DRIVING SUCCESS
YOUR MUST-KNOW GUIDE TO BUYING A TIME CLOCK

TIME CLOCKS

REPLICON™

Introduction

If you're like most of us, buying a new time clock for your business is not something that you do often. In many cases, the time clock that you buy today will be the one your business uses for five or 10 years or more. But before you write a check or sign a purchase order for the newer version of your same old time clock, ask yourself this: "What do I need to know before buying a time clock?"

In this guide, we'll answer that very question. We'll also talk about the evolution (or lack thereof) of time clocks, and will discuss the reasons why traditional time clocks are no longer the best choice. Then, we'll introduce you to the benefits of cloud-based smartclocks, and finally, we'll highlight the top five questions you need to ask of a smartclock vendor.

Traditional Time Clocks: The Technology that Time Forgot

Pull your smart phone out of your pocket or purse and take a look at it. Sure, it's a $200 device that you can use to call work, friends, and family—but it does so much more than that! It can help you find your way to a work conference in another city, take a photo that you can share with friends, keep you entertained while you're waiting for your flight, and even remind you of your wife's birthday.

Now look at the time clock hanging on your wall (or if you're getting one for the first time, a picture of the one you're considering.) Chances are, it's pretty big, relatively bulky, and was probably *really* expensive—it's not unusual for these beasts to cost thousands of dollars. It may have a literal bell or whistle, but in terms of being able to provide you with any additional value, you'll need to look elsewhere.

The first time clocks were invented just a few years after the first telephones—so why aren't our time clocks almost as advanced as our phones? That answer is simple: Because until now, no one has demanded that they improve. Unlike other technologies that must innovate or risk becoming obsolete, the time clock seems to have been given a free pass.

Businesses anticipate that doing something other than buying a time clock just like the one they currently have would be too expensive, or would be too time-consuming and painful to implement. So when a business needs to replace a broken or completely outdated time clock, the people in charge of the search tend to default to the time clock that

they're used to, rather than demanding a more customizable, innovative solution. But defaulting to the "traditional" time clock solution is fraught with peril.

Traditional Time Clock Pitfalls

If you're considering replacing your current time clock with another traditional time clock, or are looking for your first time clock solution, you'll want to consider the following realities of standard or traditional time clocks:

High cost: Today, most traditional time clocks start at around $600 and go up (and up!) from there—and that's just the initial cost. When you consider that most traditional time clocks also require expensive installation fees and maintenance costs, and that clock manufacturers often charge for upgrades, the total cost of ownership can be positively astounding. The high cost also means that you will not be able to deploy many time clocks, and you'll have to deal with the time delays associated with clocking in/out as well as possible compliance issues, even after doling out huge sums of money.

Lack of innovation: Take another look at your smartphone—how different does it look than the phones we used 50 years ago? Now take a look at the traditional time clock you may be considering. Hmm, that's odd—it may be a different color, or made from plastic instead of metal, but other than that it's pretty much the same as it was decades ago. And it certainly doesn't do much above and beyond what it did 50 years ago—no added value there. (The exception to this would be biometric clocks, which we'll cover in a moment.)

Limited configurability: Most traditional time clocks will have exactly zero configuration options. Only very few clocks will have configuration options available, but as you may expect, those clocks cost more up front, and come with the additional professional services costs associated with hiring a knowledgeable consultant who is capable of successfully programming the clock to meet your needs.

Long cycle times: Another issue associated with these traditional time clocks is that the decision making process to purchase or replace one can be quite lengthy. This is because various considerations must be made, such as whether the current vendor offers a time clock that meets basic needs, or whether it would be better to go with a new vendor who might have an enhanced offering. In either case, managers must engage in a long buying cycle before a traditional type of time clock is procured, let alone put into use, and configurability will be limited.

Easy to fool: Traditional time clocks concentrate on performing a single task—documenting when an employee clocks in or out. However, they do nothing to prevent time theft through "buddy punching"—where one worker clocks in for a co-worker who is absent. If John clocks in for Jane, a traditional time clock is none-the-wiser.

Biometric Time Clocks: Are They All They're Cracked Up to Be?

One way to prevent time theft is by upgrading to a biometric time clock, which requires a thumbprint or other unique identifier to clock an employee in or out, but biometric time clocks come with their own set of challenges.

» **Cost:** Biometric technology doesn't come cheap, so plan on paying 2 to 3 times the cost over a traditional time clock.

» **Setup:** Biometric clocks require extremely cumbersome enrollment processes where new employees have to submit fingerprints, hand scans, or other biometric data against which the clock will compare future data.

» **Data security:** Because biometric clocks collect private personal data, like fingerprints and handprints, they are attractive targets for hackers and others intent on stealing data—but securely storing and maintaining this data can be a tedious and expensive process. Additionally, there is a general level of concern that biometric data may be linked with other personal information and used for purposes other than tracking attendance.

» **Health issues:** Transmission of germs and disease is a common concern among biometric clock users. Almost all biometric clocks require each employee to press their thumb or place their entire hand onto the clock's glass. Vendors often recommend that users wipe the readers after every use—a practice that is easy to recommend and impossible to actively enforce.

