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**Deploying ESS:
Faster, Better, Stronger**

A Guest Series Presented By Accu-Time Systems, Inc.

ATS
EVERY SECOND COUNTS

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VALUE TO THE EMPLOYER

by Peter DiMaria, Accu-Time Systems, Inc.

In this second part of my four-part series, "Deploying ESS: Faster, Better Stronger," I will outline why employee self service is of value to employers. Each employer will derive different value from an ESS system based on the functionality they have deployed.

The most immediate ESS post-deployment benefit employers will experience is increased employee engagement and empowerment. Most companies that deploy an ESS system report that their employees feel like they have more control over their personal data and benefits. Furthermore, employees take a greater interest in the administration of their 401ks and other defined contribution plans, health and dental insurance, and work schedules. When these functions require employees to deal directly with their HR departments they feel less connected due to the administrative lag time involved and simple lack of available time for HR employees to get personally involved with each employee's benefit package.

The next most prominent return on a company's ESS investment is the fairly rapid decrease in HR administrative tasks. This decrease usually doesn't begin until the first couple of months after ESS deployment due to typical system "go live" hurdles, debugging, errors, and training issues. Once those are mostly resolved then HR departments will see a dramatic drop in the benefit minutiae their staff has routinely handled. Tasks like beneficiary changes, 401k contribution adjustments, address changes, plan sign-ups and cancellations, work schedule inquiries, pay questions, and dozens of other common requests are completed by employees through the ESS system instead of by an administrative support person in HR.

Most companies without an ESS system report that their HR staff-to-employee ratio is 1:100. Companies with an effective ESS system can see that ratio change to 1:150. Fewer HR staff in relation to more employees results in either a direct HR headcount reduction or those HR employees being used for more strategic and valuable purposes.

Along with a positive change in the HR staff-to-employee ratio is a significant reduction in printing and processing costs for forms, manuals, and guides. Employers spend several thousands of dollars per year printing legal statements, benefit summaries, benefit explanations, enrollment forms, employee manuals, historical pay and work schedule data, vacation requests, employee memos and messages, survey data, and dozens of other forms of communication. With the deployment of an ESS system these types of communications become available to employees on a web portal, employee kiosk, work station computer, or workforce management (WFM) terminal.

In the past few years there have been several well-publicized cases of major corporations suffering substantial

finances as the result of employee class-action lawsuits. The lawsuits have claimed that employees were not paid for overtime or regular hours worked. An ESS solution allows, and in some cases requires, employees to approve their time card or time sheet as a condition of getting paid.

My company, Accu-Time Systems, manufactures WFM terminals that offer ESS functionality. We often refer to these terminals as "lawsuit preventers" because of the self-service time card approvals that employees can perform "at the clock." Our terminals are the device through which employees can interact with the ESS solution provided by our partners. An ESS-enabled timeclock or workforce management terminal is an alternative for those employees that do not have a computer at their work station or access to a kiosk.

ESS-enabled timeclocks provide a great deal of convenience since hourly employees often must interact with the terminal four to eight times per day. At the end of the week, during their last punch of the week, employees can quickly review and approve their schedule for the week on the device's screen. Or, if they choose to, employees can view their schedule, hours worked, request vacation time, department changes, shifts, or dozens of other inquiries at any time.

Another benefit often overlooked is that experienced by second and third shift employees who don't have

ready access to first shift HR employees. Through a WFM terminal, ESS-enabled timeclock, kiosk, or workstation computer late shift employees can access a variety of self service functionality at a time that is most convenient to them.

A properly integrated and deployed ESS solution can provide substantial return on investment to employers. A poorly implemented system can do the opposite. If employees struggle with the system, create errors, or don't understand how to use it then more demand can be placed on the HR staff than was made before implementation.

To accurately gauge the ROI of an ESS system it is prudent for employers to begin with a comprehensive assessment of the tasks currently handled by its HR staff and the associated costs to perform those tasks. Printing costs should also be considered. A well-respected and experienced provider of ESS solutions will then be able to compare those current costs with the potential savings offered by an employee self service application. The results, as proven by high ESS adoption rates, are usually profoundly surprising to employers. Companies like Time & Technology, Ceridian, Workforce Software, Empower, Cybershift, Red Prairie, and several others have years of experience in creating and deploying ESS solutions around the world.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter DiMaria is founder, president, and chief executive officer of Accu-Time Systems Inc., a leader in the design and manufacture of workforce management terminals for time and attendance and employee self service (ESS.)

DiMaria is a recognized industry veteran with 30 years' experience in automatic identification (ID.) From bar codes to biometrics, DiMaria holds numerous international patents for his many technical contributions to the industry. DiMaria holds a B.S. in Mathematics and a Masters in Business Administration.