ERP Integration:
Time & Attendance
On Any Device

How SaaS-based middleware enables the device-agnostic collection
of time and attendance data in virtually any software environment.

Produced in Partnership with

RIntegrated Solutions For
ETAILERS

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Software integration projects are like an emotional roller coaster. They often begin with the thrill of anticipated efficiency; the C-suite buys into the promises of big business benefits and quick return, the dotted line is signed and the troops are rallied. Sleeves are rolled up and the front office is riding high.

Then the real work begins, and the complexity of the software environment begins throwing curve balls at the integration team. Applications don't play nice with one another, refusing to share the data necessary to enable the intended efficiencies. The project stalls. Benefits so eloquently stated during the sales pitch are placed in a holding pattern. The path to ROI is prolonged.

The ERP Integration Problem In Practice

The retail workforce management software environment is rife with examples. Perhaps most notably, the propensity for growing retailers to leverage multi-tasking POS software for labor management functions like time and attendance fails the scalability test as the business expands. Powerful new HCM (human capital management) and ERP applications that tighten the link between HR and finance, for example, are quickly becoming a must-have for major retailers. Time clock data is vital to achieving the intended return on those HCM investments, but it's a point of integration that's often overlooked. When HCM and ERP systems don't integrate with the retailer's existing time clock application—or the POS software handling time and attendance data collection duties—what additional costs will be incurred to enable the integration? How will those costs impact the return on the HCM investment?

The problem is not hypothetical. ATS recently stepped in to solve just such an issue for a several-thousand-location merchant.

When the retailer made a strategic decision to migrate from its legacy ERP systems of record to a next-generation, single-platform ERP/HCM system, the roller coaster ride began. It screeched to a halt when the time came to bolt together the retailer's time clock data feed from its POS system and the time tracking module in its new ERP. Historically, the retailer's POS system had served its time and attendance requirements well, negating the need for time clocks. But the POS time and attendance application wouldn't talk with the new ERP. There was no validated integration between the two. The retailer's multimillion-dollar ERP investment was stalled, missing a critical data point for its HCM and finance modules.

At this point, prospects were grim that the retailer would emerge from the dilemma without considerable additional expense. Would it commit to the cost and time required of a new POS implementation, one with validated time and attendance integration to its new ERP? Unlikely. Would the implementation of thousands of dedicated time clocks—replete with the process re-engineering and training required of them—be the retailer's only remedy? Or would it attempt to cobble together a complicated integration patch—knowing the likelihood that it would break and require a high

degree of maintenance at every turn—and hope for the best?

None of these options is ideal, and two are complete non-starters. Few front offices have the stomach for a multi-million-dollar fix to a multi-million-dollar project. Few store operations teams have the appetite for process change and retraining efforts—extrapolated across thousands of sites—merely to accommodate a back-office data feed, regardless of its criticality to another department. No POS software provider has the capacity to deal with a one-off integration project that facilitates the dynamic payroll and labor law challenges associated with time and attendance and workforce management. And no one wants to risk losing or diluting functionality of the systems that support their daily business processes.

Enter SaaS-Based, Validated Integration

With validated integration to the retailer's new ERP system already in place via its TimeCom data collection terminal integration solution, ATS became a solution enabler. Through partnership with the retailer's POS vendor, ATS leveraged this validated integration protocol to enable the transmission of time and attendance data from the retailer's existing POS interface to the time tracking module in its new ERP system. As a result, the ERP project moved ahead without disruption:

- The retailer moved forward with its ERP implementation at nominal additional expense—a minimal, monthly, per-terminal integration fee. Neither the POS nor the time and attendance interface changed for the retailer's store-level associates and managers.

- For a miniscule monthly usage fee, the retailer's POS vendor enjoys validated integration and the continuation of its full engagement with the retailer—including time and attendance data collection—without fear of replacement.

- The ERP provider moved forward with the implementation of its time tracking module, which had been stalled indefinitely.

