

Solve your **top 5 absence management challenges**

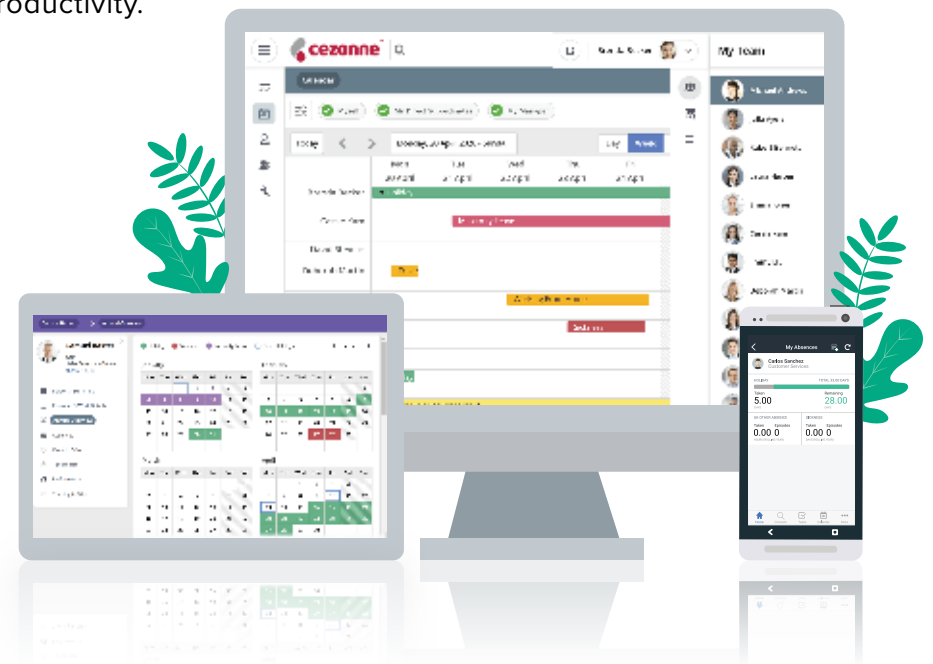


Introduction

Absence management is a critical element in running a successful business. Balancing resource planning with compliance obligations, as well as using it as a measure of wellbeing and engagement, absence should be a key concern for HR and business leaders alike. And if HR is looking for a spot in the C-Suite, strategic absence management is a good way to prove that HR deserves a seat at the top table.

But managing absence is also one of the most time-consuming administrative tasks in a business. COVID-19 has only added to the workload and increased its urgency. If a staff member were to fall ill with COVID-19, the business needs to be ready to support that employee, as well as anyone else affected – and as quickly as possible.

Absence management is made more complex because it is both a proactive and a reactive responsibility. Holiday allowance necessitates a proactive approach, ensuring entitlements are calculated correctly and holiday leave is taken. Sickness leave is more reactive with an element of unpredictability around when it's going to be taken (HR can make assumptions, but it's not locked in like holiday leave). This requires business agility so sickness-leave peaks don't negatively impact productivity.



Holiday vs sick leave

Holiday and sick leave are the two main types of leave that a business has to manage (although there are other types of leave, such as bereavement leave, jury service etc.). It's the depth and complexity around holiday and sick leave that present the main absence management challenges to a business.

The good news is that HR software can dramatically reduce time wasted on administration, and it can make absences more visible and easier to manage. Good HR systems can also do all the entitlement calculations for you, so you don't have to worry about making a mistake with your part-time workers or those in different countries.

By centrally recording absences, businesses can look at leave across the organisation, identify reasons for leave taken, and see if there are any concerning patterns such as higher than expected levels of sickness absence. Having these insights allows HR to make strategic recommendations to remediate any concerns.



This guide covers how HR software with absence management features solves your top 5 absence challenges - and what to look for in an absence management system.

Challenge 1: Admin overheads

Some organisations, even relatively large ones, are still managing absence across a series of spreadsheets, or even running partially paper-based systems. The problem is that while this may have been okay when the business was small, it's definitely not fit for purpose as the company grows and takes on more people.

