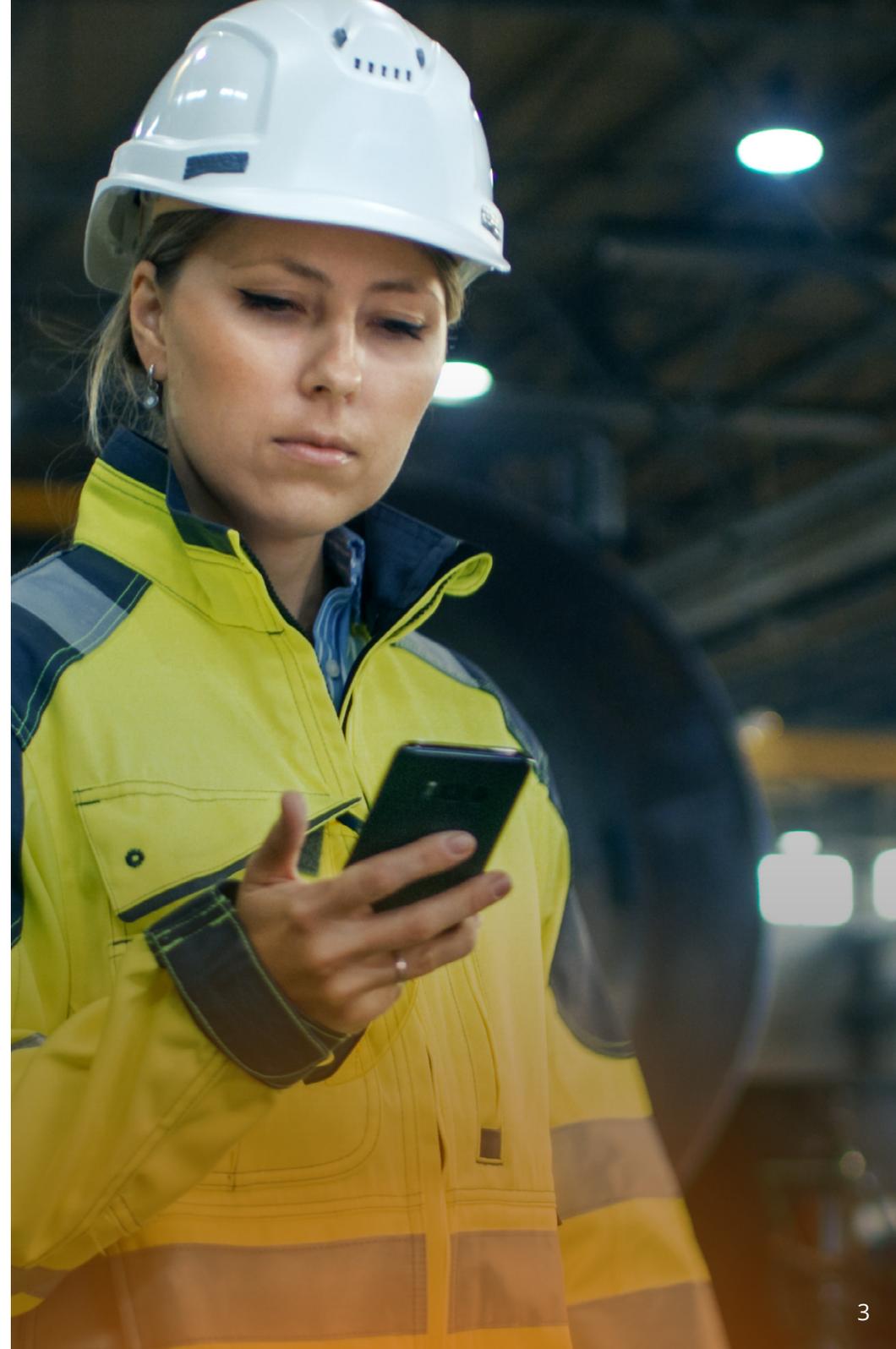
3. Your business requirements

Before you begin to look for a time and attendance solution,
think about what you need and what your business requirements are.

