



South African Payroll Association

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Why you need qualified payroll staff

Without a doubt, payroll is one of the most sensitive business activities. Income is extremely personal to workers because it's inherently tied to their well-being and survival.

It's strange then that payroll is often thought of as a job anyone can do. Especially when one mistake could have workers up in arms. Yet organisations delegate payroll to PAs, office administrators or other staff members, to be carried out in addition to their regular duties.

“Only qualified payroll administrators should be entrusted with this business-critical task, and it should be the sole activity commanding their attention,” advises Lavine Haripersad, Director at the South African Payroll Association (SAPA) and Certified Payroll Practitioner.

“Small organisations with fairly static payrolls can get away with outsourcing administration or hiring an entry-level clerk,” says Haripersad. “But the larger the payroll, the greater the need for experienced administrators who function well in a high-pressured, dynamic environment.”

Bigger payrolls face many challenges, such as new legislative requirements, complex deductions and withholdings, dynamic working hours and shifts, or complicated expense claims. In addition, a larger workforce means more pressure to perform, especially on payday.

So what should you expect from your payroll administrators? Haripersad provides the must-have traits below.

Willingness

“Yes, they must have decided on this career,” stresses Haripersad. “Anyone who hasn't won't take the special care needed to provide a professional service. Don't lump it on any available employee because they'll see it as an extra chore. Whoever did a great job with that attitude?”

Qualifications

Payroll administrators are trained to do their job very well. This doesn't just mean mastering payroll software or completing certain forms. They must also know what laws and processes to follow for any given payroll task.

Experience

“It takes a lot of time and practice to become a competent payroll administrator,” says Haripersad. “Those who have worked their way up can handle the most stressful situations. They always know what to do next without hesitating, whether they're servicing one employee or 1000, a tea lady or a CEO.”

Knowledge

New payroll laws, procedures or tax tables appear frequently. Busy workers with their own jobs won't have time to keep up to date. But payroll administrators always keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in preparation for upcoming periods. “Payroll administrators should be seen as the legal experts they actually are,” Haripersad adds.

Empathy

Above all, administrators must care about the employees they manage. A sense of empathy means they'll see the company and its workers as their personal clients and provide them with the best possible service. Other staff have their own customers to worry about.

Ethics

Administrators must always make the right moral decisions and act accordingly. While other staff may be of good character, overlapping responsibilities could cause ethical clashes they're not trained to handle.

Isolation

The private information administrators manage and tasks they perform are often best protected with a closed door. For others, this might be torture. But the professional administrator puts the confidentiality of employees first.

Do you still think you can get by without a qualified payroll administrator? We hope not.

ENDS

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