

# The best timeclock options for small businesses

Accurate time tracking is an essential part of your business operations. In order to pay your employees correctly, keep track of labor costs, and manage employee attendance, business owners need to invest in a reliable time clock system for their workplace. When it comes to potential lawsuits, poor record-keeping is not a defense likely to hold up in court. However, as a small business, it may seem like many options are too extensive, too expensive, or don't quite meet your needs.

Fortunately, you might be surprised to realize how many time clock options there are on the market right now. From high-tech biometric readers to simple punch clocks, there are many options to fit your budget and preferences. So which options work best for your business? Let's take a look.

## Considerations when choosing a timeclock

If you are looking for your next time clock, here are some of the top things that you'll want to consider.

### Budget

One of the biggest considerations when it comes to choosing a time clock for your small business is price. You can expect to spend at least \$100 on a timeclock, but prices for fancier systems can get much higher.

Something to consider when budgeting for a timeclock is whether there will be any additional recurring costs associated with your timeclock of choice. Some time clocks have monthly fees that you will need to pay in order to access the reporting, mobile apps, or remote clock-in features. If you choose a time clock with paper time cards, you will need to consider how often you will need to buy refills of the time cards. The refills are typically not too expensive, but if you have a large number of employees they can add up. Sometimes it is worthwhile to buy a more expensive time clock with no or low monthly costs rather than choosing a cheap time clock with high monthly fees.

### Work locations

If you only have one work location that employees report to, such as a retail store or office, choosing a time clock will be fairly simple. You can set up pretty much any time clock in a convenient spot at your worksite.

However, time tracking can get trickier if you have employees that work remotely or work from different worksites or in the field (such as route salespeople). Your work-from-home employees also need to be able to clock in too, and having all time entries in one central system tends to make payroll and attendance management easier. Many traditional digital time clocks now have apps that integrate with them to allow remote employees to punch in from their smartphones or computers at home.

### Accuracy and fraud prevention

Almost all time clocks will be fairly accurate as long as you remember to make sure that the time is set properly

and adjust them during daylight savings. Some electronic options may not work during a power outage, but if you lose power at your office, the time clock likely won't be your biggest worry.

However, one issue that can arise with many time clocks or time-keeping methods is time fraud. Having a time clock or app is far better than the traditional self-reported timesheet method for preventing time fraud, but employees can often still find ways to falsify their clock in or clock out times. One common time theft tactic that employees use that may work with basic punch clocks or PIN time clocks is to ask a coworker to clock in for them when they are running late. This is often referred to as buddy punching.

Some timekeeping devices or apps have features that make it more difficult for employees to falsify time entries such as geolocation tracking for mobile time entries, facial recognition or photo verification, and fingerprint scanners. These provide more accurate time entries that can help employers verify that the right person clocked in or that a field employee clocked in on time at the right location.

### **Additional time tracking features**

While the basic goal of a time clock is simply to track employee hours and breaks, some time clocks or timekeeping services offer a wider array of features. Some of the most popular additional features are employee scheduling tools, time-off management tools, and enhanced reporting tools.

If you do not already have an HRIS system in place to manage paid time off requests and other scheduling functions, choosing a time clock or app with these features may help you streamline your PTO processes.

It can also be good to look at what level of reporting or exports are offered by each time clock provider. Detailed reporting can help you keep track of labor costs throughout the period, employee attendance, and overtime. Some time clocks or time softwares also feature exporting options designed to be compatible with the major payroll providers. This can make payroll processing more efficient.

### **Time clock options**

There are four major categories of time clocks; punch card time clocks, biometric time clocks, PIN time clocks, and time clock software or apps. The best time clock for your small business will depend on your business needs as well as the above-mentioned considerations such as the number of work locations. Each category has its own benefits.

#### **Punch card time clocks**

Punch card time clocks are largely considered old-fashioned, but they can still get the job done. A punch clock may be the best option if your workforce is not fond of new technology. They also tend to be more affordable than higher-tech options.

Punch card time clocks allow employees to punch in their time entries with paper time cards. The time entries are typically stamped by the time clock machine. One disadvantage of this type of time clock is that they rely on physical records of time entries rather than digital time clock data. If someone loses their time card, it can create issues in accurately processing their pay for the pay period. You'll also need to buy refill time cards periodically.

Some of the most popular punch card time clock models include:

#### **uPunch Starter Time Clock Bundle**

The uPunch starter bundle is a great entry-level time clock option for small business owners that just want a basic timecard device. It includes the punch card time clock, a set of paper time cards to use with the

device, and a storage rack that you can mount near the time clock to help employees neatly store their time cards. Having a storage system is very helpful if you are going to use paper time cards, as they can be easy to misplace. uPunch also offers a two year warranty and free lifetime customer support with the bundle. However, you likely won't need to contact customer support often with this type of time clock.

### **Lathem Atomic Time Clock With Tru-Align**

The Lathem atomic time clock is another popular punchcard time clock option. This time clock also doubles as a document stamp which can be helpful for stamping mail, faxes, and other documents around the office.

## **Biometric time clocks**

Biometric time clocks are one of the more advanced time clock technologies. They use employees' unique biometric data, such as fingerprints, iris scans, facial scans, or even palms to record time entries. The most common version is a fingerprint time clock.