Integration with other systems

Identifying your integration needs early on will help you identify suppliers
that can make sure you get the most out of your current systems and
processes. This means establishing:

- What existing systems you have

- Whether your business uses a payroll software or HR management
  system that you want your time and attendance system to work with

- Whether you need to find a supplier that offers a suite of workforce
  management solutions

On-premise or cloud

Cloud-based hosting relieves the need for hefty servers and reduces
pressure on bandwidth, but for some companies a server-based model
may be more appropriate.

Employee access

You should choose the clocking-in option that is aligned with your business,
industry and way of working. This could include:

- Biometric terminals
- Keyfobs
- Web portal
- Mobile devices

Administration

With employee self-service access you can empower your workforce, giving
your team and managers ownership of the system. Allow users to view work
rotas, planned shifts, absences and submit leave requests all in one place.
Make sure the system presents data clearly to get managers on board.

Software customisation

If your organisation uses unique shift patterns or different payroll categories,
then you may require a system that can be customised to suit your
requirements. Find out what level of customisation any potential supplier
can provide, so you can find something to fit around your needs.

Supporting future growth

What are your organisation's plans for the future? You may be looking to
introduce flexible working hours, remote teams, or skills-based scheduling.
Make sure the system you choose can grow with your business and support
what you want to provide your employees.

4. Finding a software provider

Not all time and attendance systems are the same. There are some clear differences, advantages and potential problems to keep in mind when weighing up your options.

Have you considered:

- Who will support your software: the company that sells the system or the people that developed it?

- How knowledgeable are the support staff?

- Do the support staff work with only one brand, or with multiple systems from a range of suppliers?

- Who is responsible for making changes to the system?

- What service-level agreements (SLAs) can you expect?

- How quickly can software or hardware issues be resolved?

- Does the supplier have a clear roadmap for ongoing and future product development?

- What is its software update frequency like?

Be aware

You may want to check if the supplier you're talking to is a full-service software provider which owns and develops the software itself, or a reseller.
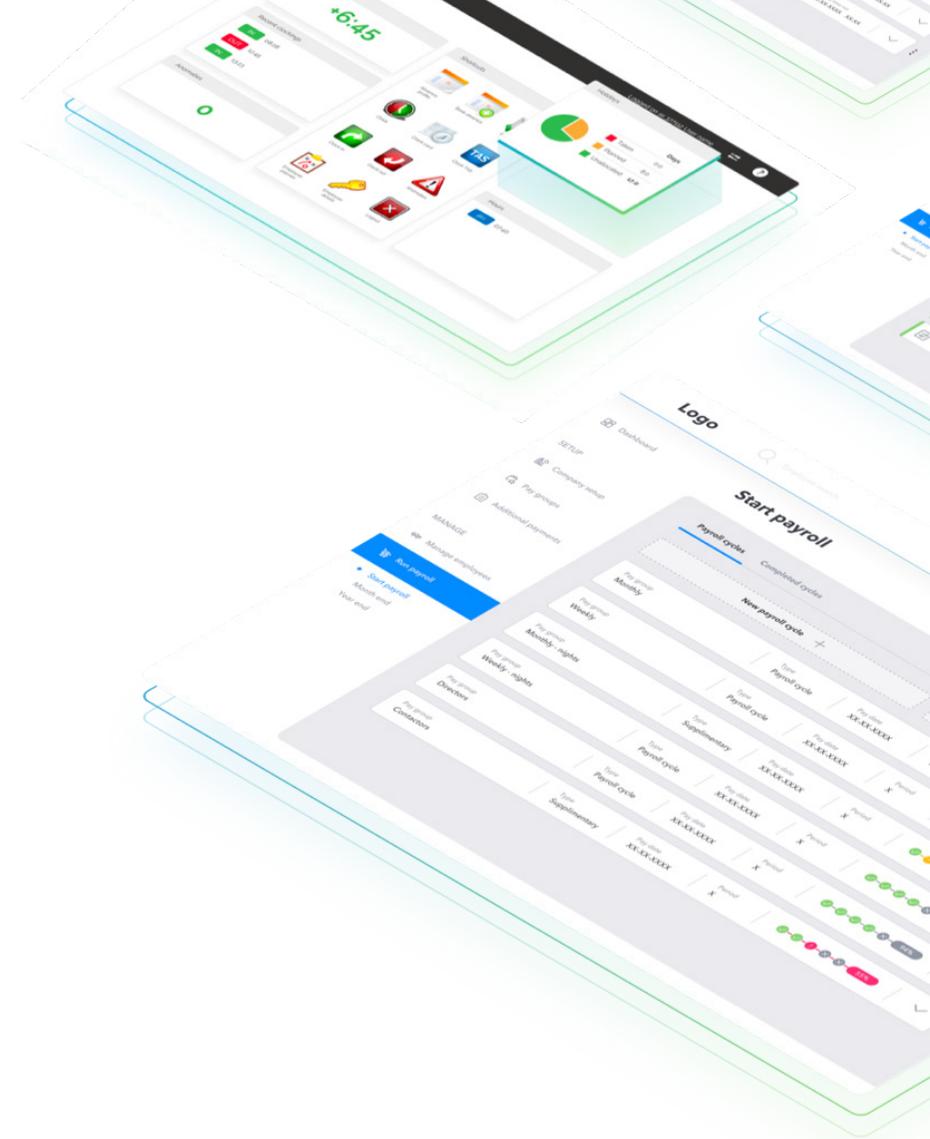
5. Features to look for

