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TouchStar
**TIME AND
ATTENDANCE
BUYERS GUIDE**

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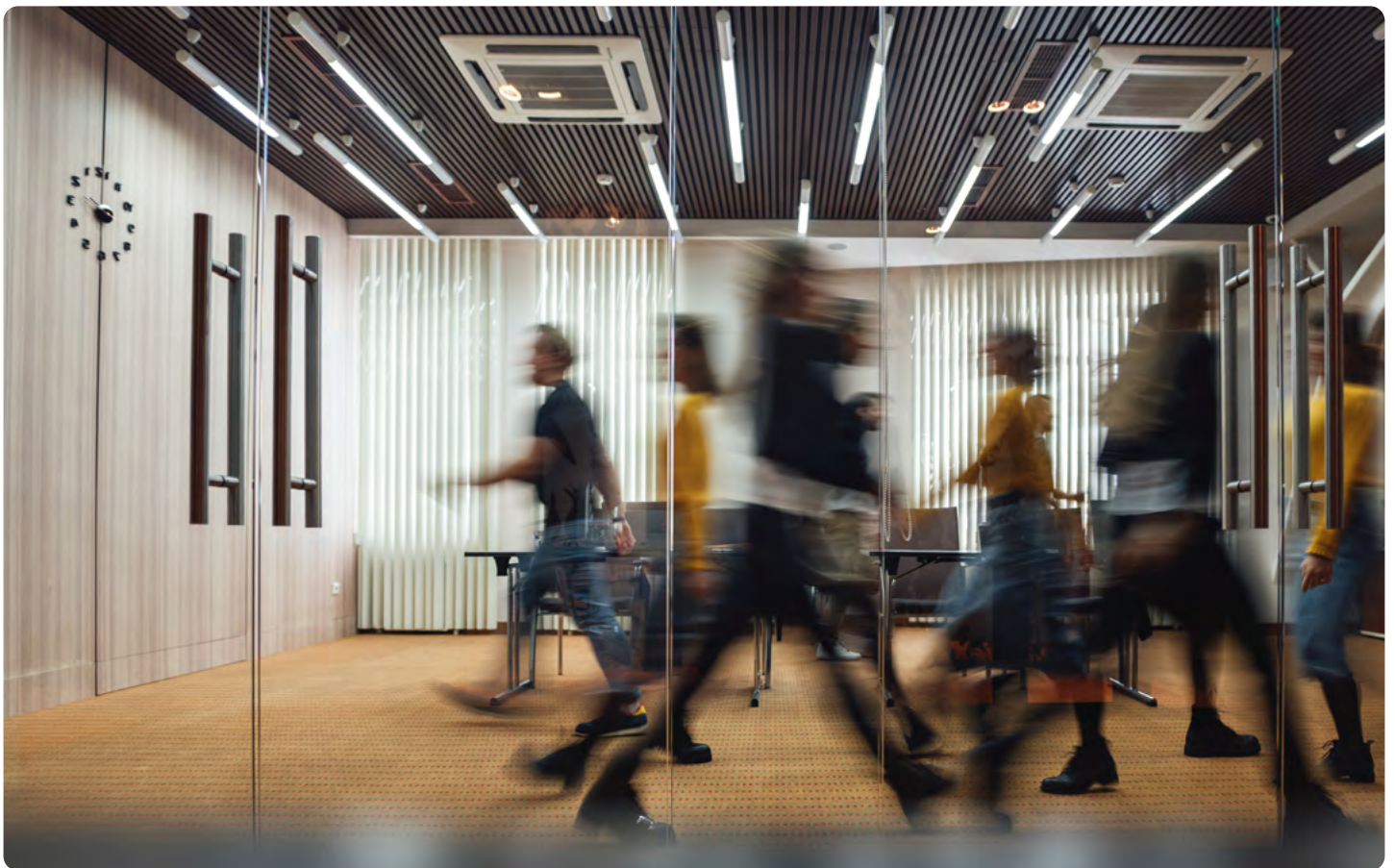
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INTRODUCTION

In environments where efficiency and productivity are vital to meet operational goals, having a Time and Attendance solution is crucial for any business aiming to optimise workforce management. The right solution can deliver precise timekeeping, help to enhance productivity, and provide greater insight into labour costs.

