

# Thinking Outside the Clock

Unique ways of using automation to address complex business needs • VOLUME 14, MARCH 2008

## Tracking Employees without a Lunch Break

by *Tim Bernier*

Too often we see organizations install fancy labor management software and in the end all they've accomplished is creating an electronic timesheet, where they capture an employee's IN and OUT punches and pass those totals to payroll for processing of pay checks. Meanwhile, many of the manual and often challenging processes of managing employee's time while at work remain.

While most automated systems can easily handle the out-of-the-box labor management scenarios, what about those processes that seem too complex to replace with automation? With a little thought and planning and a good understanding of your system's capabilities, often those business practices that have plagued supervisors, can be eliminated with some creative use of your technology.

One such organization wanted to move away from too much automation where employees didn't have to punch for lunch breaks and had the time automatically deducted each day. Instead, they instituted a policy where employees MUST punch for lunch breaks, and the time not on the clock was counted as their unpaid lunch break.

However, a problem they quickly realized was the difficulty in tracking those employees that decided NOT to take lunch, and instead worked straight through, often accumulating extra overtime hours each week.

While a punch out and back in for lunch gives you something to query against, they found themselves unable to capture any data for those employees that weren't clocking at all for lunch breaks. There simply was nothing there for any automated system to recognize.

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## the solution

To overcome this, utilizing their automated labor management system (Kronos Workforce Timekeeper) they created a deduction rule that applied a "flagging" pay code to every employee's time card each day. And only if the system recognized a punch for a lunch break, did it then NOT apply this flagging pay code. This pay code did not pay any hours to the employee, nor was it even visible on the timecard or reports. It simply set a flag in the system for each shift worked that did not include a punched lunch break. To finish out the process, a query was written that a supervisor could run on demand that identified any employee that had an instance of this pay code in the time period queried (i.e. employees who didn't take lunch breaks).

Suddenly this organization found themselves not only paying employees for actual hours worked (long lunch breaks were no longer being given away), but also employee's that were attempting to capture some extra overtime without actually working past the end of their shift were being identified and disciplined for not taking appropriate lunch breaks.

Timekeeping isn't always just about IN and OUT punches. Sometimes you have to think outside the clock!!



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