Get ready for the next generation payroll administrator

By Warren van Wyk   28 Feb 2018

Technology is transforming how many businesses operate. Cloud software, for example, is increasingly popular among multinational companies, enabling them to expand into new territories as quickly as possible. This calls for a new breed of payroll administrator, one that is agile and strategic enough to meet a business' global payroll needs.

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Back in the day, payroll professionals simply captured data – there was minimal need to think over and above the administrative task at hand. Now, as companies continue to grow across borders, payroll teams are expected to take on more business-critical responsibilities. In addition to data inputting, they are required to gather information securely, analyse the information, spot relevant market trends and patterns, and suggest areas for improvement.

The next generation payroll administrator needs to be able to implement and manage a complex cross border payroll system with confidence. To do this successfully, they will need certain skills and characteristics.

Strategic thinkers

The next generation of payroll administrators are strategic thinkers. They know how to collect the right information, interpret it for their needs, and put it to good use. To enhance their strategic abilities and knowledge, these professionals don't stick to the confines of their desks – they cross interdepartmental lines and get to know how other divisions like HR and finance function.

They acknowledge that payroll cannot operate independently of other critical departments. Each business function intersects and is impacted by various stakeholders, their objectives and agendas. Together, they determine the company's business direction. Payroll teams manage the largest cost within an organisation. To ensure strategic administration, it's absolutely crucial that the payroll team has a comprehensive understanding of how the entire business works.

Warren van Wyk

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Technology users

Next generation payroll administrators are enthusiastic early adopters of new technologies. They are constantly on the lookout for faster and smarter business tools that help them do a better job.

Technologies such as Business Intelligence (BI), analytics and the rapidly advancing world of Artificial Intelligence (AI), are able to manage many repetitive tasks like data capturing and reporting. These automated systems liberate payroll professionals from laborious work, giving them more time to contribute to the company's strategic direction.

The power of these new, developing technologies is that they can be applied to almost any payroll function across all business sectors and industries. Most organisations operating in the digital age depend on applications such as predictive information supply, raw data filtration and validation, and business information mining.

The payroll administrators of the future will understand integration and application program interface (API) world. They'll know how to use best of breed apps to drive seamless payroll management and integrate their payroll platform with complementary software such as accounting or ERP systems.

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Agile doers

It's no longer common to start one's career as a payroll administrator and retire as one many years later. In today's economy, competition is more intense than in previous generations, people work for much longer and rarely stay in the same job for the duration of their career.

Payroll administrators need to continuously improve and update their skills, knowledge and abilities to stay relevant. This is particularly important in a global context that involves cross border legislative compliance. Given the amount of legislative changes that occur almost overnight in many African countries, this is far more challenging than meets the eye.

Data protection laws are also getting stricter and far more onerous. The consequences for legislative non-compliance of any kind are not insubstantial. An experienced or non-responsive payroll administrator could cost a company hefty penalties and fines.

To protect and encourage their global expansion plans, international businesses need to hire payroll professionals who are agile and can think on their feet. This, combined with an ability to think strategically and embrace new technologies, defines the next generation payroll administrator that will help lead multinational business success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Warren van Wyk is the director of PaySpace.