With so many solutions on the market, selecting one that can meet your business objectives can be challenging. Using our extensive experience in time and attendance systems, we have created this buyers guide that will help support you on your way through to the purchase of a new or upgraded system.

Covering everything from starting out, defining your system requirements, supplier selection and legislation through to types of systems and system support, we take you through the steps to help you determine the best fit solution for your workforce operations.



1. The Start Point

Simply put, a time and attendance system will enable an employer to monitor employees' working hours – even in real-time – to ensure that schedules are kept to, legislation regarding permitted working hours is abided by, compulsory break times are applied and much more.

The best place to start is by listing your company's needs and processes. Focus on the features that you would like, consider your workforce size, structure, and ensure you have considered your operational goals. Following that, you should look at the existing issues your company is facing in managing time and attendance, and what you require from a new solution to help you solve these. Lastly, consider both the way your company works today and your future needs and growth plans.

Some of the most common reasons for installing a time and attendance system include:

- **Improved Accuracy** – Manual methods of tracking time are prone to errors. Automated systems prevent time fraud or payroll abuse, only paying employees for the hours truly worked.
- **Labour Cost Savings** – Accurate time tracking provides insights into overtime trends, allowing for better budgeting and forecasting of labour costs. It also helps to avoid overpaying employees due to timekeeping errors.
- **Streamlined Payroll Processing** – Integrating time and attendance data directly with payroll systems speeds up the payroll process and ensures that employees are accurately and transparently paid for the hours they work.
- **Increased Productivity** – With an automated system, employees are often more conscious of their time and breaks, leading to better work-time management. They are typically more punctual, while time saved from manual timesheet calculations can be channelled into more productive tasks. Moreover, HR personnel and managers no longer need to spend countless hours processing timesheets manually.
- **Regulatory Compliance** – Many countries have strict labour laws regarding overtime, breaks, and working hours, including the UK's Working Time Directive. A time and attendance solution can alert companies to potential compliance issues and help them to easily adhere to these laws, reducing the risk of costly legal complications.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making** – Time and attendance systems can offer insights into the staffing levels needed across shifts and highlight employee working habits and attendance patterns. This data can help the business make informed decisions on staffing, resource allocation, shift planning, and even forecasting future hiring needs.

Working with a trusted partner – one that invests time to understand your business operations, whether your company has multiple offices, temporary satellite locations, or remote workers – is so important. This approach ensures you are well-positioned to select a solution that is tailored to your company's specific needs.



2. Legislative Compliance

When starting out, there are various legislative requirements that need to be considered alongside the installation of a time and attendance system. These can be summarised as follows:

GDPR

Biometric data, which may be captured as part of a time and attendance system, is, of course, personal to an individual, meaning that it is subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and its rules governing the processing of personal information. Under GDPR, biometric data is known as 'special category data' whenever it is processed to identify an individual. As the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) states, "if you use biometrics to learn something about an individual, authenticate their identity, control their access, make a decision about them, or treat them differently in any way, you need to comply with Article 9".



Article 9 includes the specific conditions for processing special category data; any organisation looking to implement biometric time and attendance must meet at least one of these. We've also summarised some of the most relevant conditions below:

- Biometric processing is essential for reasons of public interest.
- Biometric processing is critical in protecting the vital interests of the data subjects (employees).
- Biometric processing is necessary as part of the provision of health or social care (with a basis in law).
- Biometric processing is necessary for the purposes of carrying out obligations and exercising the specific rights of the data controller (employer), or of the data subjects, in the fields of employment, social security and social protection law.
- The data subjects have given explicit consent to biometric processing.