Using spreadsheets to manage leave results in:

- Questions about what spreadsheet to refer to due to version control issues
- HR and line managers spending lots of time working out entitlements/allocations
- Approvals always being chased and not adequately recorded
- Paperwork getting out of hand and disorganised

Cloud HR software helps to iron out all these issues. It streamlines processes and ensures information about absences of all kinds is hosted in one central, secure, but easily accessible place. It gives managers visibility over exactly what's happening in their teams, and allows employees to check leave balances, request time off and register sick leave.



Features to look out for in an HR system

Self service for employees and managers to access and process absence information from the device of their choice, at a time that suits them

Challenge 2: Legal obligations

HR manages all the legal requirements associated with absence management to support both staff and the business. Employers have a duty of care to their employees and it's mandatory to give people time off, but this isn't the only compliance obligation – it's also essential that processes are followed should sick leave become a concern.

HR systems help address these responsibilities and more. They can calculate entitlements/allocations based on local legislation, working time patterns, public holidays and company rules. The software will also record sickness history, so that if you need to take disciplinary steps you have the evidence to support your decision. An HR system makes leave far more visible so both managers and employees know where they stand.

Legal responsibilities for absence include:

- Ensuring leave balances are calculated correctly and that employees have taken their legislative minimum leave
- Giving employees time off if they have a family crisis
- Paying people appropriate sick leave and, if they've been off sick and have a doctor's 'Fit note', making work adjustments as needed
- Recording workplace injuries and Health and Safety incidents and following up as appropriate



Features to look out for in an HR system

Historical information for reporting and compliance, **document management** to store documents and restrict access where appropriate, and **configurable notifications** to alert responsible parties as needed

Challenge 3: Business disruption

Beyond the general admin and legal obligations associated with absence management, HR also needs to think about business disruption if absences aren't managed well. Just one person off sick in an already hard-pressed team can have a significant impact on productivity.

When excessive leave hits a business, it can lead to:

- Important deadlines being missed with insufficient staff to carry the workload
- Customer service falling below par as staff rush to keep up
- Motivation and employee engagement suffering within the workforce that's trying to pick up the slack
- Collaboration and team cohesion breaking down as resentments arise over who's doing their fair share of the work

Using an absence management module in an HR system can highlight concerning patterns (such as unacceptable problems within a particular team), which need to be addressed. Detailed data can support a decision for the business to be more proactive in its attempts to improve attendance, or to manage it in a more balanced way if, for example, holiday leave isn't being properly spread out.



Features to look out for in an HR system

Dedicated absence dashboards to help keep an eye on critical trends, such as working time lost by year, holiday request clashes, and absence frequencies by individual or organisational unit

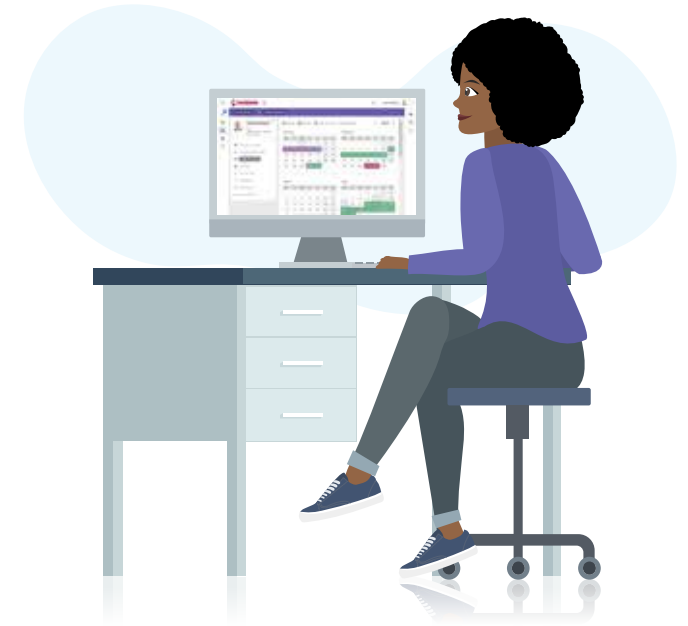
Challenge 4: Resourcing insights

It's difficult for HR and line managers to have a 'helicopter' view of absences without an HR system in place to store and report on this information. And without a clear overview of who is off and why, it can be hard to ensure a business is adequately resourced at all times.