With so many time and attendance systems on the market, it can be difficult to know which one is right for your business.
We've highlighted some key areas that you should look for in a solution.

Clocking-in options

A flexible system will allow your staff to clock their time in a variety of ways, such as through a portal, mobile app or hardware device.

Added value functions

A system that offers more than just clocking in and out will provide added value to your business. These functions can include:

- Staff scheduling
- Holiday requests
- Absence management systems

Accuracy

You need to see and report the actual time employees work, not just the hours they're scheduled to work.

Ease of use

Look for a system that's easy to use, with a simple interface that allows employee self-service. This will ensure a high adoption rate by both employees and managers.

Mobile compatibility

Find a solution that can meet all of your staff requirements, including remote workers. Mobile compatibility means that remote workers can clock in and out and you can track their location, making sure they're where they're supposed to be.

Audit trail features

The ability to view the original time sheet data along with any changes made by managers can be beneficial in case of an audit.

Security

Security is key for businesses, particularly when handling sensitive and personal data. Regardless of the system provider, make sure it places as much importance on security as your IT teams do.

Integration options

Look for a system that integrates with any existing applications and software you use, such as those for HR and payroll.
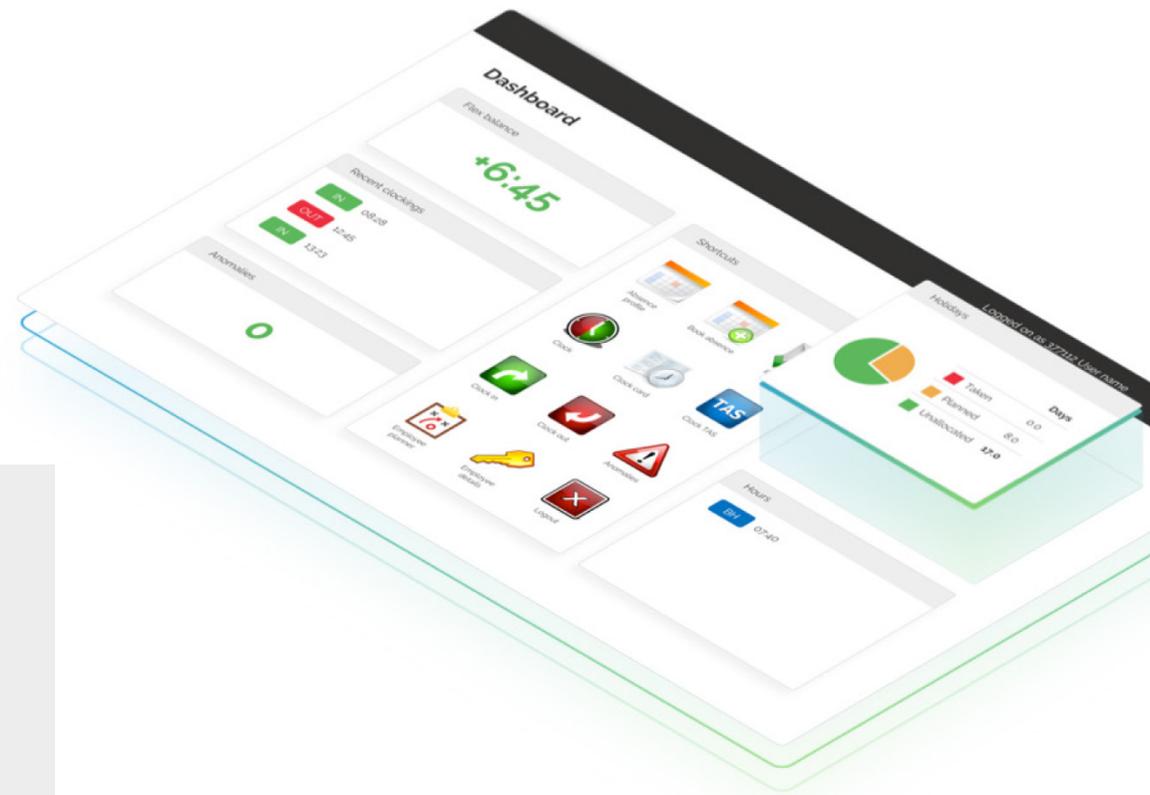
🔔 Alerts