As this list shows, many of the conditions for processing biometric data relate to the type of work an organisation carries out and whether this provides a justification for processing. Conversely, gaining employee consent negates the need for an organisation to fit certain parameters, making it perhaps the most straightforward way to implement GDPR-compliant biometric technology.

To be fully compliant, employee consent must be explicitly given from everyone; you cannot simply opt everyone in. At the same time, you must also offer your employees the option to withdraw their consent at any point.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

If you're planning to use biometrics in conjunction with a time and attendance system, you need to be aware of your responsibilities under the Human Rights Act 1998, and more specifically, Article 8 - A right to privacy. If you're unsure if Article 8 applies to you, you can take an online self-assessment with the ICO at:

www.gov.uk/data-protection-register-notify-ico-personal-data

3. Supplier Selection

There are many suppliers/installers that operate within the workplace management industry so it can be a complex task to narrow them down to the ones that will provide you with the experience, reliability, and support levels you may require.

Here are some common areas to consider when looking at potential suppliers:

ACCREDITATIONS

It is worthwhile looking for a supplier that is accredited as part of **The CIPP PAS (Payroll Assurance Scheme)**. This accreditation is recognised as the gold standard for payroll practices developed with HMRC, following a CIPP assessment. The accreditation showcases a dedication to compliance and best payroll practices, that suitable processes are in place for preparing and delivering legislative changes, and there is a dedication to life-long learning and development.



Verification of a suppliers compliance can be found on the [HMRC](#) website.

CASE STUDIES / TESTIMONIALS

A company that can demonstrate a portfolio of happy clients, testimonials and case studies provides a good indication you are dealing with a reputable workplace management company. Companies should also be happy to provide references or a site visit if applicable.

SERVICES

It is worth investigating what services your supplier can provide, and this can help you understand what support you are likely to expect. A supplier that has been established for many years and has their own in-house team provides a good level of confidence that you are likely to receive high service levels. However, it is also important to ensure that your service requirements are aligned with the capabilities of your supplier. Most suppliers can be grouped as follows:

- Supply Only.
- Supply and Install.
- End-to-End – Design, specification, install, support and maintenance.

A supplier that offers a flexible service approach is often more beneficial to those looking at new system installations or upgrades, whether that be the end-to-end implementation of the software and hardware or options for part-install on the hardware side.

INSURANCE

Checking the insurance details of any supplier is a must. Most suppliers that carry an accreditation will be covered, but it is always a worthwhile activity to ensure that they have the correct cover in place.

It is important to check for the following:

- Employers' liability to cover their own staff in the event of an accident.
- Public liability to cover damage or injury to clients and their property.



4. The Survey Process

It is important that when considering any kind of workplace management system that you should look for a supplier that will help you undertake a no obligation appraisal of your requirements and objectives.

Requirements can vary from sector to sector, and depend on things such as workforce size, structure and complexity of the building and its flow. Following your site survey, you should expect a provider to address the following aspects:

- IT network requirements.
- Employee time clock requirements and positions.
- Risk assessment.
- Insurance requirements.
- Identify existing media that can be used on the proposed T&A system (for example the use of Access Control Cards on the employee time clocks).

Any recommendations should consider the scalability and futureproofing of your proposed installation.



5. Types of Time and Attendance Systems

Once you have specified what your new time and attendance system needs to be capable of, it's time to decide on the best solution for the job. There are many forms of time and attendance software, hardware, and peripherals, so it's all about finding a customised combination that works for your business.

As a start point, there are several different types of systems on the market which can be defined as follows:

ENTRY LEVEL TIME AND ATTENDANCE SYSTEMS

Employee time clocks can be used as part of an entry level standalone system or in conjunction with a time and attendance module from a comprehensive workplace management system. Simple standalone systems can be integrated with a basic transaction gathering back-end platform for entry level data management and reporting functionality. It is important that you seek a supplier that can provide a standardised API to enable a flexible system that can easily interface with different device types.



