

Cultivating Accountability: Transforming Small Businesses in USA through Structured Attendance Management

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the various impacts of a lack of accountability on small businesses. It specifically focuses on decreased productivity, poor work quality, low employee morale and engagement, increased turnover, communication challenges, and resource wastage.

Furthermore, it explores the implementation of an attendance point system as a quantitative measure to improve punctuality and regular attendance. It addresses anomalies such as late arrivals, early departures, long breaks, absences, and no-call no-shows.

The study emphasizes the importance of establishing a culture of accountability and implementing structured attendance management to foster a positive work environment and enhance operational efficiency.

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Introduction

Accountability is crucial in the workplace, particularly in small businesses, as it greatly influences organizational success and employee performance. The Indian business landscape, with its unique combination of cultural values and rapidly changing economic scenarios, requires a careful approach to managing workplace accountability. This paper examines the negative consequences of a lack of accountability in small businesses, including reduced productivity, low-quality work, decreased employee morale and engagement, and increased employee turnover. It also discusses the challenges posed by ineffective communication and resource wastage. To address these issues, the study introduces the concept of an attendance point system, which is a structured approach to monitoring and managing employee attendance, fostering a culture of responsibility and punctuality. The paper aims to shed light on the importance of accountability and structured attendance systems in enhancing the overall performance and culture of small businesses in the Indian context.

A lack of accountability can have significant impacts on small businesses, resulting in productivity loss and other detrimental effects. Here are some key impacts:

- **Decreased Productivity:** One of the key challenges that organizations face is a decrease in productivity. This can happen when employees are not held accountable for their actions and performance. When employees feel that their actions have no impact or consequences, it can lead to a significant drop in efficiency and output [1]. As a result, tasks take longer to complete, deadlines are missed, and overall work quality may suffer. This can have a negative impact on the success and growth of the organization. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to establish a culture of accountability and ensure that employees understand the importance of their contributions towards the overall productivity and success of the company.
- **Poor Quality of Work:** Lack of accountability can result in poor work quality. When individuals are not held accountable for their tasks and responsibilities, they may not feel the need to put in their best efforts. This can lead to a lack of attention to detail, resulting in errors and inaccuracies in their work. Furthermore, without a sense of ownership and responsibility, individuals may not prioritize the relevance and importance of their work, leading to a disconnect between their outputs and the needs of the customers. As a result, customer complaints may arise due to the subpar quality of work [1].
- **Low Employee Morale and Engagement:** Accountability plays a crucial role in promoting employee engagement and ownership. When employees are held accountable for their actions and responsibilities, they feel a sense of purpose and motivation, leading to higher levels of engagement and productivity [2,3]. This, in turn, positively impacts overall employee morale and creates an environment where individuals feel valued and motivated to contribute their best efforts to the organization.

- **Increased Employee Turnover:** A lack of accountability can have significant negative impacts on an organization. One of the key consequences is the potential for high employee turnover. When employees do not feel valued and responsible, they may start seeking job opportunities elsewhere. This can disrupt normal business operations and result in increased costs for small businesses [4,5]. It is crucial for organizations to establish a culture of accountability to retain talented employees and maintain operational efficiency. Lack of Communication: One common challenge in small businesses is the lack of effective communication among team members. When communication channels are not clearly established and maintained, important information can get lost or misunderstood, leading to delays and errors in project execution.
- **Wasted Resources:** In addition to the lack of communication, another issue that small businesses may face is the wastage of resources. When roles and accountability are not clearly defined, multiple staff members may unknowingly work on the same project or task, resulting in duplicated efforts and wasted time. This not only hinders productivity but can also have financial implications for the business [6].
- **Damaged Company Culture:** In addition to the negative effects mentioned above, a lack of accountability can also lead to a decrease in employee morale and engagement. When employees feel that their efforts are not recognized or rewarded, they may become disengaged and less motivated to perform at their best. This can result in lower overall productivity and a decrease in the quality of work produced.
- Furthermore, a toxic work environment can also lead to higher employee turnover rates. When employees are consistently subjected to a culture of blame and lack of accountability, they may feel undervalued and unappreciated, which can ultimately drive them to seek employment elsewhere. This constant turnover can be detrimental to the company's reputation as it may be perceived as an unstable and undesirable place to work.
- It is important for companies to prioritize accountability and establish a culture of responsibility and ownership. By holding employees accountable for their actions and providing them with the necessary support and resources to succeed, companies can foster a positive work environment that promotes trust, productivity, and overall success.
- By addressing these issues and fostering a culture of accountability, small businesses can improve productivity, enhance work quality, boost employee morale and engagement, reduce turnover, optimize resource utilization, and improve financial performance.