Some systems can provide notifications when employees:

- Are nearing overtime
- Forget to clock in or out
- Are close to exceeding working regulation hours

This can be helpful for controlling business expenses, as well as looking after staff wellbeing.

📊 Reporting and analytics

Monitoring time and attendance is only part of the job: the really important work comes next, through insight and evaluation. Look for a software solution that will deliver broken-down data, at-a-glance graphics and analysis.

✓ GDPR compatibility

Be prepared for when legislation changes. Make sure your system is GDPR-compliant, so you can better manage your data requests and processing.

6. Speaking to potential suppliers

Once you've found several potential suppliers, it's time to narrow them down.

This checklist should help you tackle those important initial conversations.

You need to know:

- How in-depth is the consultation process?

- Does the supplier have a project management team aligned with an industry-recognised methodology, such as PRINCE2, APM, or PMI?

- How will the project be implemented?

- How is the initial user training provided?

- What is the ongoing support model?

- What are the SLAs?

- What reports can be obtained from the system?

- Which organisations are using the system already, and can they provide testimonials?

- What has the system availability been like over the last six months?

- What accreditations does the supplier have?
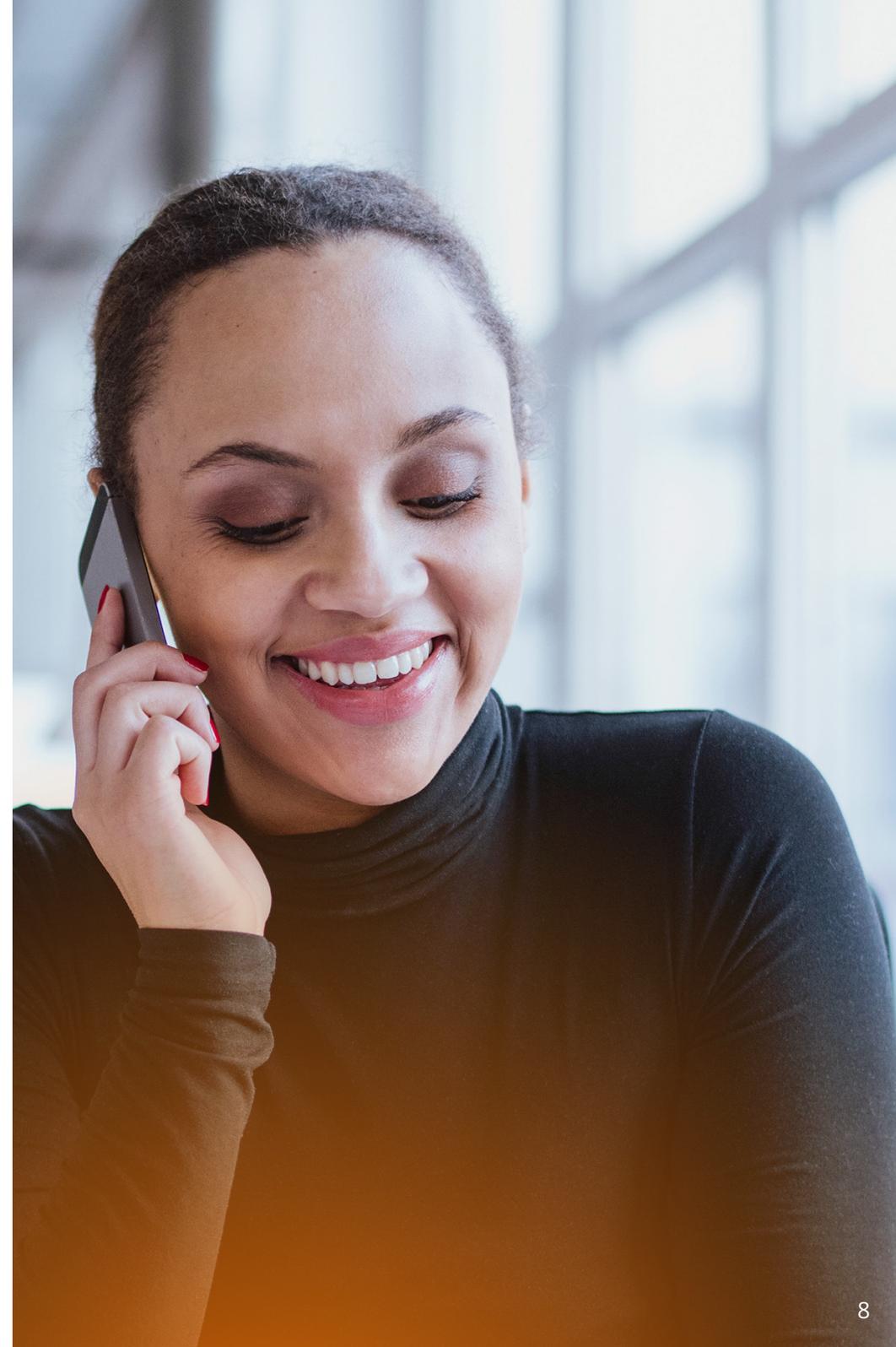
7. Pitfalls to avoid

The decision to invest in a time and attendance software is a wise one,
but choosing the wrong solution could cause more headaches down the road.

Here are some of the most common pitfalls:

Lack of planning

It's always a good idea to review your current processes before considering new software. Planning how you want the system to work with what you already have will boost adoption rates.

Not identifying your key requirements

Prioritise the functional requirements you want out of your system: these should be the rating criteria for evaluating software options.

Over-prioritising cost

Opting for the cheapest solution may not be the best choice. The decision about which solution is the best for your workforce is a matter of value, not cost. Wasted time is wasted money.

Doing too much, too soon

Some implementation issues don't appear until you start scaling the system. Allow for the system to scale out gradually so that you can solve problems methodically as they arise along the way.

Not consulting your people first

Get company buy-in, from the board through to managers and employees. Learn what they need and want from the system.

Not training your staff

Take the time to train employees on the new software. It takes more time and effort, but the payoff will be worth it. Before choosing a supplier, find out what training is provided, how it's delivered, and the costs entailed.

8. Measuring your return on investment

A time and attendance system can deliver multiple benefits for your organisation, from productivity to empowerment. To give you an insight on how a time and attendance system can provide a good return on investment (ROI), here's how it can support different areas of your business.

Finances

Time and attendance software saves money. The case has been proven over and over again: quality breeds quality and drives profitability. Investing in a superior system from the start will pay dividends. You can expect to see a return on investment very quickly. It's simple: reducing absenteeism means fewer lost man hours, and by saving time and reducing errors, you can increase productivity and therefore profitability.