6. Time and Attendance Software

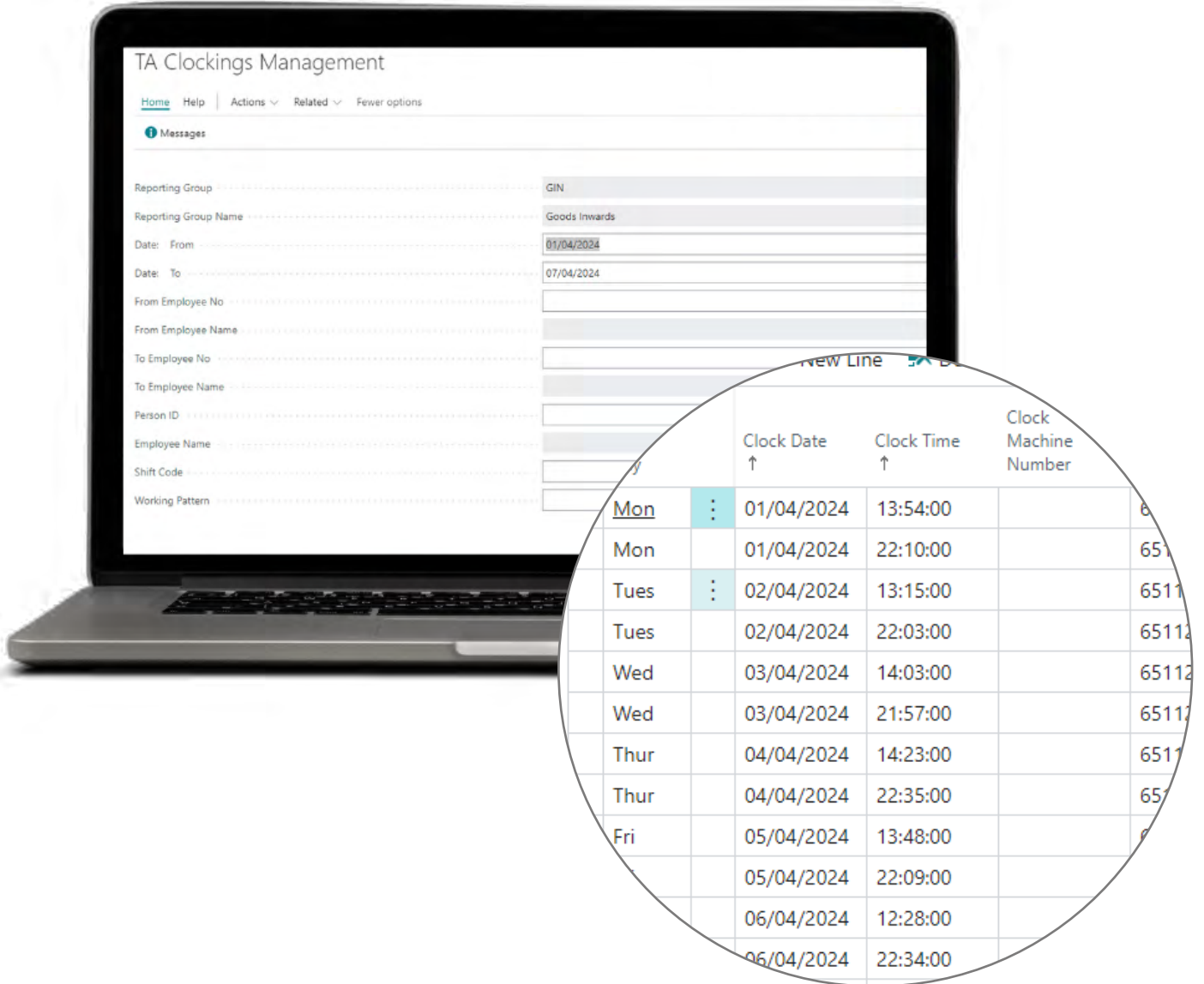
Time and attendance software modules are designed to give the end-user a comprehensive tool to control employee time and attendance data.

