

Case Study: Tulare County



Located within the heart of the agriculturally rich central region of California, Tulare County is the number one county in the nation for total milk production and the second-leading producer of agricultural commodities. In addition to substantial packing/shipping operations, manufacturing plants are multiplying. The region is also situated at the base of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, offering myriad opportunities for year-round recreation. All this, plus affordable housing, is attracting people from across the state and country; however, like many local governments relying upon public funds, Tulare County has a mandate to keep costs down, yet maintain the same level of services to its constituents.

Tulare County began its partnership with ADP in 1996 when they realized that they needed an integrated and flexible HR/payroll system to meet the increasingly complex information requirements they faced. At that time, the county's legacy systems could not integrate.

"We wanted a product that would be table-driven, rule-driven, and integrate HR data with payroll data so that we would have less manual input. We also wanted the capability to do a lot of system customizations ourselves, without using consultants," said Evelyn Smethers, HRIS manager for the county.

After investigating other vendors, Tulare County determined that ADP's systems offered the integration and flexibility to build out a solution to meet their near-term requirements, provide for expansion as the county grew, and offer customization. Plus, they were already an ADP payroll customer and enjoyed an excellent customer service relationship with ADP. Tulare County went live in 1998 with ADP's Enterprise HR solution.

Ad hoc reporting capability

Payroll manager Wayne Lovejoy firmly believes that ad hoc reporting is essential to function in today's world. "The integration of the ADP HR/payroll system lets us create reports so we see the whole picture, rather than a piecemeal view."

ADP helps Tulare County handle "business not as usual," using the flexibility of ADP's HR/payroll services

Challenges

- Increasingly complex information requirements
- Over 3,500 employees who are represented by 10 collective bargaining unions and over 500 management employees
- Inefficiencies due to disparate, nonintegrated HR and payroll systems
- Needed ability to do system customization without outside consultants

ADP Solutions

- ADP Enterprise HR®
- Payroll services, including AutoPay® and check printing
- ADP Enterprise eTime®
- ADP Tax
- ADP Garnishments

Benefits

- Integrated HR/benefits/payroll system enables ad hoc reporting
- Easy to use and intuitive interface
- System customization capability offers flexibility
- Disaster recovery program safeguards payroll
- Outstanding customer service

Tulare County also leverages a custom general ledger (GL), that enables reporting by employee, something that was impossible beforehand. “The individual departments are able to get a clear picture of where their costs are by each employee – from overtime and regular wages to FICA, benefits, and retirement costs,” according to Lovejoy.

He continued, “For example, a lot of employees report to different job cost centers; one employee may be in ten different job cost centers. With the set-up and data tables in the ADP HR system, we can capture data very easily by each job cost center.”

Lovejoy says that the custom GL file also minimizes potential data entry errors.

Union benefits and payroll streamlined

Tulare County serves a growing population of 397,000 with 3,500 employees who are represented by ten collective bargaining unions, plus more than 500 non-union management employees. To further add to the complexity, within the bargaining units, there are an additional 25 union subdivisions.

When asked what has helped the county handle complications that occur when working with multiple unions, Smethers replied without hesitation: “The flexibility of the system.

“It’s quite a challenging arena. The time frames are always short. The demand is always high. We have to customize every year, depending on the state budget and the county budget,” she said. “The flexibility of ADP Enterprise HR allows us to program and meet the challenges; I call it ‘where business is not as usual.’ That’s very important to us because there is no such thing as ‘usual’ anymore.”

Lovejoy added, “We have so many union codes, and a lot of data is unique to a certain union code. From my standpoint in payroll, ADP AutoPay is able to filter this information through a custom calculation, using union codes as their filter. There are a lot of tasks that automatically get done on each payroll that we don’t have to do manually.”

“We’ve found a unique way of using bargaining unit versus union code. We split up the bargaining units into multiple union codes that can be used for payroll purposes,” added Smethers. “We have a very complex benefits package due to the unions. And, we are in the process of creating a very complex furlough program, so we have some unique challenges ahead. We are using the ADP tools that have been provided to assist us in meeting these challenges.”

Disaster recovery assurance

Tulare County is also pleased with ADP’s disaster recovery program. Lovejoy says, “We know we can pay employees on pay day using ADP. I’ve been to the ADP San Dimas facility and it is state-of-the-art. It allows us to have the comfort level of being able to process and get a payroll through ADP that we wouldn’t have if we had to rely solely on our own resources. I believe this puts the county’s mind at rest that we can provide a payroll in the most difficult of circumstances.”

ADP customer service, second to none

Lovejoy values ADP’s team approach to client service. “I have one person I directly deal with, and there’s also a team of eight or ten account managers, so any time I pick up the phone and my account manager is unavailable I can talk to the other account managers. They can usually answer the questions on the spot, or they find out the answers. They do a great job overall. I’ve had maybe four or five client service representatives (CSRs) over the years and each one of them has been fantastic.

“ADP customer service is really second to none. They do an outstanding job of making sure everything is done and done correctly,” Lovejoy continues. “In payroll, we deal with them a lot on an individual basis, daily or by pay period. They really go the extra mile, whether it’s little things or big things.

“In one instance, we couldn’t transmit payroll data during our normal time because we had put in some new processes that did not work properly. Friday morning at ten o’clock was the drop dead date to get direct deposits in, and everybody in our department was worried. I kept working with our ADP CSR and by 5 o’clock on Friday, she assured me that we would get direct deposits. She made a phone call, and Saturday morning, those direct deposits went in. We’ve never had a late payroll with ADP!”