Using biometric entry ensures that employees may not clock in for one another. However, it is worth noting that biometric readers can sometimes be more finicky. If they do not properly read a fingerprint entry, it may result in a missed punch.

Some of the best biometric time clocks for small businesses include:

### **uAttend BN6000 Biometric Fingerprint Time Clock**

While biometric time clocks tend to be the priciest category of time clocks, the uAttend BN6000 is a more affordable option. This fingerprint time clock allows employees to clock in or out for work or breaks by simply placing their finger on the fingerprint scanner.

Employees can also clock in on the uAttend website or mobile app, which is ideal for small businesses that have a hybrid work model where some employees may need to clock in from home at times.

While this is a highly affordable and flexible time clock option for small businesses, it is worth noting that a subscription is required. Plans start at \$22 per month and increase based on the number of employees that you want to track. Be sure to factor this in when deciding whether the uAttend BM6000 is right for your budget.

### **Allied Time USA CB4000**

If you want more flexibility in which personal identifier employees may use to clock in and out, this time clock from Allied Time USA may be your best choice. While coming in at just above the \$250 price point, this biometric time clock can recognize faces, palms, fingers, and employee ID badges.

Like uAttend's biometric offering, this time clock comes with subscription-based web software that allows employers to view employee hours and run reports. The subscription starts at \$20 per month and increases based on the number of employees covered.

## **PIN time clocks**

PIN time clocks allow employees to clock in and out with a unique PIN number. These PINs are often assigned based on an employee's employee number, social security number, or other personal but easy-to-remember data.

Some top PIN time clock choices include:

### **TotalPass P400 Employee Time Clock**

The TotalPass P400 is a sturdy PIN-entry time clock. This is the type of time clock that most employees are used to. Retail stores, offices, and more commonly use PIN-pad time clocks to record employees' hours and breaks.

This time clock is more expensive in terms of up-front costs, but may be more economical long-term as there are no monthly fees associated with operating the device as-is. However, there is an extra fee for web punch functionality for remote staff. The device also supports free payroll exports to services such as QuickBooks, Paychex, SurePayroll, Paycom, and ADP Workforce Now.

### **uAttend Cloud-Connected Touchscreen Time Clock**

Another great option from uAttend is this touchscreen time clock that supports PIN entry and fingerprint scanning. Choosing a time clock that supports both options can be a good way to avoid some of the issues that can come with fingerprint scanning time clocks (including errors and rejected scans). The touch screen provides a modern touch and the screen nicely displays a summary of the employees' punches, and different clock-out options such as break lunch, etc.

## **Time clock apps and software**

Time and attendance software is becoming a popular alternative to traditional time clocks. These are particularly useful if you have a remote or hybrid workforce. Many HRIS systems or payroll systems have time tracking capabilities. Time clock apps or software services are often offered as an add-on service. If you already have a system that you find user-friendly, check to see if you can add on time tracking.

If you don't already have a system in place with a time-tracking add-on available, here are some great standalone time tracking services:

### **Clockify**

If you're looking for a no-cost timekeeping option, Clockify is a great alternative to traditional time clocks or paid time and attendance software. Clockify is a cloud-based time tracker application that can be accessed via desktop or mobile. The service allows employees to track their time worked and log time spent on particular projects.

Clockify has a free plan for time tracking that includes access for unlimited users. This is a rare offering as many free services limit the number of users and subscription services often charge based on the number of users. The project tracking is also great if you are in an industry such as legal or consulting where you need to track billable hours.

### **QuickBooks Time (Formerly TSheets)**

QuickBooks Time, formerly known as TSheets, is a great option for small businesses that already use Quickbooks or Intuit services. Quickbooks Time allows employees to clock in from their phone or computers and records their geolocation. If you use QuickBooks for payroll processing, the integration is convenient. The GPS tracking is also great for route or field-based employees.

### **Hubstaff**

Hubstaff is billed as a time tracker and productivity tracker. This is another great software that your

remote or dispersed teams can use to track time while also tracking time spent on specific tasks or projects. This is a great way to not only track time for payroll and attendance purposes, but also to get a better idea of how your staff is spending time. You may find that administrative tasks or meetings are taking up more of their days than you expected, or that you are likely to exceed the forecasted number of hours on a client project. Having this real-time data can help you get a better view of the day-to-day activities of your team members.

They have a mobile app with GPS tracking which is ideal for field-based teams. Their desktop app also has an optional setting that periodically captures screenshots to provide proof of work and productivity for remote workers. This can be good for adding an extra layer of accountability.

## **Good timekeeping is paramount**

No matter what timekeeping method you choose, it's important to maintain accurate data. Having a disorganized timekeeping system can lead to payroll mishaps, which you want to avoid as much as humanly possible.

Small businesses with disorganized processes and timekeeping also sometimes run into errors around time-off tracking. In particular, employers that don't track hours closely may end up forgetting to deduct time off taken from an employee's PTO balance. This mistake is nice for the employee, who will end up with some extra hours in their time off bank, but can cost your business money.

Time tracking also lets you keep an eye on employee hours and labor costs in real-time, so that you can make staffing or scheduling adjustments throughout the week to cut down on labor costs or meet higher demand. It can also help you keep track of employee lunches and breaks to ensure that you are in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws regarding employee breaks during shifts.

A good timekeeping system ensures that the compensation paid out is fair and accurate to both the employee and the employer by preventing time fraud and ensuring that employees are paid for all of the time worked.