

INTEGRATION, INTEGRATION, INTEGRATION

Even though the workforce accounts for every cleaning contractor's largest expense, the value of workforce management data often goes unnoticed. Not any more, however. Developments in workforce management software and cloud integration means contractors can unlock the value from their workforce data to drive business efficiency. Nick Whiteley from Vanquish Integrated People Solutions explains.

Workforce management for the cleaning industry has come on leaps and bounds. Gone are the days of having to put up with the frustrations and errors associated with timesheets and spreadsheets or 'off-the-shelf' systems that are unable to cope with the idiosyncrasies of the industry.

After much development work, solutions dedicated solely to the cleaning industry have started to emerge.

These have been developed in close collaboration with leading contractors to deliver the tools and features that contractors have long yearned for, such as the ability to:

- Centralise the workforce in a single software solution
- View the workforce from a contract perspective
- Track 'actual' worked hours against hours forecasted
- Collate real-time data from remote client sites and track staff movements
- Apply different pay rates for staff working on multiple contracts
- Simplify the management of multi-tenancy buildings with Building Reference functions
- Assign 'best-fit' and 'best-cost' to meet strict budgets
- Create 'Teams' of workers who regularly work together for fast scheduling
- Configure 'Assumed Hours' to manage workers

Collectively the advanced functions enable contractors to gain total transparency of the workforce, better plan and manage workers to meet the requirements of each contract and gain a better understanding of their labour costs.

Integration – The Key To Unlocking Value From Your Workforce

As powerful as workforce management systems are on their own, their return and strategic value is heightened profoundly when integrated with other key business functions.

"For far too long, there has been a tendency for workforce management to exist as an isolated business function, but with the workforce representing every contractor's largest expense, workforce management systems hold some of the most meaningful data available to contractors."

Cleaning contractors typically rely on a myriad of systems, such as CMS, accounting, payroll and HR to run their business, but a lack of direct integration with workforce management means contractors are left with an incomplete and disparate picture of how well a business

is performing against customer expectations, costs and quality.

Workforce management systems provide the only opportunity to engage with the workforce at the point of service delivery. Subsequently, the data is critical to gaining an insight into contract costs and staff productivity.

In the absence of true integration valuable time is often spent duplicating data, leading to the potential for errors and inaccuracies to occur.

Innovations in cloud technology and API platforms have made integration with workforce management easier, faster to implement and more cost effective, opening up the possibility for 'best of breed' back office systems to profit from workforce data to enrich their own functionality.

Data can now be 'pushed' and 'pulled' from connected systems in real-time without hiccups, allowing core business functions to be automated and streamlined without the need for further data entry.

With easy and open access to their workforce management system, contractors have the flexibility to leverage all the industry-specific features from a dedicated system, as highlighted above, and then extract whatever data they need, however and whenever they need it.

For instance, they can apply the necessary pay rates for each contract, prepare team rotas to meet service level agreements, and then track on-site activity to ensure staff have arrived and finished on time.

Attendance data can then be 'pushed' back to the central hub to populate timesheets required for payroll and invoicing.



STRATEGIC BENEFITS

Integrating core business functions with workforce management brings both administrative and strategic benefits.

With all data entered once and made available in a single database, which is always up-to-date, contractors can gain a total and holistic view of their entire operation and make better informed decisions based on 'one version of the truth' to drive a more profitable business.

For instance, they can make a direct comparison between how long each contract takes to clean and how many hours were budgeted for, and use this information to determine which contracts are profitable and which are causing excessive drain on resource.

With this information to hand contractors can enforce best practice and cost out more accurate quotes, safe in the knowledge that their margin is protected.

Meanwhile, on a day-to-day basis, time and cost savings are achieved through reduced data duplication, the removal of errors, and fewer payroll and invoicing enquiries from employees and clients.

The fact that it is all hosted in the 'cloud' means managers can access the data anytime, anywhere from any web-enabled device, and the return on investment is immediate as there are zero demands placed on the contractor's network infrastructure.

The Final Piece In The Jigsaw

For far too long, there has been a tendency for workforce management to exist as an isolated business function.

But with the workforce representing every contractor's largest expense, as much as 75% of overall costs, workforce management systems hold some of the most meaningful data available to contractors.

Thanks to new feature and integration capabilities, workforce management can now release its value and move to the heart of the decision-making process, where it rightly belongs.

www.vanquish-ips.com