

Payroll Chaos

Although payroll is generally a minimally staffed, highly tasked area of business, there are times of year that your payroll department will be feeling the weight of their duties the most—many becoming utterly overwhelmed. Staffing in the payroll world is typically “just enough to get by.” And with the highly specialized work they do, most companies don’t have many outside teams that can pitch in and help during payroll’s busiest times.

With their constant deadlines and cycles, adding special projects to payroll’s list of tasks can quickly and easily overwhelm the department (especially when staffed by only one or two people). A payroll department in a state of chaos can be a dangerous thing, not only because of the importance of what they do, but also because of the simple fact that they are important people in your organization.

Any HR professional knows that having your employees in a state of overwhelm is not something to be proud of, especially if you know it happens every year and nothing is done to improve or prevent the situation.

Handling the Busiest Times of the Year

The two most well-known annual payroll chaos times are open enrollment and year-end, which both reach their peak during the same last few months of the year. During these times, not only will your payroll people have to continue handling processing regular payroll, but they will also have to add *more* tasks—W2s, wage reviews, year-end bonuses, balancing, audits...and the list goes on.

If your organization is planning on changing payroll system, January is the most optimal time for a new system implementation because you don’t have to bring over opening balances and year-to-date data. Even without that requirement, the timing of a January 1 ‘go live’ can add additional pressure to your year-end payroll resources. It means that the highest amount of activity for implementation preparation will be happening at the same time as your year-end and open enrollment.

In an area of your organization where accuracy is of the highest priority, stretching your resources too thin can make things even more risky. Ideally, a payroll department will include audits in their day-to-day and, of course, year-end procedures. But when things get hectic, errors can easily slip through the cracks, only to be found later—and requiring extra work to fix. This is precisely how work can begin to snowball in a short period of time.

Prevent Burnout During Hectic Times

If these times of year are not handled effectively, they can cause a loss of morale and motivation, as well as complete burnout for some. There are certain payroll projects that can be put off for a better time of the month or year—a time when the department expects to have more bandwidth. But year-end and open enrollment just can't budge.

Whether or not you plan ahead for these times of year, it may prove to be impossible for your current team to take on the extra work, or for another internal resource to help out.

A third-party partner is often the most ideal option to prevent burnout and mitigate high stress levels and errors during busy and stressful times of year. A third party can step in and take over additional tasks that would otherwise overburden your payroll department. They will come to the table with extensive HR/payroll experience, and a fresh set of eyes. Their objective eye and perspective can also have the positive side effect of helping your payroll team identify errors or refine processes so that when their job is done, your team's job will continue to be easier.

How Wise Consulting Can Help

Wise's expert consultants have nearly 20 years of experience in helping companies handle HR/payroll special circumstances like these. They have learned through years of working with a wide array of clients which best practices are actually best, and can offer those practices to your HR/payroll department as you plan for the future and work through your current special projects and implementations.

Wise Consulting has the necessary expertise to handle anything your payroll department needs, from a busy time of year to expert help during an implementation. As your consulting partner, they can take the time to understand your needs so you can easily handle times when things could otherwise become chaotic.



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