A comprehensive Time and Attendance calculation system can take clocking's generated either manually or from a clocking hardware device, then apply the rules set within the system to calculate the pay which is then posted into a payroll solution.

Within these application types, you can apply differing shift rules to different teams or individuals, and these can be customisable to meet your requirements.

These systems help to increase the productivity of a business as traditional methods of tracking time are labour intensive. Administration time and costs associated with dealing with multiple shift patterns, holidays and overtime will ultimately be reduced.

These systems can operate as a standalone module or as part of the complete HR suite. The benefits of an integrated solution are measurable and the seamless integration between modules means less data duplication, streamlined data input and a greatly reduced probability of errors.



7. Time and Attendance Employee Time Clocks

Time and Attendance systems often require the integration of additional hardware products such as Employee Time Clocks.

The user would register 'in' at the clock using the desired media. The employee would then register as 'out' on a clock when the day is complete. The clock can then send the relevant employee, date and time data to back-office systems so that total times can be measured and reviewed.

Once you have engaged with a supplier, it is good to be aware of what options are available. What is most important is that each device is correctly specified against the business requirements to reduce the risk of a system failure and to ensure operational goals are met.

An overview of the various employee time clocks can be summarised as follows:

SIM BASED CLOCKING IN MACHINES

For businesses who operate from a remote yet permanent location, plug and play clocking in machines such as the SIM based devices have become the norm. Employee identification can be proven by means of credentials dependent upon the requirement.

Not only are plug and play clocks a means of providing both accurate and immediate attendance records, but they are also quick and economic to install. Installation or relocating of hardware is a simple process that only takes around 30 minutes per device. Plug and play clocks simply require mains plug or even a power outlet in the car to be operated and is perfect for remote or temporary locations.



NETWORKED CLOCKING IN MACHINES

Networked clocking systems are the most common means of facilitating clocking transactions. A networked system will consist of a controller either above or door, or close to the location of work. It will also require a central interface to the ethernet LAN.

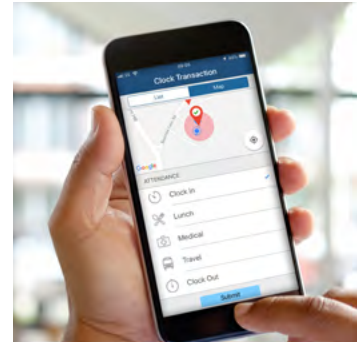
Networked systems can be accessed from any connected PC, smart phone, or tablet device, this can be particularly useful for multi-site systems whereby the system can be controlled and administered efficiently from one central location.

When deciding on the best location for your time and attendance units, your supplier should help guide you as part of the survey process. Most commonly these may positioned near the most popular entrance point, break room or near workstations. You want to make it as easy as possible for your staff to use them.

7. Time and Attendance Employee Time Clocks (continued)

TIME AND ATTENDANCE – MOBILE APP'S

For remote workers in field-based operation, fixed plug and play devices may not be so viable. In these scenarios, businesses can look towards mobile applications. Modern time and attendance solutions typically offer a mobile application for remote/field-based workforces. These mobile apps provide real time management visibility, using GPS navigation, to verify a valid location before employees can clock on, they can also track a multitude of other clocking transactions, such as 'taking lunch', 'travel', 'medical appointments'. For companies with remote teams or flexible working arrangements this ensures accurate tracking regardless of where an employee might be working.



Whatever system you go for, it is important to ensure that each device has a proven and robust real time connection to a back-office system. Ensure that standard API and integration is in place with core HR and Payroll systems to ensure accurate data reporting and management – this avoids the need for extensive and costly customisation.