Finally, an Attractive Alternative to Traditional Time Clocks: A Smartclock

Thankfully, there now exists a truly innovative, cost-effective, customizable alternative to traditional time clocks—the revolutionary smartclock app which can be deployed on the tablet device of your choice.

Using the latest tablet technology, smartclocks have large, multi-color touchscreens that capture time via a scanned QR card using a built-in camera. And because smartclocks are connected to the cloud and work seamlessly with cloud-based software, you can anticipate a number of benefits, such as:

Affordability: Your initial investment in a smartclock is substantially lower than it would be with a traditional time clock—and because upgrades and maintenance are included and simply pushed out via the cloud, the total cost of ownership is also much lower.

Quick deployment: Just as with any of your other favorite apps, downloading a smartclock app to a mobile tablet device is super-fast and easy, and the cost is much less prohibitive when compared to traditional or biometric options. In addition, managers can generally move forward with the purchase decision with minimal approval reviews due to the low cost and, once the decision is made, you can just download the app and go.

Grows with your needs: Just as you can customize your personal mobile device with apps and functionality that make your life easier and improve your productivity, smartclock apps can similarly be easily customized to meet your specific and growing needs.

Fewer maintenance needs: Unlike biometric clocks that are known for being temperamental and prone to malfunction ("Hey George, the thumbprint reader isn't working again!"), smartclocks require less physical interaction and, as a result, have fewer maintenance issues. And because a smartclock is connected to a cloud-based service, vendors are constantly able to monitor your clock to identify any potential problems and proactively troubleshoot them without you even noticing it. In the unlikely event that your smartclock does experience a problem, you'll receive an alert so that you can resolve any small issues before they become big problems.

Lower learning curve for staff: Because smartclocks have an intuitive user interface, businesses can anticipate a shorter learning curve than they would for traditional or biometric clocks. And because installing the smartclock app is quite easy, as it comes pre-configured, you're up and running in less than an hour, not several days.

Saved time in processing payroll and other time-related tasks: Smartclocks work seamlessly with cloud-based time and attendance software, meaning you can easily edit erroneous punches, apply business rules for things like overtime and meal breaks, set up your preferred time rounding, enable employee self-service for time off, and implement other policies directly.

Ensure more accurate time data: Like biometric clocks, smartclocks prevent time theft or "buddy punches" by ensuring that John Smith is actually the one who's punching in John Smith's timecard. But unlike the issues around setup, data privacy, and hygiene caused by biometrics clocks, the most advanced smartclocks simply capture an image of the employee when s/he clocks in, so managers can visually confirm that the time card belongs to the employee who is clocking in with it if needed.

Saves IT resources, time, and headaches: Smartclocks easily fit in with your existing technologies, without the need for extensive or expensive IT investments—and updates, upgrades, and maintenance tasks are performed automatically, requiring no IT intervention.

The Top 5 Questions You Should ask a Smartclock Vendor

Now that you understand the many benefits of a smartclock over a traditional time clock, you should just run out and buy the first smartclock you see, right? Not quite—not all smartclocks are created equal. To ensure you're making a smart investment in a smartclock, here are the top 5 questions you'll want to ask a potential smartclock vendor.

1. **Does your smartclock vendor give you the flexibility to choose your tablet device?** Does the clock come preconfigured and ready to use? You'll only want to consider a vendor that can provide you that flexibility and a smartclock that is ready to go from day one.

2. **Can you have one smartclock to handle employees from different shifts?** Some smartclock vendors require you to purchase a separate smartclock for each working shift; however, you'll be able to streamline the process and keep overall costs down by selecting a smartclock that can manage multiple shifts within a single clock.

3. **How does your smartclock eliminate the issue of time theft/buddy punching?** Different vendors handle this in different ways, but many businesses find that capturing an image as an employee clocks in and out is the most effective, efficient way to prevent time theft.

4. **How often do you release updates and upgrades?** Choose a vendor that provides updates and upgrades on a regular basis, and can show you an anticipated update/upgrade schedule for the next 12 months.

5. **Tell me about your company and its experience?** You'll want to make sure you select a vendor that is going to be around to provide the upgrades and support they've promised. You'll also want to look closer at any vendor that has proven experience.

Making an Informed Time Clock Purchase

For most companies, a time clock is not an everyday or inexpensive purchase, which is why it is so important to understand your options and make an informed decision. Because time clock technology has largely been static, it may be tempting to stick with the same old technology you're used to—but if you do that, you'll be stuck with the same frustrations, headaches, and pitfalls all over again. A biometric clock may seem to be the answer at first glance, but health concerns and high costs tarnish their luster.

For a truly innovative, cost-effective alternative to traditional and biometric time clocks, consider a smartclock. With a wide variety of benefits—from lower costs to easier maintenance—a smartclock is simply the smartest way to go when it comes to purchasing a new time clock.

About Replicon

Replicon is the leading provider of cloud time tracking applications. Our products are used by over 7,800 companies of all sizes worldwide to better manage workforce attendance, projects, professional services organizations and shared services resources. By providing complete transparency into time data, our technology reduces compliance risk, keeps costs down and provides unparalleled insight into the key drivers of business performance.

Replicon's award-winning products are delivered 100% in the cloud on a unified platform, and are hassle-free to deploy and use. Replicon is headquartered in Silicon Valley with employees in offices worldwide.

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