Attendance Points

An attendance point system is a method used by organizations to monitor and manage employee attendance. It is a quantitative approach that assigns points to employees for instances of tardiness, absence, or early departure from work. The system is designed to promote accountability and regular attendance, and it typically involves progressive disciplinary actions for employees who accumulate a certain number of points. The system is often used to discourage absenteeism, simplify disciplinary procedures, and ensure fairness and consistency in enforcing attendance requirements. Points are assigned based on the specific company policy, and accumulation of a certain number of points can lead to disciplinary actions, including termination. Despite its benefits, the system has been a subject of debate, with some employees finding it unfair and discriminatory. It is important for companies to ensure that the system complies with state and federal laws and makes exceptions for protected absences.

Implementation of Attendance Points

Define the employee activities that need to be tracked and their impact on the points system. These activities include being late, leaving early, taking long breaks, absence, partial absence, or deviating from the schedule. These activities can be tracked as anomalies.

- **Late In**

Arriving to work after the scheduled start time of a shift or workday is referred to as being "Late In."

Being late can disrupt the day's workflow, affect team coordination, and potentially impact customer service or other time-sensitive tasks. It's important for workplace policies to clearly define the acceptable time window for arrival, procedures for reporting lateness, and any consequences or corrective measures associated with chronic tardiness.

- **Early Out**

Leaving work before the end of the scheduled shift or workday is referred to as an "early out." For instance, if an employee's shift is scheduled to end at 5:00 PM and they leave at 4:30 PM without prior approval or a valid reason, it is considered an early out.

Early outs can have a negative impact on productivity and workload distribution, particularly in team settings. Therefore, it is crucial for policies to clearly outline the circumstances under which leaving early is allowed (e.g., emergencies, with supervisor approval) and how it should be documented or reported.

- **Long Break**

Taking a break that exceeds the allotted time for breaks during a shift can be problematic.

For example, if an employee is entitled to a 30-minute lunch break but takes a 45-minute break instead, they have taken a "long break."

While breaks are important for employee well-being and productivity, it is essential to avoid excessively long breaks that can disrupt work schedules and affect operational efficiency. Therefore, policies should clearly specify the authorized duration of breaks and outline procedures for situations where extended breaks may be necessary (e.g., for health reasons).

- **Absence**

Not being present for a scheduled workday or shift without prior approval or a valid reason is considered an "Absence."

Example: An employee who is scheduled to work on a Monday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM but fails to show up for work without informing their supervisor or obtaining prior approval is considered absent.

Absences can significantly disrupt work, especially in critical roles for daily operations or team projects. It is important for companies to establish clear absence policies, including guidelines for requesting time off, valid reasons for unscheduled absences, and the process for notifying supervisors. These policies should also outline any consequences for unauthorized or excessive absences, such as impacts on performance evaluations or disciplinary actions.

- **No Call No Show**

Failing to report to work as scheduled without notifying the employer or seeking prior approval is considered one of the most serious attendance issues.

For example, If an employee is scheduled to work from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on a given day and does not show up at all, without any prior communication or subsequent explanation to their manager or HR department, this situation is termed a “No Call No Show.”

This behavior not only disrupts the day’s operations but also creates additional burdens on colleagues and supervisors who may have to cover for the absent employee. It often leads to disciplinary action due to the lack of professional courtesy and the operational challenges it presents. Policies related to no call no shows should clearly outline the process of reporting an unplanned absence and the consequences of failing to do so. These consequences can range from formal warnings to termination, depending on the company’s policies and the frequency of such incidents.

• **Late Shift Drop**

Canceling or not showing up for a scheduled shift close to the start time or during the shift without prior approval or a valid reason can be disruptive to business operations. This behavior, known as a “Late Shift Drop,” does not give the employer enough time to find a replacement or reorganize the workload. It can have a significant impact, especially in sectors like healthcare, retail, or hospitality, where staff presence is crucial for operational continuity.