IDENTIFICATION CREDENTIALS

• PROXIMITY

Proximity readers are a popular option for time and attendance clocking. Presentation of credentials by card or tag are the most common methods of authorisation. These clocks can be suited to both internal and external environments with the availability of heavy-duty vandal and water-resistant outdoor units. Whilst these readers are an effective means of recording workers hours, they are not faultless. Buddying or unauthorised use of cards/tags can mean that time fraud can often be committed. In these scenarios, your provider would be able to recommend additional controls based upon your system objectives and requirements.



• BIOMETRICS

Our physical attributes are the most impervious form of identity verification there is. Virtually impossible to replicate and completely unique, physical features such as eyes, faces and fingerprints make ideal ID credentials. Biometric employee time clocks are built around this exact principle. These readers scan and read an eye, a face, or a fingerprint in seconds, assigning working hours for those credentials registered in the solution's database.

Due to their uniqueness, biometrics is one of the most secure types of credentials available. Biometric data, which may be captured as part of a time and attendance system is of course, personal to an individual, which means it is subject to the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) (see GDPR) and its governance of the processing of personal information.



7. Time and Attendance Employee Time Clocks (continued)

INTERFACES

• INTEGRATION PLATFORMS

For companies that are looking for a more integrated solution, middleware platforms offer a means of integrating any third-party application into your time and attendance system through standardised API integration when a direct link is not possible. This could include anything from HR and Payroll through to Access Control, CCTV or Fire systems.

Enabling the automatic transfer of data from a separate system into HR/Payroll, is an efficient and accurate method of populating multiple systems by removing the manual re-keying of data. Such platforms can also help to monitor and manage the status of your proximity, fingerprint, or facial recognition clock machines. It can track which devices are online and gather diagnostic information about devices to support firmware upgrades.



8. Costs

When looking at quotes comparatively, it is very common for costs to vary.

When researching a Time and Attendance solution always assess the total cost of ownership against the potential benefits and savings. Ensure you include purchase, implementation, maintenance, upgrades and ongoing support costs in your calculation.

Your supplier should be able to offer a discovery call, where requirements can be established, and a proposal built based on your needs.



9. System Deployment and Installation

Once you have approved a quote you should expect a project delivery manager to be assigned to your deployment. The purpose of the project delivery manager will be to verify the initial recommendations and undertake the appropriate level of testing to support the process.

When looking at any installation work, such as employee time clocks, relevant risk assessments should be undertaken with a method statement and an installation plan. A good project delivery manager will work hand in hand with the relevant contacts on your site to develop the infrastructure for an effective deployment. Identifying the work areas and schedules, a successful installation will ensure there is little or no disruption to your day-to-day operations.

Once it's in place, it's time to test the system. Your supplier should run through a thorough set of tests to ensure the solution is as required/quoted to confirm an "as fitted" specification.

10. System Training



A supplier that offers both on-site and site-specific training and resources will be key to ensuring a smooth adoption. Consider what level of training and support you will need to minimise the learning curve and ensure smooth adoption. Ensure the company you are working with can provide the level of training and initial support to help workers adapt to the new system. Also evaluate the availability and quality of post sales customer support, you want to ensure that any issues can be resolved quickly and efficiently.

Employee time clocks typically operate out of the box and are exceptionally user friendly to install. That said, it is worthwhile looking for a supplier that can provide training for companies to undertake their own installations, helping them understand any potential challenges that may arise – such as tackling areas where signal strength may be weak. This is good idea particularly for businesses who are seeking scalability allowing them to easily add on and manage their hardware estate as their sites and clients continue to increase.

Your supplier should assist in this by aiding in installation and applying their expertise in training software users through a ‘train the trainer’ approach. This approach gives the flexibility for you to take control of the solution and bolster your business as it grows without depending on additional resource to assist each time.

11. Service Support and Maintenance

When looking for a supplier, it is worth looking for a well-established supplier that has a nationwide network of software and hardware engineers to provide the best and most reliable support for your installation. Service and support packages should ensure minimum disruption to your operations and will be determined by the size, type, and the complexity of your final deployment.



