



New Tools Build a Solid Foundation

Construction Company Switches to Telephone Time Collection, Automated Time Tracking and Saves 3.5% on Annual Payroll

A construction company accurately tracks employee hours worked — and increases the efficiency of payroll — by automating the collection and calculation of employee labor.

About Civil Constructors

Established in 1994, Tennessee-based Civil Constructors offers fully integrated site development and heavy highway contracting services for commercial, municipal, private, and major projects for the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

With over 450 employees, the company provides site excavation, grading and paving, and underground pipes and utilities construction. Civil Constructors manages between 200 and 250 job sites.

Competitive Pressures

The construction industry faces significant material cost fluctuations, cyclical demand, uneven cash flow, and complex regulations. Today more than ever, it is imperative that construction companies streamline operations to maximize profitability.

In past years, it was a challenge for Civil Constructors to efficiently manage employee time tracking, scheduling and absence tracking for over 400 employees dispersed between job sites. This put a significant administrative strain on the company.

Under the previous methods, job supervisors and foremen tracked workers time in the field using hand-written weekly time sheets which were then reviewed each week by HR and keyed into manual spreadsheets for payroll processing. This meant that each day, for numerous remote job sites, the job foreman had to remember to track a crew's start and end times, late arrivals, early departures, excused absences, tardies and unexcused no-shows.

Explains Wendy Bradley, Civil Constructors Payroll and Benefits Administrator, "It wasn't unusual to have a supervisor stand at my desk on a Monday filling out his crew's start and end times for the previous week solely by memory. With the amount of projects and job sites, this was a daunting task. We knew the weekly time sheets could be inaccurate."



Concerns with Manual Methods

Manual methods made calculating premium pay difficult. HR clerical staff sorted through each time sheet at the end of the pay period, flagging holiday, overtime, and other premiums as best they could. Notes Bradley, "As with any manual process, there was likelihood for error when applying premium pay. Each individual processing the payroll manually had to have a working knowledge of our calculations on premium pay, at times, this could lead to an unintentional inconsistent process."

It was also cumbersome to chase down any missing information from the previous week, and time consuming and potentially error-prone to rekey data for payroll. In all, the HR department often spent over 30 hours each week manually handling and preparing employee labor hours for payroll.

These bottlenecks became even more worrisome as the company grew. "Even with the manual handling and calculation, our team kept up when we employed 180 or so workers. After the workforce more than doubled, however, we simply could not continue with this outdated process," adds Bradley, whose department is responsible for payroll, benefits administration, workmen's compensation, and other HR related tasks.

New Tools

For Civil Constructors, accurately tracking employee hours worked -- along with increasing the efficiency of payroll -- required automating the collection and calculation of employee labor. It would be critical to find a solution that was easy to use for supervisors and foreman to streamline labor tracking out in the field, and could scale to keep up with the growing company. Thus, the organization turned to Gorrie-Regan (Birmingham, AL) time and labor management experts, who installed Attendance Enterprise™ from InfoTronics, Inc., InfoTronics biometric time clocks, and Telliris Attend telephone-based time and labor data collection solution.

Attendance Enterprise is an easy to use, integrated time and attendance system that automates complex pay rules to ensure accuracy and regulatory compliance. The system also optimizes employee resources and reduces labor costs with features such as employee scheduling, extensive reporting and analysis capabilities.

Telliris Attend is a cost-effective data collection solution that is perfect for situations where employees are mobile, transient or disbursed geographically, such as Civil Constructors who employs over 400 workers in the field. "The team at Gorrie-Regan made a good recommendation with these solutions, which were a perfect fit for us," notes Bradley.

Building a Better Way

Now, by simply using their telephone, the job foreman and supervisors easily enter employee hours worked, unexcused absences, excused absences, early departures, late arrivals and other job incidents daily as the events take place at each of the job sites. Other workers including mechanics clock in and out using the biometric time clocks located in the machine shops.

Attendance Enterprise automatically collects the data and up-to-the-minute labor tracking is available at the HR office, showing accumulated hours, overtime and regular totals, holiday eligibility and more which in the past were difficult to track manually. At the end of each pay period, the accumulated time is automatically downloaded into the payroll software for check processing.

Key Advantages

The new processes remove the need for virtually all manual data entry. Civil Constructors now has confidence that payroll totals are much more accurate. Hours worked by employees, job incidents and absences are tracked by pay designation each day, and a once manual and error-prone process is automated for ease of calculation and reporting. Attendance Enterprise automatically generates end of week reports that are signed by the employee and supervisor. The time sheets are archived for reporting required by the many requirements for federal and state contracts.

Civil Constructors benefits from other useful reports including Weekly Distributed Hours report, Time Card Report displaying employee behavior trends, Hourly Weekly Balance, Missing Time Card Punches which can be reviewed before payroll run, and a Weekly Incident Report which flags and behavior issues such as unexcused absences as they happen.

The Telliris telephone time collection process is a low cost solution since no extra equipment was necessary. Existing cell phones act as data collection terminals which is much less expensive than equipping a job site workforce with PDAs for time and labor data collection in the field. Administrators don't have to issue and track badges or even worse, maintain expensive handheld PDA devices and their software.

Adds Bradley, "By tracking labor with cell phones, we avoided the time and effort of end-user training and resistance to new technology. The supervisors simply follow the telephone prompts when tracking hours worked, job site incidents and absence tracking. The whole process totally followed the format of the existing time sheets, making the transition easy for foremen and field personnel. Everybody loves it!"