Number of employees	Hourly rate	Annual saving
150	£7.50	£37,781
10,000	£8	£1,343,333
10,000	£7.20	£2,350,833

These annual savings are conservative estimates based on a 1% increase in attendance, 0.5% decrease in errors and a two minute reduction in manual data entry per employee.
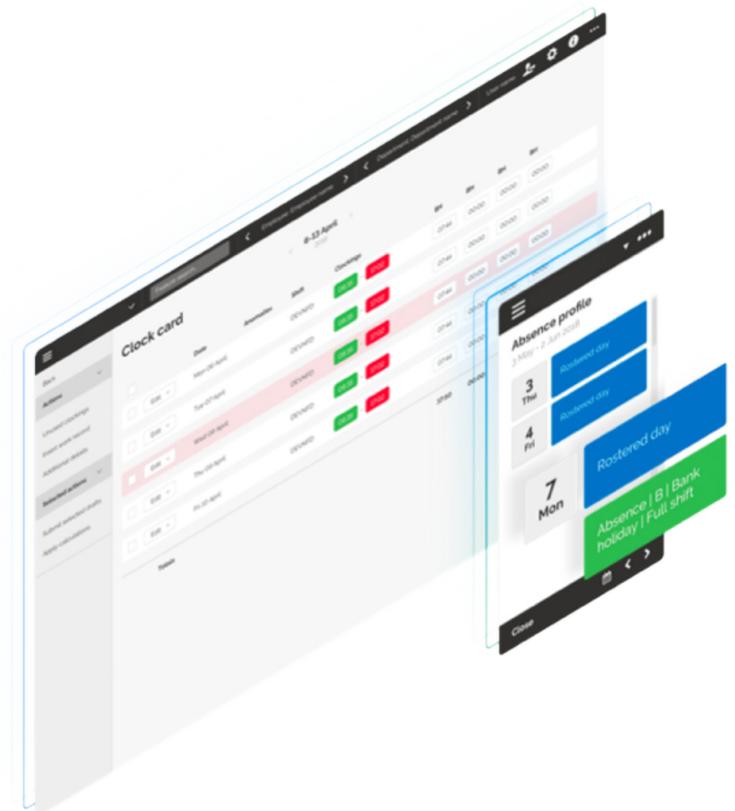
HR

HR teams are often the driving force behind change or implementation of time and attendance software – as well as the first port of call when an issue arises. The ROI of using a time and attendance solution may be immeasurable across your business, but it's often most visible for HR teams initially. It means they can get the basics of time savings sorted and deliver on their obligation to provide a happy, healthy workplace, as well as other benefits.

- **More time**
  Automated reporting means that your HR team can save a huge amount of time compared to doing things manually

- **Less administration**
  Everything is logged digitally, so there's no chance of paperwork going missing

- **No need for HR to be a 'middleman'**
  Swapping shifts becomes much easier for employees, who can sort it amongst themselves

- **Work from anywhere**
  A multi-platform system can be accessed from any device with just an internet connection

Staff

Time and attendance software doesn't just give employees the opportunity to clock in and out easily and book their annual leave. It also gives them control over their working lives and demonstrates a level of trust from management. This level of autonomy is empowering, and it comes up time and again in reports on employee satisfaction and productivity – something that's high on every HR agenda.

As employees are able to monitor their own absence records, they're more likely to keep track of sick days and adapt their behaviour accordingly. What's more, time and attendance systems can often lower the frustration levels of not just employees, but also managers, payroll staff, human resources professionals and owners.

"Advanced's Time and Attendance software system saves a great deal of time and produces accurate information at the touch of a button, rapidly reducing labour and administrative costs."

Katina Styles, Human Resources Director
Axminster Carpets

9. Your next steps

There are many technological benefits to using time and attendance software. Insights can be used and exported directly to your existing HR or payroll system, removing the potential for error and data double entry. And automated reporting removes a job from the to-do list.

