Cameron County Uses Kronos Solution to Increase Productivity and Improve Comp Time Compliance

The southernmost county in Texas, Cameron County is home to more than 400,000 residents. With administrative offices based in Brownsville, Texas, the county oversees the smooth delivery of public services to cities and towns throughout the county’s 1,276 square miles. Cameron County’s nearly 100 departments are responsible for county administration, transportation, public works, law enforcement, parks and recreation, the jail system, and a host of other public services. With approximately 1,800 employees, the county is focused on efficiently supporting the needs of county residents.

CHALLENGES

- Accurate timekeeping was elusive with employees writing “8-5” every day on their timesheets
- Manually keying in timecard information for hourly and part-time employees before payroll processing was time-consuming and error-prone
- Accrual balances were not always accurate, allowing employees to take more time than they had earned
- Compensatory time was awarded at the discretion of each department, creating inconsistencies
- Each department maintained its employees’ comp time balances on notepads or spreadsheets, providing no ongoing visibility into the county’s comp time liability

SOLUTION

- The Kronos iSeries Central suite has automated workforce management processes to better control labor costs, increase productivity, and mitigate compliance risk

BENEFITS

- Accurate regular and accrued employee time have increased accountability, ensuring that employees are paid only for time worked and take only accrued time earned
- Accurate time tracking has helped reduce overtime in large departments
- A 60 percent reduction in payroll data entry has streamlined the payroll process, creating payroll staff time savings that provide time to check for discrepancies
- Automating comp time earned has virtually eliminated inconsistencies, and visibility into employee accrual balances keeps the country apprised of its liability
Cameron County departments used manual processes to track employee time, resulting in inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Many timesheets were turned in to a department’s payroll clerk with the standard “8-5” written for each day, and employees sometimes took time off they hadn’t earned. Compensatory time was tallied on a department notepad or spreadsheet, and department heads set their own comp time rules. Without visibility into comp time balances, the county was unaware of its financial liabilities until a year-end accruals balance statement was prepared. Even then, with a reliance on manual comp time tracking and inconsistent rules, the county was exposed to lawsuits and unexpected payouts when employees left. State auditors demanded more accurate reporting.

Wanting to eliminate paper, more accurately track time, consistently apply comp time, streamline payroll, and access better reporting, Cameron County implemented the Kronos iSeries Central suite. Using these automated workforce management tools, the county has visibility into all employee time to better control labor costs, can consistently apply rules to reduce compliance risk, has streamlined the payroll process to increase productivity, and can easily access data for informed decision making.

Smoothing implementation and greater accountability
“Implementation of the Kronos solution went smoothly,” says Hendrick Quellhorst, Cameron County’s data system auditor. Solution adoption wasn’t mandatory, except for departments with at least 15 employees, which were more prone to lawsuits and significant overtime.

With these employees now clocking in and out, they are accountable for their time. “We have a more accurate representation of when employees are working,” says Quellhorst. “If they show up late, comp or vacation time is used to cover this time.”

Accurate balances mitigate comp time issues
Salaried exempt employees also use the time clocks, so the county has accurate accrual balances of all employees when reporting comp time liabilities in its year-end financial statements. “Before, if all employees quit, we’d question if we had enough money to pay off everyone,” says Quellhorst. “With our Kronos solution, our accrual balances are all right there.” This visibility, accurate reporting, and consistent application of comp time have alleviated issues with lawsuits and given the county greater control of its liabilities.

Department heads and employees also have better visibility into accrued time. Using the solution’s self-service tools, employees can see at the clock how much accrued time they have available before requesting time off. “Our Kronos solution shows if an employee has time off accrued for vacation, as opposed to department heads consulting a notepad,” shares Quellhorst. “The solution gives employees time as they earn it and subtracts it as they take it. If they have no paid time off available, employees can’t take it.”

Labor tracking ensures accurate payments
The value of automated workforce management was reinforced following a barge accident that collapsed a bridge. Sherriff’s deputies were needed to direct traffic 24/7 during the yearlong repair process. To ensure accurate state reimbursement of this time, a time clock was installed at the location to capture county employee time on site, and the Kronos solution accurately tracked and processed this special-duty time.

Significant overtime savings realized
With greater visibility into employee time using an automated workforce management solution, Cameron County has gained better control of overtime spending. Following implementation of the Kronos solution and other efficiency measures, the jail system, one of the largest departments and biggest overtime users, saw a 75 percent reduction in overtime spending during a single month, compared with the same month the prior year, notes Quellhorst.

Payroll time and paper savings
With paper-based processes no longer used, the county is realizing significant paper savings, as well as a reduction in space needed to store paper records. Payroll employees are also seeing productivity gains, with an estimated 60 percent reduction in data entry now that employee time flows directly into the payroll system.

“There’s a better review process now,” claims Quellhorst. “They have time to review day-to-day transactions to find discrepancies and request adjustments in the system.”

Looking toward future benefits
As Cameron County looks to optimize use of its Kronos solution, it may require that all departments use the solution. Centralizing payroll would bring additional time and labor savings, says Quellhorst, and adding more employee self-service features at the clock, such as requesting time off, would enhance the county employee experience further.

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