

4 ways to stay ahead of global workforce compliance risk

The future of work will feature diverse teams operating globally, with jobs and roles impacted by artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, analytics, and mobility tools. These evolving workplaces will require new skill sets, bringing new opportunities and risks. “The skill sets required in both old and new occupations will change in most industries and transform how and where people work,” observes the World Economic Forum in its most recent [Future of Jobs report](#).

While global workforce skills are evolving, monitoring labor compliance remains urgent, especially with mandates that vary by region based on local regulations. Unfortunately, many healthcare, manufacturing, retail and other organizations perform compliance monitoring with outdated software solutions, creating errors that can lead to fines, class action lawsuits, [expensive settlements with workers](#), or [delayed market access](#). The right tools can help you stay ahead of these risks, while preparing for future challenges.

Here are four ways to manage global workforce compliance risks.

1

Monitor local compliance laws with one system

Along with languages, holidays, and workplace culture, international, federal, state, and local labor laws can vary by region. At the same time, full-time, part-time, contract, remote, and outsourced employees all have different scheduling requirements, as well as union or collective bargaining agreements, [statutory allowances](#), or [fair workweek laws](#) to monitor for their localization. With fair workweek laws in particular, which promote stability in scheduling, “A growing body of research has also found that increasing predictability, stability, and flexibility of worker schedules can lead to higher productivity and increased sales for retail stores,” [according to the Economic Policy Institute](#).

Additionally, overtime compensation varies by worker and region, which requires tracking hours, deductions, and accurate compensation. This can also include country-specific rules about the maximum amount of time an employee can work in a day (or the minimum number of hours an employee can work), as well as compliance mandates [for employing minors](#).

Managing workforce compliance on a global stage requires real-time information that is accurate, easily accessible, and available whenever and wherever your employees and managers are. But many companies are still operating with disparate legacy or paper-based systems. Having multiple technology solutions deployed in different regions, along with locations that might still be manually updating spreadsheets, can create costly errors when tracking workforce and compliance data.

With a modern workforce management (WFM) system, you can consolidate and monitor all of your global workforce needs from one system that collects and shares real-time data. By automating inefficient manual processes with real-time data, you can free up your employees to focus on more strategic activities that benefit your bottom line. Even more efficiencies can be realized by utilizing new tools like predictive analytics to develop schedules mathematically, considering all potential variables that affect your business—whether you run one location or have locations across states, countries, and continents—as well as employee-specific considerations. Many of these systems can also leverage fair-scheduling tools to intercept schedule changes that occur within defined windows and capture the reasons the changes were made to automatically track violations—and keep you in compliance.

2

Choose a system that can not only be localized—but is also industry-specific

One benefit to a global workplace is that organizations can be enriched by new cultures and ways of working. “When you manage workers in other countries, you have a rare opportunity to experience new cultures and new people firsthand. Those experiences then funnel into stronger management practices—and a stronger overall company,” [writes Globalization Partners](#). Along with these new cultures come existing norms in the workplace that can impact overtime scheduling and compensation.

For retail and manufacturing, especially, this can mean always knowing the overtime regulations for full-time, part-time, or contract employees in each location where you operate. Whether certain employees can access certain areas of your plant, such as food production plants where there is a risk of contamination should the wrong person be in the wrong place. Or, knowing how to monitor overtime compliance in India, where adults “cannot work for more than 48 hours in a week and not more than 9 hours in a day,” [observes Paycheck.in](#). Monitoring overtime in India is highly specific to certain job types.

Ultimately, you must be able to document that your workers are treated and paid fairly, while also upholding your company’s values and culture. This also includes tracking shifts worked to ensure your workers are in compliance with local regulations, while also ensuring your workforce payroll processes are accurate and compliant.

Your WFM system must be able to automate and manage payroll so employees can be paid from anywhere, on time, while also taking into consideration local tax laws, and avoiding “payroll leakage,” where unintentional overpayments can be caused by systems that have not kept up with changing policies, timekeeping practices that have gone unchecked, gaming, and so on. Meanwhile, time and attendance tools can help your payroll departments reduce errors and overpayments by validating time and labor data collection in real-time—from the head office to every global location where you have operations.

A WFM solution with the right localization tools geared towards your specific industry can also help you understand local tax laws for preparation and filing to avoid international fines with rule configurations based on interpretation of these laws and mandates. A trusted solution can also utilize machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze and automate many of these processes in ways that are appropriate for local regions within your industry.

3

Leverage technology to improve experiences

Employee scheduling has often been treated more like an art than a science. In retail or service industries, “It’s often based on historical practices or the day of the week. For example, if [a company typically schedules] five cashiers every Monday, they’ll keep scheduling five cashiers every Monday until the end of time,” writes [Peter Swaniker at Medium](#).

In healthcare, it’s important for nurses, for example, to be able to trade shifts—but shift supervisors must also take into consideration the compliance requirements for full and part-time employees, which for large healthcare systems can vary state to state, and ensure nurses are getting their federally mandated breaks or adhering to a set number of hours.

The drive to always meet certain staffing levels can lead to over- or understaffing or times when regulations are bent or broken. Companies are turning to the power of AI and machine learning to create more efficient, demand-based schedules, and to generate predictive schedules that anticipate future needs based on past trends.

At the same time, mobile devices are continually changing the way workers in manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and other industries complete their daily tasks. Mobility tools can track and collect information in plants (to measure worker productivity), hospitals (to monitor nurse schedules, including federally mandated breaks), and in retail outlets (to track overtime or trading schedules) to deliver real-time data that can be used to monitor compliance activities and generate reports.

With this kind of data, schedules are optimized based on demand, seasonality, weather patterns, and more. In addition, machine learning tools can help promote the aggregation of more and better data with broader labor models, deeper flexibility with forecasting algorithms, and offer correlation services between large data sets. Meanwhile, digital assistants available on desktop or mobile tools can accelerate time to completion for repetitive labor tasks and make smarter decisions when human discretion is critical to cost or engagement outcomes.

4

Document issues when they happen to increase resolution

Accidents happen. In manufacturing, it's not uncommon to have experienced workers who might be "stretched thin and have little time to train and mentor new hires" as well as inexperienced workers who are "at a high-risk for injuries, especially within their first six months of employment," [reports Risk & Insurance](#). Increased overtime and 24/7 operations [can also contribute to](#) "fatigue, sharply increasing the risk of serious injuries or fatalities." Both new and old employees have their compliance challenges, basically.

Whether you're operating manufacturing plants, healthcare centers, or retail outlets, the safety of your employees is paramount. If there has been an issue in one of your locations—something as simple as a torn carpet that workers have tripped on—you must be able to document when the issue has been resolved.

When it comes to occupational safety, paper-based processes and manually updated forms and spreadsheets can lead to errors that can go often overlooked until it's too late. Or, these processes might have the necessary documentation—but it's been misplaced or lost. Your WFM solution should not only allow employees to register these issues, but it should also create a virtual paper trail that your managers and human resources leaders can use to track when the issue was reported and how it was resolved, as well as any additional or further issues.

For global companies, the right WFM system must be a window into your operations—anticipating, predicting, and balancing compliance tracking wherever you have locations. The overall result of this visibility will be improved compliance, clear operational processes, workflows that transcend borders, and a valued workforce that contributes to your culture.