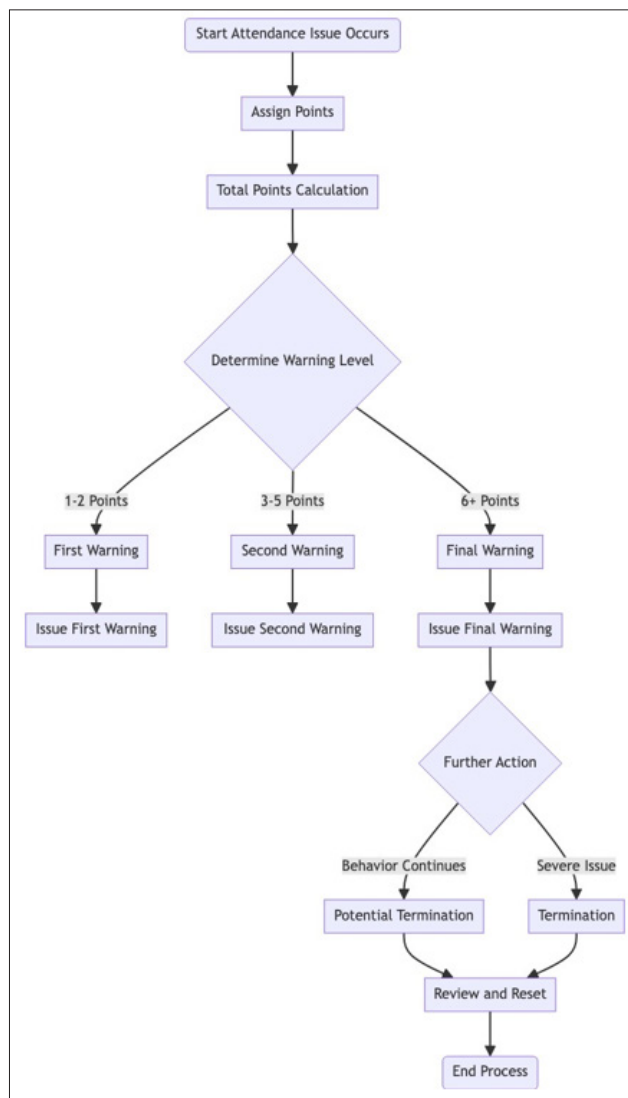
To address late shift drops, it is important for companies to have clear policies in their attendance policy. These policies should define acceptable notice periods for canceling a shift and outline the consequences of failing to adhere to these guidelines. Responsible scheduling practices and communication protocols should also be emphasized, particularly when unforeseen circumstances prevent an employee from attending their scheduled shift.

Creating a Points-Based System Based on the Aforementioned Anomalies

To effectively manage and address attendance issues, it can be helpful to create a point-based system that tracks these incidents and provides corresponding warnings. Below is a suggested table that outlines different types of attendance incidents, along with the points assigned to each incident and the types of warnings that could be issued.

Please keep in mind that the point values and warnings provided are only examples and should be customized to align with the specific needs and policies of your organization.

Attendance Issue	Points Assigned	First Warning	Second Warning	Final Warning
Late In	1 Point	Verbal Warning	Written Warning	Final Written Warning
Early Out	1 Point	Verbal Warning	Written Warning	Final Written Warning
Long Break	2 Points	Written Warning	Final Written Warning	Potential Termination
Absence	3 Points	Written Warning	Final Written Warning	Potential Termination
No Call No Show	4 Points	Final Written Warning	Potential Termination	Termination
Late Shift Drop	3 Points	Written Warning	Final Written Warning	Potential Termination



Explanation

- **Points Assigned:** Each attendance issue is assigned a point value based on its severity and impact on the organization. More severe issues like ‘No Call No Show’ carry higher points.
- **First Warning:** Typically, this is a verbal or written notice given to an employee after their first offense.
- **Second Warning:** A more formal written warning is issued if the behavior continues.
- **Final Warning:** This is the last warning before more severe action is taken, indicating the seriousness of the issue.
- **Potential Termination:** Indicates that if the behavior does not change, it could result in termination of employment.