REMOTE SYSTEM SUPPORT

Where possible, you should look at what support your supplier can offer through remote diagnostics and maintenance. Most suppliers will offer a 24/7 helpdesk as a minimum, but as with any operation, it is fundamental that their operating hours align with your shift patterns and needs.

ONSITE ENGINEER VISITS

When looking at suppliers, you should review their stated SLA response times and whether they meet your needs. Typically, these can vary from 4 hours/same day, next day, and continuous availability.

From a hardware perspective, you should ensure that your employee time clocks include a standard 12-month warranty. Some suppliers may offer gold stock (hot swap) for your clocks, ensuring minimal downtime in the event of device failure.

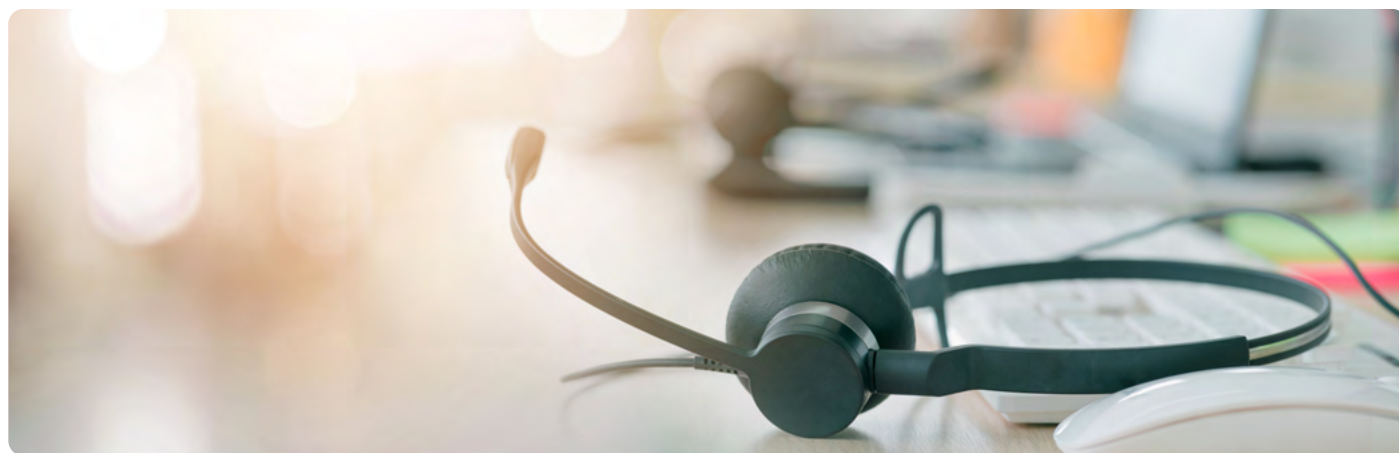
12. Conclusion

Make the switch to a digital Time and Attendance solution NOW!

If you're still relying on outdated, manual time and attendance solutions, you're not only compromising efficiency but also potentially losing out on valuable insights. Making the transition to a digital solution is not just a smart move - it's essential for keeping track of the modern workforce. Digital solutions are incredibly flexible and can be adapted to the size of your business. Whether you have a small team in a fixed location or a sprawling workforce, digital systems can be tailored to suit your needs. Moreover, as your business grows, these solutions can easily scale to accommodate more employees, ensuring a seamless transition.

Are you ready to unlock efficiency, accuracy, and a world of data-driven insights?

[Contact our team now](#) to discuss an upgrade to a digital time and attendance system and leave behind the hassles of manual systems forever.



13. About TouchStar

TouchStar are a UK provider of Fire, Security and Monitoring solutions. Our systems assist companies in addressing challenges related to managing daily flow of people, monitoring high-security zones, tracking resources, recording staff attendance, and protecting people, premises, and assets.

Backed by a successful 50-year history of effective installations and reinforced by a nationwide support and maintenance network, our team of skilled fire and security professionals guarantees reliable assistance around the clock for 24/7 peace of mind.



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