

New app aims to simplify the absenteeism reporting process

A new business productivity improvement IT application, called Appsent, has been introduced to the South African market. The application is specifically targeted at business owners, HR managers, line managers and operational staff in South African businesses who have staff reporting to them.



Johnny Johnson, co-founder of Appsent

Appsent makes it extremely simple for absent or late arriving employees to let their managers know that they will be absent late by using their mobile phones or a landline, which is sent as an email to their managers. Managers can then plan in advance so that there is no impact on production.

According to Johnny Johnson, co-founder of Appsent, "The application does not need to be downloaded, and no software needs to be installed by either the user or the business. The system utilises USSD technology over the cellular telephone networks, to provide an early notification of employee absence to employers. The employee dials a USSD number and follows the simple menu prompts. This data is sent to an Appsent server and a notification email is sent to the manager of the employee."

Productivity not affected

Johnson says that this product will allow managers to receive an early warning that their employees will not be at work. They can therefore plan better and ensure that their absence does not affect production. For instance, they can either ask a worker on the current shift to work overtime or will have enough time to call in a standby employee.

Johnson notes that employers will be able to use the information received via Appsent by comparing it with the actual absenteeism information, to enable them to see who was absent and did not provide an advance absence notification.

"Most employers will have a policy which states that the employee must advise of their absence a few hours before their shift of work. If they don't then they may have to go through a disciplinary process," he says.

The application was launched by ABSOLV Software Technologies (Pty) Ltd, a start-up that works closely with absenteeism and insurance risk manager AIMS, owned by Johnny Johnson. The application was developed in partnership with Dalino Fortuin and, after a need for this type of tool was identified by them, through close interaction with their clients.

"Employees using this system will not incur any costs, as all costs are billed to ABSOLV. The employee can also use any landline via the toll-free number. However, we have found that almost all employees have access to a cell phone. The USSD option also does not require that the user have any airtime. In addition there is a PCM (please call me) option that can be used to interact with the IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system."

No excuses

"The combination of the various technologies provides for all scenarios means there can be no excuses from employees should they not notify their employer of their absence," he explains.

Johnson notes that the application is charged on a per employee per month basis and is also not expensive for businesses. These costs are quickly recovered through improved productivity, resulting from more efficient and easier planning. There are no set-up costs as these costs are absorbed by ABSOLV over the contract period. The initial contract is fixed for 12 months, with a month's notice period thereafter.

"The setup can be completed within hours of all the required information being received. This includes details of all employees on the system as well as the information required to route the notification emails to the correct person," explain Johnson.

"The client is able to advise us on who should receive the email notifications. These emails can be sent to more than one manager and can be set up so that only employees who report to a particular manager will be shown on those emails. The notification schedule is also determined by the client. In addition to regular notifications being sent during the day, a consolidated report is sent at a scheduled time. The number of emails is unlimited. The employee clock number, name, surname, department or any other classification, absence type, mobile number used for the contact and the notification time are provided.

"The mobile number is useful for any follow-up that may be required, for example from the medical department. This feature can also be used by service providers such as an Employee Assistance Programme to allow proactive follow up with absent employees. Often absence is caused by socio-economic factors and prompt follow up can help the employee to resolve these problems," Johnson says.

Johnson says that the objective in developing this tool was to make it easier for the managers to manage their production staff.

"All the absence notifications are sent via email, so it's not a haphazard process where the manager receives SMSs, phone calls and/or verbal messages. For employers, this system's value lies in its early notification of the absence. Employers can now plan properly so that there is no disruption to production.

"Our initial clients have found that its introduction has actually led to lower absenteeism among employees," Johnson adds. This is possibly due to the fact that employees who are not really sick feel a little intimidated by the fact that their absence is reported immediately to their manager as well as to other senior managers at their employer.

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