



The **Responsive Payroll Manager:**

Success Factors for
Building and Leading
Strong Teams

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With the global pandemic transforming how many people feel about fundamental aspects of their lives, including their jobs, the manager-employee relationship has become even more critical—holding workforces together and helping organizations build and lead adaptable teams. Today's payroll managers need to be more people-centric than ever before, meaning they must consider the unique and quickly changing needs of each employee on their team.

It's no secret that part of what has caused the payroll manager role to grow in importance is the widespread move to remote work. No doubt you've already faced the challenge of helping your payroll team collaborate, plan, brainstorm and celebrate from afar. Those skills will not go to waste.

But what's going on is not just about remote work. A sea of change has occurred in what employees and job seekers expect of their employers and their new priorities are here to stay.

Besides remote work and higher compensation, payroll professionals expect a greater chance for advancement and are looking to their managers for help. They also seek support in areas that may not have been as much of a focus before the pandemic, such as health and wellness.

The need for you to give personal attention to each of your employees to help them reach their goals has never been greater. Coalescing a payroll team today requires consistent, impactful discussions with your people.

Offer Greater Guidance for Career Paths

As a manager, it's critical you find time to spend with your employees, helping them plan and fine-tune where they want to take their careers and how to get there. Your people will appreciate the individual attention and guidance you offer, which translates into greater loyalty.

Encouraging your team to gain designations is a great way for them to grow their careers. Connecting them with the National Payroll Institute's path to becoming a Payroll Compliance Practitioner (PCP), for example, will ensure they have the compliance knowledge needed for success. Earning a Certified Payroll Manager (CPM) designation will prepare seasoned professionals to manage a department.

It's also important to get involved in developing your team's soft skills. Human qualities such as empathy, emotional intelligence, communication and leadership have become more important than ever for payroll teams as they work more closely with departments such as HR and IT. These

attributes are not easily taught, but managers can demonstrate them by being visible role models.

Place a Strong Focus on Technology

Another way to address an employee's desire to learn is by offering them targeted training in areas vital to payroll. Today, this largely means gaining technology skills.

Be a leader in the tools you provide and the skills your team can build. For example, offering access to the latest cloud-based HRIS systems can make their job easier, help them to expand their skillset and create a better employee experience.

Support Advancement Through Upskilling

Always make a point of talking to your employees about upskilling in areas that may be new to them. Examples include:

- ▶ **Payroll analytics:** Upskill professionals to roles that involve the analysis of information they're already familiar with, such as overtime, pay rates and taxes. Their work with payroll analytics can improve job satisfaction once they see how they're helping company leaders make more informed decisions about people-related issues such as headcount and compensation.
- ▶ **AI-supported payroll systems:** If you've already implemented or plan to add AI-supported payroll systems, upskilling promising team members to take part is another way to help them achieve their goals. With your encouragement, they could eventually gain skills in AI-powered fields such as data integrity, workforce analysis process improvement and performance management.
- ▶ **Employee-friendly mobile apps:** Giving employees access to smartphone payroll applications and self-service portals allows them to review important information like pay slips and update their personal information on their own. This can free up your staff from data gathering, giving them more time to devote to their core responsibilities.

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Look Out for Your Team's Wellness

When workloads are high and the pressure is on, it can be difficult for payroll professionals to step away from the computer. Here are some ways you can increase your team's sense of well-being:

- **Focus on output, not input.** Pay attention to employees' work results, not how or when they accomplish them. An increased level of trust on your part can lead to reduced stress and greater job satisfaction for your team.
- **Provide helpful resources.** From company-sponsored mental health and wellness initiatives and employee assistance programs to free workshops and webinars, remind your team about any wellness benefits your company offers to support a healthier lifestyle.
- **Offer access to the latest technology.** Offer the latest communication and collaboration platforms so your teams can connect with one another more easily.
- **Put mobile access in perspective.** Having access to files and data on their smartphone may be convenient but remind workers that they don't have to be chained to their devices.
- **Help prioritize.** With many duties to keep on top of, some staff may need help identifying their most urgent tasks. Help your teams identify

which projects are nice-to-do and which are business critical.

- **Respect downtime.** Instant messaging platforms make it easy for you to slip into bad habits such as firing out updates or requests on a Sunday night. Set an example by respecting your employees' time off and insist everyone else does the same.
- **Avoid micromanaging.** Anxious managers create anxious employees. Once someone has proved they can deliver quality work on time, give them as much autonomy as possible.
- **Bring in extra help.** Consider bringing in contract professionals to alleviate bottlenecks and help out during busy periods such as payroll processing days.

Payroll professionals engage across every level of the organization, which means their work has wide visibility. By being supportive and responsive to their new and emerging priorities, you are sure to build a strong and flexible payroll team. ■

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You can meet Michael at the 2022 National Payroll Institute Conference in Niagara Falls on June 10, when he will be presenting “How to Build and Lead an Adaptable Payroll Team.” Register now at payroll.ca.