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#### THE PROBLEMS

The following problems were identified as negatively affecting productivity:

- Staff AWOL
- Buddy clocking with both the punch cards and the magnetic readers
- Flour on fingertips disallowed accurate reading of fingerprints
- Magnetic cards left at home or lost
- Previous clocking systems were bulky and unsightly.

#### Helping to maintain a steady flow of pies

With over 500 000 pies produced by Pieman's Pantry per day, this Krugersdorp-based plant needs to maintain high levels of productivity and maximised employee attendance.

"We produce a range of quality savoury pies and other pastry based products in three formats: frozen and unbaked, baked and ready to eat, and baked and chilled for reheating," said Alta van Rooyen, the company's payroll administrator.

To achieve production levels whereby the baked products are distributed nationwide to more than 10 000 retail outlets, the company's 405 hourly-paid employees need to be at their posts for

the required number of hours. "Absenteeism starts with a few minutes, but if everyone takes a few extra minutes, these soon become hours and then days, of lost time. Lost time means slower production and a reduced bottom line, so it's critical to keep track of staff by employing an accurate time clocking system,".

According to Van Rooyen, the company has run the whole gamut of time logging systems. "In the early days we used manual clock cards, but this type of system is often open to abuse, with buddy clocking and fraud being commonplace. We tried a biometric fingerprint system a few years ago, when biometrics was first introduced as a form of time and attendance monitoring. However, because these early systems were less sophisticated than what is currently considered the *de facto* standard in biometrics, the presence of flour on employees' fingers proved to be an aggravating factor for the retrieval of proper data.

"As a result we upgraded from iButtons to a magnetic proximity card and sensor from Senti Systems some six years ago and this worked really well in terms of gathering the data. However, we were once again faced with challenges. The first one being, once again, the issue of buddy clocking and the second one being that staff sometimes left their cards at home and we would therefore have to manually log their time," added Van Rooyen.

"In 2009, Senti Systems introduced us to their very sophisticated and fool-proof biometric fingerprint reader, which is able to accurately read fingerprints, even when they are covered in flour. Installation took one day and with a short training session I was able to capture the fingerprints of all our hourly paid staff in a short space of time".

Van Rooyen explains that there are 547 employees of the company registered on the system. "However, only 405 of these use the system as a time and attendance tool using TurboTime. The monthly paid employees are registered on the system, but when needed, we can also log any overtime they might work. In addition, we have 80 contract cleaners who are registered for attendance only and we will be adding 73 learners onto the system for attendance only, since they receive a fixed stipend."

Van Rooyen added that the maintenance staff, because of their frequent mobility in and out of the plant, are registered on the system but also use a manual clock card system.

Sentri Systems also provided a turnstile for access into the production facility which is linked directly to the fingerprint reader at that entrance. A manual clock card system provides T&A monitoring for the 50 staff members at the company's smaller facilities at Crown Mines and North Hills.

Using Turbo Time software, the system has been connected directly into the company's VIP Payroll package, offering the full benefits of seamless time and attendance monitoring and reporting. "There is a huge variety of report types to choose from. The system has a colour coded calendar built into it which highlights different colours for AWOL, leave and sick leave so I am able to quickly and effortlessly select specific elements to identify absenteeism trends of chosen employees, for instance,": said Van Rooyen.

"By having this data at their fingertips, management can match T&A to productivity and output and identify problem areas or issues with a particular employee," Van Rooyen said. "The beauty of the system is that its accuracy is unquestionable since it is directly linked to whenever a staff member places their finger on the reader pad. There is no manual intervention or interference, so results are categorical."

Van Rooyen said that there was a learning curve involved initially on implementation of the system and minor adjustments were required to fine tune the system to the specific requirements of Pieman's Pantry. "However, the team from Sentri Systems was extremely helpful and ensured that the switch-over to the new system was as painless as possible for us."

Van Rooyen enthused about the advantages of the new system. "We now have a larger capacity for storage of data. In the past, if I didn't import the information on a daily basis, we would face problems with under-capacity. I recently took three days' leave and there was still sufficient capacity on my return.

"Another benefit of the system has been the elimination of unnecessary comfort breaks by the employees. Unfortunately, the old system was open to abuse and we found that some staff members were leaving the production area an unreasonable number of times. The inconvenience of forgotten or misplaced cards has also been eradicated," she concluded.

#### THE SOLUTION

In 2009 Sentri Systems installed a fool-proof biometric fingerprint reader, linked to a turnstile for access into the production facility. The following tangible benefits have been noted:

- System can accurately read fingerprints
- Fast installation time of less than one day
- Short training session required for payroll administrators
- Capturing fingerprints is fast and easy to accomplish
- Turbo Time software is connected directly into the company's VIP Payroll package, offering seamless time and attendance monitoring and reporting
- Large variety of report types to choose from
- Colour coded calendar highlights different colours for AWOL, leave and sick leave allowing users to identify absenteeism trends
- Management can match T&A to productivity and output and identify problem areas or issues with a particular employee
- No manual intervention or interference, so accuracy of results is categorical
- Larger capacity for storage of data
- Elimination of unnecessary comfort breaks by the employees
- No more forgotten or misplaced cards.