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The SaaS-based approach to data integration employed by ATS serves as an enabler of time and attendance data from virtually any source—whether a time clock, a POS station, or a mobile device. Instead of a direct integration between two critical applications, the ATS middleware facilitates a unified stream of appropriately-formatted punch data from multiple devices into the ERP software's time tracking module.

This is important in environments such as retail, where it's common for time and attendance data to be collected from a variety of devices located in disparate facilities, such as stores, warehouses, and distribution centers. Because the middleware is validated and continually maintained by ATS, the integration works seamlessly with little intervention as ERP updates are executed. In fact, TimeCom controls the downloading of flash firmware and application updates to the hardware and devices facilitating time clock data. The solution is also equipped to monitor the health of data collection terminals, create distinct time clocks and employee user groups, and configure and deliver messages and alerts.

Future-Proofing Time And Attendance Data Collection

Whether a retailer operates a few hundred domestic stores or thousands of global retail, supply chain, and manufacturing facilities, everyone benefits from the consolidation of multiple time and attendance feeds into a unified, formatted stream of data feeding core software applications. A consolidated, holistic, and common data set ushers in the application of business intelligence and analytics tools that help retailers more thoroughly understand the implications of weather, holidays, associate ability, and more on labor performance. With that thorough understanding—based on a complete data set—comes confidence in labor management decision making.

As more retailers deploy biometric time and attendance technology and future-forward RFID-based workforce management solutions, the ability to unify those data sources and validate their integration with ERP and HCM systems will only become more important.

In the meantime, the ATS approach reduces cost and complexity, ensuring the integrity of the existing time and attendance data collection infrastructure as retailers continue their march toward unified ERP platforms. Too often, the integration of time and attendance data is an afterthought in the context of an ERP system deployment or upgrade, but at some point in that process it becomes critical. Leveraging a single instance of cloud middleware and a bit of foresight, retailers can rest assured their mission-critical hardware and software investments will benefit from a unified stream of time and attendance data, with no change to the user interface.

For more information on enabling ERP integration with Accu-Time, visit
www.accu-time.com/timecom

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About Accu-Time

We make, design, and sell hardware, software, and services that enable the collection, reporting, and analysis of workforce management activities.

OUR PARTNERS ARE GLOBAL AND INCLUDE:
- Human capital management (HCM) and workforce management (WFM) software developers
- Independent software vendors
- Payroll service providers
- Enterprise resource planning (ERP) software developers and providers
- WFM and HCM solution integrators
- Value-added resellers (VARs)
- Enterprise-level end users in a variety of industries

TO THESE BUSINESSES WE OFFER:
- Time & attendance data collection terminals
- Employee self-service stations
- Peripheral biometric identification devices
- Terminal management software
- Integration middleware
- WFM application interfaces
- Inventory management programs
- Service, maintenance, and installation programs
- Technical support programs
- Expertise in WFM data collection

OUR TERMINALS FEATURE A WIDE ARRAY OF OPTIONS INCLUDING:
- Barcode, magnetic stripe, and proximity readers
- Biometric solutions to prevent buddy punching or ghosting
- Serial, Ethernet, cellular, WiFi, and Bluetooth connectivity
- Color touch displays
- Rugged long-life construction
- Expandable memory
- Scalability
- Popular operating systems and programming languages

OUR SOFTWARE ALLOWS OUR PARTNERS TO:
- Quickly integrate our hardware with their solution
- Manage the functionality of the terminal
- Manage communications and uploads/downloads with the terminal
- Easily develop core WFM functions at the terminal
- Deliver SaaS and hosted products to their customers

Accu-Time Systems serves partners and end-users in many countries from our headquarters in Connecticut and our international offices. We embrace our customers for the life of our products and support them through a variety of initiatives. Our trusted representative and reseller programs allow our partners to expand into many types of markets. We help them do that through our unique ability to adapt to our partners' evolving needs. The integration of sturdy, flexible ATS hardware with your software solution ensures your continued growth and success.

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