Resourcing considerations might include:

- Having access to a business-wide holiday leave calendar to spot potential concerns
- Checking business-critical teams have sufficient headcount to cover a reasonable percentage of team members on leave at any given time
- Cross checking when the organisation is at its busiest against planned leave requests so the business isn't shorthanded
- Being able to closely monitor times of increased sick leave – such as winter – to ensure absence levels don't escalate

HR software can provide calendar features that make it easier for line managers to see whether they have enough staff at any given time before approving holiday leave. An HR system can also give information about headcount, by department and team, that can be downloaded and viewed alongside leave balances (which can be separated out according to type of leave). By adding the business' own insights about when the organisation is at its busiest to the leave data mix, HR and line managers can remain on the front foot with resource planning.



Features to look out for in an HR system

Support for **multiple absence plans** across different parts of the business, providing easily accessible reporting to help line managers make appropriate resourcing decisions

Challenge 5: Employee engagement

Sickness absence is one of the ways that HR can monitor employee engagement – increased sickness might indicate a problem with wellbeing in the organisation. But it can be hard to look at absence trends or spot ‘sickies’ without HR software. Being alert to an increase in sickness absences is tricky when HR and line managers are working from spreadsheets.

Sickness absences related to employee engagement can rise due to:

- Increased stress from higher workloads, job security concerns, etc.
- Any unwelcome changes in management or team members
- Misalignments in goals and values between business leaders and employees
- Employees feeling like they aren’t recognised or appreciated

To keep an eye on the health of employees – and the business – HR and line managers can use an HR system to collect and inform them about sickness absence data. Segmenting the data by department and team, and then seniority, tenure etc., concerned parties can dig into what issues might be impacting their workforce and then decide what they can do to improve things.



Features to look out for in an HR system

Preconfigured absence queries enable HR to generate reports at the click of a mouse and better drill down into the details

What to look for in a system

Not all absence software solutions are equal. Some are more sophisticated or flexible than others.

Make sure you choose a system that allows you to manage different needs within your business, including different absence plans. Plans might need to be tailored according to department or location, and you need a system that can flex with you.



Flexibility

It's important that the HR system you choose is flexible enough to allow you to record and report on all types of absence. Jury service is an obvious one in the UK, and military service is compulsory in some other countries. People may also need leave to care for a sick relative, or on 'compassionate' grounds due to bereavement. Company policies vary widely on how these days should be tracked and managed, and sometimes systems struggle to cope with this level of flexibility.

Using Cezanne HR for absence management

Growing organisations, like Outpost24, are using Cezanne HR to streamline their absence management processes:

“ The Absence module allows managers and the HR team to approve and track holiday requests and other absences – which saves everyone a lot of time. We love the fact the system is automated and very easy for both management and employees to use to track their holidays and other absences.

"We've found the Cezanne HR modules to be easy, user-friendly and quick to learn. The notifications are also working very well. We get a list of who is absent, and they remind us about when probation periods are expiring, which is very good, so we can remind the managers. ”



[Read Outpost24's full case study here](#)

Resources to consider



Making the case for your HR software budget

Why is it that companies are often reluctant to invest in HR specialist technology? Although the cost of HR software has come down dramatically in the past few years, many businesses are resisting technological change and instead sticking with spreadsheets [...]

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Calculating the ROI of HR Software

You know that HR software makes organisations run more efficiently, ensures regulatory compliance and help employees work smarter together. But, while many management teams 'get' why you need a modern HR system and trust you to make the right decision, [...]

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About Cezanne HR

This report was written by Cezanne HR. Cezanne HR is leading the way in delivering smart Cloud HR software solutions to mid-sized and growing businesses, both locally and globally, at a cost unthinkable just a few years ago. Cezanne HR's system is quick to deploy, easy to manage and packed full of features that save time and help everyone work together more productively and successfully.

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