

Payroll reporting problems are going, going, gone at Pickles Auctions



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Suzanne Heinrich, National Payroll Manager, Pickles Auctions

Pickles Auctions is Australia's largest privately owned auction house, employing more than 500 permanent and seasonal staff across 18 branches, covering every state and territory.



Pickles Auctions

The Pickles Auctions payroll team is responsible for ensuring the accurate and timely payment of salaries to each member of staff. In addition, the two person team provides each branch manager with critical information on employee costs and expenses. Wage payments typically account for 55 percent of a business' overall spend. Keeping tight control on this area is crucial to the profitability of a company and Pickles Auctions is no exception to the rule.

"Our branch managers require access to as much information as possible. The more detailed payroll reports they can access, the easier it is for them to perform cost analysis," said Suzanne Heinrich, National Payroll Manager, Pickles Auctions.

Payroll Pain

In 2003, the payroll team were using MicrOpay's Payroll Manager software. To access payroll information, staff had to export payroll data to another application, such as Excel, before printing it out as a report. The reports contained generic payroll information about all staff across the organisation.

The reports did not provide information specific to each of the company's eighteen branches. Each month, the payroll team had to generate individual reports for each branch by manually entering payroll information into various spreadsheets.

"Generating each report in this way sucked up masses of the team's time - the basic data entry took us almost half a day per report. By the time we finished one reporting cycle it was practically time to start the next," said Heinrich.

The pain the payroll team experienced was compounded by the company's rapid growth. Pickles Auctions grew from 120 employees in 1998 to 450 in 2005. As the company payroll expanded, so too did the payroll staff's workload.

The DOS-based software had a complicated user interface that was difficult to use. The team were keen to move to a Window-based solution that offered a more intuitive, user interface, making it easier to train new users. They also wanted a Windows-based application that was compatible with the company's accounting system, Exonet.

Pickles deploys Meridian

The payroll team required software that could generate highly customised payroll reports thereby significantly reducing staff time spent manually generating reports.

After reviewing payroll solutions from three vendors, Pickles chose the latest payroll solution from MicrOpay, Meridian.

"If there's a problem with our payroll system and we can't pay staff, or report to branches or the CFO, then that's a lot of unhappy people we have to answer to. From our previous experiences with MicrOpay, we knew their tools were reliable and once we saw that the cost of implementation wasn't at all prohibitive, it was an easy decision for us to make," said Heinrich.

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Micropay Meridian Case Study:

Pickles Auctions

MM06/07

Pickles Auctions deployed the new Micropay Meridian system in June 2005. In less than a day the software was installed and the payroll team were comfortably using the solution.

"Implementation was quick and painless. We found you really don't need any previous payroll experience to be able to use the software. Any queries we had were immediately resolved by the friendly Micropay helpdesk staff," said Heinrich.

Payroll Pleasure

"Using Meridian, we can now produce detailed, customised reports for each branch without having to re-enter data into Excel. Now we simply cut and paste the data we need from one page to another."

As a result, each branch report now takes considerably less time to compile than when using the old system.

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The reports are now not only quick to generate, they are more accurate thanks to the reduction in human keying errors. In addition, the reports contain more

detailed payroll information such as HR details, making it easier for branch managers to analyse costs and manage budgets.

The new software has also reduced the time Pickles' payroll staff spend adding new staff members or seasonal employees to the payroll system. They no longer need to re-key all the information for each person, over and over again. The team now cut and paste the relevant pieces of information, such as salary, holiday and sick pay from a similar record and create a new one.

The payroll team has also significantly reduced the time spent making superannuation payments on behalf of its staff.

When SuperChoice came into effect on 1st July 2005, Pickles' payroll team were faced with having to make super contributions to 30 different super funds. To do this meant they had to manually draw cheques for each person to each fund and deposit them in relevant the relevant super funds. Meridian allows them to pay directly to multiple superannuation funds, saving them considerable time.

"Using the new Meridian system has given our payroll team the ability to manage time more effectively and

increase productivity," said Steve Hawkes, Chief Financial Officer, Pickles Auctions.

"The payroll team can now focus on higher value activities such as analysing business costs in more detail, which benefits the company and provides our staff greater job satisfaction," he added.

Following the success of the Meridian deployment, Pickles Auctions now plans to integrate the system directly with its accounting package.



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