



"Your Time is Our Business"

Client Success Story:

Village Nurseries

Keeping Current: Nursery Improves Employee Time and Attendance Tracking with Remote, Hand Held Time Clocks



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Wayne Johnson, Chief Financial Officer
Village Nurseries



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Overview:

With over 700 acres of growing facilities, a regional nursery faced a real challenge when tracking the time and labor data of their hourly field workers. When pickers, irrigators, construction staff or other workers punched in and out or switched tasks, the supervisors physically traveled to the time clock or kept hand-written records which then had to be manually entered into the software by clerical staff. IntegrTime Solutions, Inc. suggested the company implement new, Web-enabled technology and a combination of hand held terminals carried by the supervisors in the field and time clocks at strategic locations that are polled hourly via the internet. Now, the remote units track employee start, end and transfers, and that information is uploaded directly to a web-enabled time tracking solution at convenient times during the day. The company tracks labor more accurately since data is being recorded as it happens, and better manages labor expenditures and efficiency analysis.

About Village Nurseries:

Village Nurseries has over 700 acres of growing facilities across Northern and Southern California. The company serves the needs of more than 5,000 customers including professional landscape contractors, home improvement and big box retail customers, as well as developers, wholesale and re-wholesale nurseries, brokers and government agencies throughout the Southwestern portion of the United States. With a total of 7 million product offerings, the organization is made up of two companies: Village Nurseries LP; which operates five Landscape Centers, and Village Nurseries Wholesale LLC a regional grower and wholesale distributor.

"We've been pleased with the improved visibility about labor expenditures and with the ease of extracting data for various reports. Monitoring field operations is extremely important for the company's bottom line and it's so much easier for us to extract this data."

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Past Challenges:

In past years, Village Nurseries used an outdated employee time and labor tracking software package to capture labor hours of approximately 700 employees located throughout 13 locations. Both hourly and salaried, non-exempt employees are based out of the extensive growing grounds, the five landscape centers, and administrative and sales offices.

A limitation with the past software was that the vendor no longer supported the package. The company ran into difficulties with the dial up modem method of polling time clocks. Notes Wayne Johnson, Chief Financial Officer of Village Nurseries Wholesale, LLC, "We were vulnerable to hardware failures with the time clocks located in the growing grounds, since they are somewhat exposed to the elements and have been used for many years."



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To facilitate analysis of hourly field employee utilization and efficiency, supervisors routinely transfer employees to different tasks or operations during the day. With the old system, the supervisor had to travel back and forth to the growing ground field time clocks when they transferred employees to a different operation. This was a unique challenge as each major growing ground has over 200 acres and employs more than 200 hourly employees. It was also difficult to track task codes to monitor the amount of labor spent on over 200 tasks including canning, irrigation, planting and so on.

IntegrTime installed a proximity reader time clock in the main corridor of the facility to collect employee time and attendance data. The data collection device fit the company's unique work environment, and would prove more reliable than the previous bar code reader which often failed in the open-air manufacturing environment.

Limited accessibility in the administrative offices was another problem. Explains Johnson, "The old system gave us only five user licenses, but we have a team of over 12 administrative staff who needed to get into the time tracking software for editing punches, labor reporting, job costing and other data entry at some point each day and at the end of every payroll period. We literally had to formulate a schedule for the administrative staff to access the time keeping software on the last day of payroll."

With the outdated package, scheduling for the Landscape Center employees was done with a piece of paper or a spreadsheet file. Many retail employees work part time or staggered shifts, so filling the 6-day schedule each week was an administrative burden given the limited availability of some of the employees.



Coming Up Roses!

To overcome these limitations and others, Village Nurseries turned to IntegrTime Solutions, Inc, (Palmdale, CA) time and labor management industry professionals who had been helping the company support their outdated system throughout the years.

IntegrTime suggested switching to Attendance Enterprise, a web-enabled time and attendance system that offers an intuitive user interface, flexible data collection, employee scheduling, web access for employees and managers, and extensive reporting and analysis capabilities.





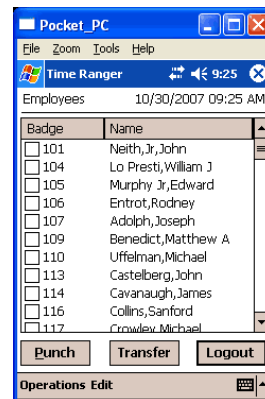
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The experts from IntegrTime were already familiar with the unique growing grounds operations, and the numerous task codes to track the different field operations. They helped the company switch over to the new methods in about three months, installing 15 bar code time clocks throughout the locations, and implemented over 20 innovative hand held terminals in the growing fields.

Hand Held Time Clocks:

A dramatic benefit since switching to the new methods comes from using the hand held time clocks in the growing fields. As employees transfer between task codes or switch operations, the supervisors use the hand held units located directly in the fields or carried with them, and that information is uploaded remotely to Attendance Enterprise. The terminals are portable and move with the supervisor. Thus, as pickers, irrigators, construction workers or others switch tasks, the supervisor no longer travels to a time clock or keeps hand-written records of the information.

“Our supervisors are confident that labor is recorded much more accurately now,” states Johnson. “It was a huge inconvenience for them to travel acres to go back to a time clock and make multiple changes either from memory or off of notes. Accuracy is up because this data is being recorded as it happens and not after the fact.”



Improved Access:

Now, at any time during the day and at the end of every pay period, the entire team of administrative staff has access to Attendance Enterprise to help prepare data for labor analysis reports and payroll processing. Payroll is prepared much faster than before. Administrators don't need to make as many changes to time records as they once did. In the past, administrative staff had to fix the start/end times of many transfers between task codes for errors made by the supervisors making mass changes from memory or notes. Now, since Attendance Enterprise stores schedules and applies the company's rounding rules fairly, time tracking better matches the hours of the schedule shifts, and payroll totals better reflect the hours actually worked.



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Improved Reporting:

Village Nurseries also gains tremendous business value from detailed labor reports it was not able to generate in the past, such as efficiency reports that reflect labor hours per task code. This helps managers monitor the standard costs of operations. "The new time and labor system helps us track monthly production labor totals, such as how many units of product were canned based on the amount of labor expenditure. This way we can see if we are budgeting and forecasting correctly, letting us use our labor as efficiently as possible in the growing fields. Our production supervisors look at this information almost daily to help us keep on top of our inventory," notes Johnson. Other useful reports show vacation time, overtime reports, and tardies.

Managers have confidence that they are looking at the most up to date labor data available since the system polls labor data hourly.



Dramatic Benefits:

Village Nurseries has achieved dramatic benefits since switching to Attendance Enterprise and the new time clocks. Field workers time is tracked directly on the hand held units conveniently located with the supervisor in the growing fields. Administrative staff is no longer burdened with spending hours each pay period editing missed punches, incorrect start/end times or task code changes, and accurate, up-to-the-minute efficiency reports give a true picture of labor and productivity data. These improved methods give the company better control of labor expenditures, and help Village Nurseries increase payroll accuracy. Concludes Johnson, "We've been pleased with the improved visibility about labor expenditures, and with the ease of extracting data for various reports. Monitoring field operations is extremely important for the company's bottom line, and it's so much easier for us to extract this data."



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