

**POINT OF
VIEW**



Great HR/Payroll Service Improves Business Performance



Historical Service Trends

All business executives know that great customer service drives business growth. Clients are happier, employee morale is higher and productivity soars. Yet, over the years companies of all sizes and in all industries have struggled with delivering exceptional service that is also cost-effective. As economic conditions ebb and flow, it is not uncommon to see major shifts in

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■ ■ ■ **Tom Sinton,**
President & CEO, Perquest

how companies manage their customer service functions. One thing, however, remains the same; there is a constant eye on driving down costs without compromising quality.

Delivering exceptional service within the human resources and payroll industry is particularly complex due to the many facets of the client experience. Depending on a number of factors, HR and payroll needs significantly change, which inherently makes each client experience unique. The number of employees, the number of business locations, whether the company operates in multiple states, number of federal ID numbers, and payment schedules all play a part in driving a client's processes and HR/payroll needs. In an effort to build the most cost effective, yet satisfactory, customer experience within the HR/Payroll industry, we see some common practices or trends emerge.

Trend 1

Automate to Drive Productivity.

One common approach is founded on the idea that by using technology and automating as many processes as possible, the client can perform the majority of functions without any assistance from their vendor. Several companies subscribe to the philosophy that automation solves everything; when clients can easily manage their HR/payroll activities without any support, the processes are seamless and the cost of service goes down.

The challenge in using this “self-service/no-service” approach is that it typically only works for the simplest of HR and payroll needs. As soon as additional levels of complexity are introduced – for example, payroll processing for multiple EINs or multi-state compliance obligations – HR/payroll managers need expert support and advice. In this model, response times can be long and service teams may lack the in-depth knowledge needed to properly resolve client issues.



Trend 2

Centralize for Economies of Scale.

Many companies have played with the decentralized versus centralized approach to service. With decentralized service models, service teams can get more in tune with client needs and respond quickly. However, issues of lessened bandwidth and inadequate expertise can arise since team sizes are typically smaller.

When companies choose to manage HR and payroll responsibilities internally, they face a similar challenge in that it is extremely difficult to employ the number of staff or expertise needed to handle the myriad of compliance and HR/payroll complexities. Additionally, HR/payroll teams will not have the capacity to handle employee inquiries during peak volume periods, such as open enrollment or year-end.

For large companies, duplicating regional service capabilities across multiple cities becomes a very expensive proposition. In a reverse approach, several HR/payroll outsourcers have centralized services to get economies of scale and to leverage expertise across multiple clients. Companies who employ this service approach must be very careful to preserve a personalized experience and accountability to the client. Sometimes, these critical elements can be lost, inevitably leading to client dissatisfaction.

Trend 3

Outsource It All.

On the other extreme, some companies are choosing to outsource all HR/payroll activities and rely on a vendor to manage everything for them, including employee inquiries and all processing obligations. By transferring the entire function, the responsibility is placed squarely on the partner to ensure that all activities run flawlessly. This approach has been more popular with very large companies who have extremely complex needs and who can afford a total outsourcing solution. However, as total outsourcing solutions have matured, the industry has seen commoditization. Outsourcers are trying to find a balance between developing and delivering a unique culture and processes, affordably delivering services and ensuring clients and their employees have positive experiences.

Regardless of the approach, one thing is for certain - delivering great service is a complex undertaking. But it is also the key to building a viable business. At the end of the day, you can only grow a business as fast as you can grow referenceable clients. To be truly customer-focused, the employee culture, processes and technology must start with service.

The Secret to Great Service?

As with all great mysteries, the secret to great service is... that there is no secret. To deliver truly exceptional customer service, it is not one thing done well. It is all things working together that make the difference. Delivering great service, regardless of the industry you are in, must include four core elements:



✓ Sound Application Technology.

The first ingredient for great service is a solid application foundation. Solutions must be truly integrated and designed in a way that can be easily customized to create a personalized, easy user experience that mirrors client workflows. When solutions don't connect well and can't accommodate the right needs, the burden is placed on IT, operations and service teams to make up for the deficiencies. By getting the core product right the first time, companies can immediately improve the client experience and minimize potential pain.

✓ Integrated Service Approach.

Companies must invest and commit to service technology that allows total visibility into a client's information. They must also make sure that their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system works collaboratively with their applications. A single CRM system tied to the HR/payroll applications provides insight into all key touch points, including service history, activity statuses, reports and more.

✓ Streamlined Business Processes.

Another key to delivering exceptional service lies in how you build your business processes. This is especially true in industries like human resources and payroll, where users are managing activities that impact multiple processes. Companies must identify the critical touch points across processes and build a plan for integration. For optimal efficiency, companies should try to map workflows within their systems to the way their clients manage their processes.

✓ It's Culture Critical!

A strong service culture is the foundation of the equation for excellent service. A company's culture must start and end with service. If it doesn't, it's almost impossible to change. Processes and systems across every function must include a way to understand and measure the client experience. And companies must use their data to make improvements. From the C-level suite, to the front-line teams, all employees must be empowered to make the decisions needed to ensure a positive experience.

The Perquest Service Philosophy

Perquest is passionate about providing mid-size companies with today's most effective, easy-to-use workforce solutions. Our solutions were designed from the ground up to deliver a distinctively simple user experience. We've invested in the technology and processes necessary to place our clients at the center of everything we do. In fact, 90% of our clients are willing to recommend Perquest to their colleagues.

Our Service Promise:

Deliver measurable value, exceed expectations and work to make clients successful every day.

From the initial implementation through the ongoing relationship, we're committed to making the client experience easy. Every aspect of our business includes measures to accomplish this objective. Our 360-degree approach to customer service incorporates the following components:

“At Perquest, we empower all employees to “commit” the company to meet or exceed a client’s expectation.”

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- A single integrated platform ensures that all HR, payroll and benefits information is in sync.
- Intuitive, customizable workflows allow clients to design their processes to work the way they do.
- Our CRM system directly integrates with our applications to allow complete visibility at all touch points for Perquest and our clients.
- “Call Me” triggers are built into our CRM so clients can contact a Perquest executive and ask for a response within 10 minutes or 24 hours, based on their preference.
- All Perquest employees - from the top executive to the front line Account Manager - are empowered to “commit” the company to meet or exceed client expectations.
- Metrics such as error rates, case resolution times and 1st call resolution ensure that we're meeting and exceeding client expectations every day.