However, not all time and attendance systems are the same.
To make sure you select the best provider, don't forget to:

- Plan
- Break down your requirements
- Consider your budget
- Discover your potential ROI
- Identify the provider that will best meet your needs
- Implement your system and get your staff trained
- Watch the results
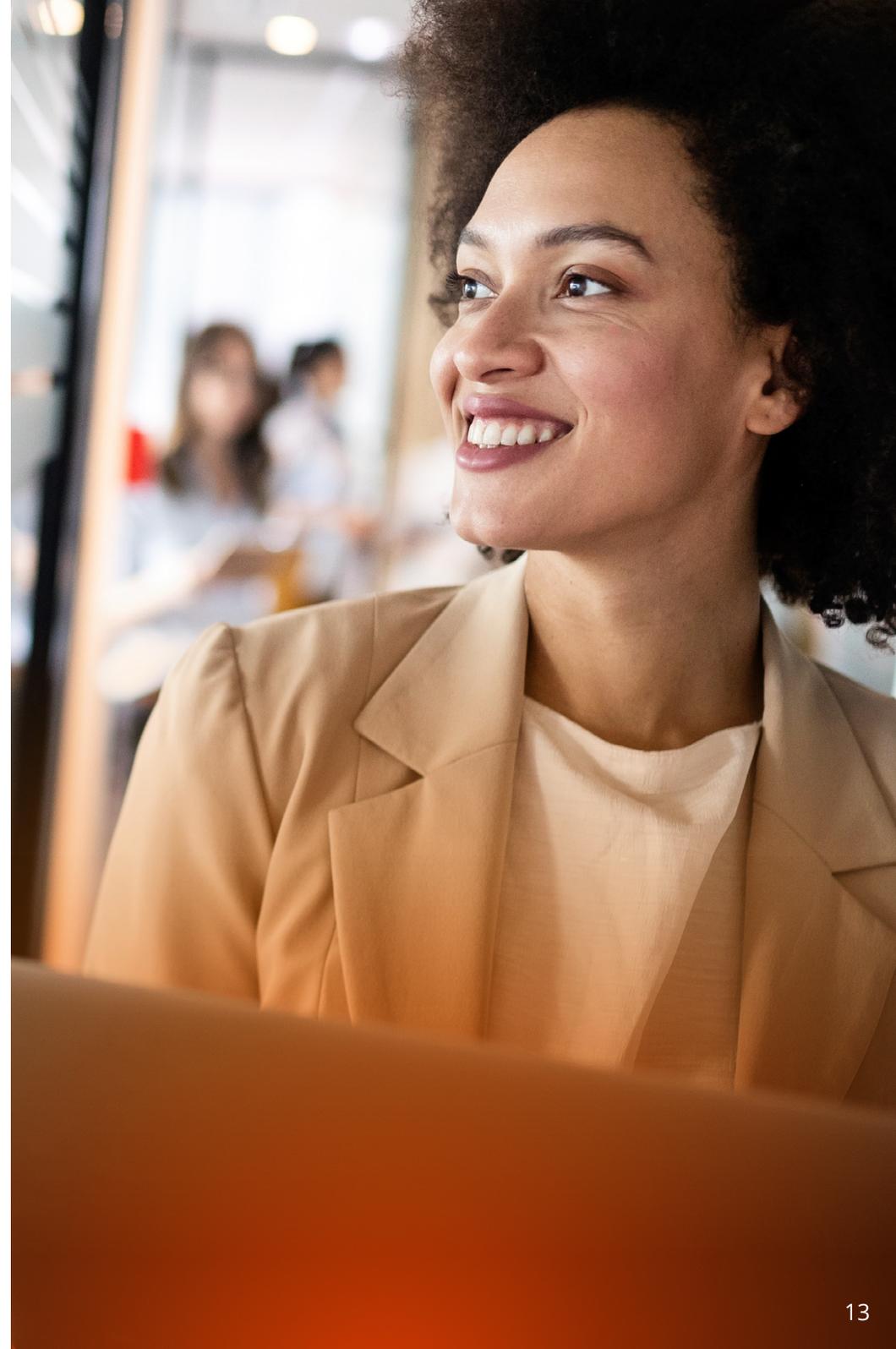
10. Managing your workforce

Our solutions, modules, services and products can be used in isolation, or fully integrated to create a seamless and efficient end-to-end workforce management process.