System Implementation

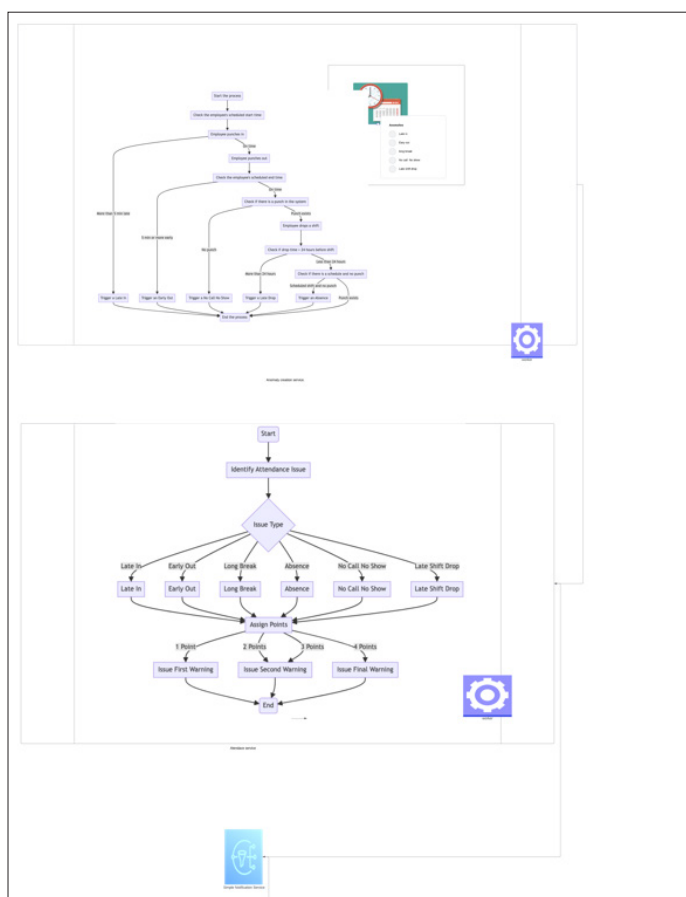
There are 3 services required to be created. First, an anomaly creation service that is based on scheduled hours and actual punches. Second, the attendance service that will assign points based on the anomaly service. Lastly, the notification service that will trigger notifications to users based on the anomalies.

Attendance Service

Based on the type of issue, the following actions will be taken

- **Late In or Early Out:** Assign 1 point. Issue a Verbal Warning for the first occurrence. Issue a Written Warning for the second occurrence. Issue a Final Written Warning for the final occurrence.

- **Long Break or Late Shift Drop:** Assign 2 points. Issue a Written Warning for the first occurrence. Issue a Final Written Warning for the second occurrence.
- Consider Potential Termination for the final occurrence.
- **Absence:** Assign 3 points. Issue a Written Warning for the first occurrence. Issue a Final Written Warning for the second occurrence. Consider Potential Termination for the final occurrence.
- **No Call No Show:** Assign 4 points. Issue a Final Written Warning for the first occurrence. Consider Potential Termination for the second occurrence. Terminate for the final occurrence.
- The notification service automatically receives the points information as soon as they are received in the system. It then sends the notification to employees' mobile devices.



Key Considerations

- **Consistency:** Apply the system consistently to all employees.
 - **Documentation:** Maintain detailed records of all incidents and warnings.
 - **Communication:** Clearly communicate the policy and consequences to all employees.
 - **Review:** Periodically review the point system and make adjustments as needed based on its effectiveness and feedback.
- This system offers a structured approach to managing attendance issues, ensuring that employees comprehend the consequences of their actions and fostering a more accountable workplace.

Conclusion

The investigation into the lack of accountability in small businesses reveals a complex web of issues impacting productivity, employee morale, and operational efficiency. In the Indian business environment, where teamwork and collective effort are highly valued, the absence of accountability can significantly

hinder progress and growth. This study underscores the need for establishing a culture of accountability, not just as a disciplinary measure but as a cornerstone of organizational ethos.

The introduction of an attendance point system serves as a practical solution, offering a methodical way to manage attendance while ensuring fairness and transparency. This system, when effectively implemented, can lead to a substantial reduction in attendance-related anomalies, thereby enhancing overall productivity and workplace harmony. It also plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of responsibility among employees, encouraging them to contribute positively to the organization's growth.

However, the successful implementation of such a system requires careful consideration of cultural sensitivities and the unique dynamics of Indian small businesses. It should be complemented by clear communication, consistent application, and regular reviews to adapt to the changing needs of the organization and its employees. In essence, fostering a culture of accountability, coupled with a well-structured attendance management system, can lead to a more motivated workforce, higher productivity, and a positive organizational reputation, thereby propelling small businesses towards sustainable growth and success in the competitive Indian market.

This paper contributes to the discourse on workplace management in Indian small businesses, providing valuable insights and practical solutions to enhance accountability and operational efficiency. It encourages business leaders and HR professionals to rethink their approach to employee management, emphasizing the importance of accountability in building a resilient and thriving business environment [7-16].

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