- Time and attendance
- Workforce management
- Absence management
- HR software
- Flexipay payroll software
- Hardware and access control
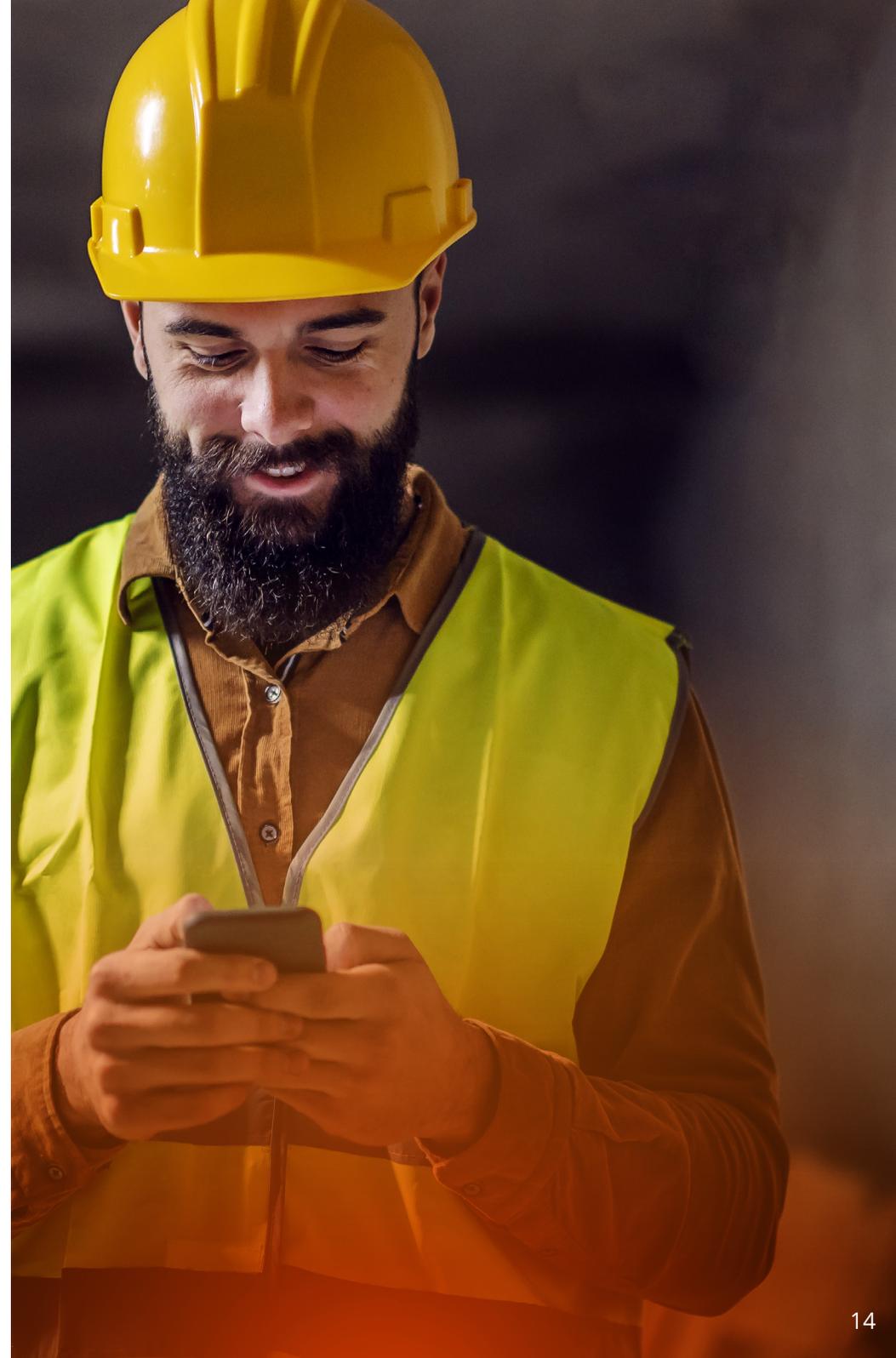
We would love to hear from you

Hopefully this was a helpful insight into Time & Attendance Software.
If you'd like to find out more about how our solutions can help your business
and ensure you are ready to meet the future, get in touch with us today.

Contact us