

Paylocity Helps Retailer Streamline HR Processes and Create Connections



- 180** hours saved per year with Benefits Administration
- 120** hours saved per year with automated Onboarding
- Increased employee engagement



ALASKA MILL AND FEED
Employee Owned Company

www.alaskamillandfeed.com

Retail & Manufacturing

90+ employees

Anchorage, Alaska

Switched from local provider

The Donatello family started Alaska Mill and Feed in 1950 to meet the state’s pet care, livestock, and gardening needs, at a fair price and with excellent customer service. Ask any Alaskan if they’re familiar with the company, and the answer is likely yes. The company's footprint in Anchorage, AK features a retail, manufacturing, and warehouse facility that supplies Alaskans with everything they need to tend to flora and fauna.

In 2016, Alaska Mill and Feed transitioned from family-owned and operated to employee-led and owned, when it established an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). Despite having over half a century in operation, there were cracks in the foundation of the systems Alaska Mill and Feed had in place to support its employees. Manual, paper-based HR functions set the company behind, and when COVID-19 hit, a lack of digital solutions spotlighted the gaps in the employee experience.

While departments stayed physically distanced to keep everybody safe during the pandemic, the inability to effectively communicate created more problems. Everything from onboarding to performance reviews absorbed hundreds of hours and involved dozens of paper files for each employee. For a company with seasonal hiring fluctuations based on needs, nobody had time to wait on an HR system that lagged.

Ready to make a change, Alaska Mill and Feed partnered with Paylocity to streamline and automate critical HR functions. They were able to elevate their recruiting and onboarding practices while also leveraging the platform’s unique employee engagement opportunities to unlock deeper automations and meaningful data insights.

“The limitation with things like Slack and Teams is that half of my people don't have a company email. But everyone has a cell phone. So the Paylocity app is way more accessible.”

Chimena Campbell, Controller



The Challenge

Paper-based HR Process Causes Disconnect

Alaska Mill and Feed discovered how inefficient its legacy HR tool was when cross-department communication broke down.

Alaska Mill and Feed's previous HR solution was a local provider with limited capabilities. Scattered spreadsheets, piles of paper and a lot of manual oversight. The team was left managing the tool just as much as they were managing their business.

Moreover, because almost every critical task in HR's court was paper-based, it was putting compliance at risk. Employee documentation had to be gathered by hand and placed in a physical filing cabinet. Controller Chimena Campbell says, "You relied a lot on one person, and if this person was a little disorganized, it could impact documentation. And you didn't always have the checks and balances you needed to succeed." There was no way to gain a holistic view of employee data such as length of service.

Onboarding Bottleneck Bogs Down HR

Spring kicks off the busy season for Alaska Mill and Feed, but hiring seasonal employees was a nightmare before Paylocity. Chimena describes, "It was a 400-page onboarding document. It was all paper-based, and employees sat locked in this room for hours and hours." When Alaska Mill and Feed needed efficiency most, not to mention to capitalize on an opportunity to showcase company culture, the previous solution fell short.

Ineffective Tools for Employee Communication

Communication before Paylocity was fragmented at best. Not every employee had a company email, and company-wide communication depended on distributing flyers to employee lockers. The HR team realized quickly that the inability to communicate with employees was bogging down their initiatives and limiting their potential for critical automation.

Performance Review Process Earns Low Marks

Performance reviews followed suit. Alaska Mill and Feed's process for providing employees valuable feedback was outdated and involved printing out forms and documenting all the information by hand. Alaska Mill and Feed knew they needed to upgrade to a human capital management (HCM) provider that offered a modern, flexible infrastructure to solve their people management problems.

"You'd print and hand out 50 flyers, put them in people's lockers, and hope that the people that did have email read it, and didn't just delete it or simply miss it."

Chimena Campbell, Controller



The Solution

Paylocity Levels Up Entire Organization

Alaska Mill and Feed sought an agile, people-management solution, flexible enough to meet the needs of its employees, regardless of department.

Documentation Becomes Automated and Accessible

With Paylocity, Alaska Mill and Feed has the digital checks and balances to verify documentation and ensure critical communication—worker’s comp injury claims, OSHA verification, etc.—is entered quickly and efficiently. And that matters when it comes to compliance. Chimena explains, “Now it's all a detailed journal we share with the management team. It's so much easier because you can just print it out and tell the attorney, ‘Here's all the documentation.’”

Community Revolutionizes Company Communication

Switching to Paylocity meant integrating the platform’s social collaboration hub, [Community](#), into day-to-day operations. What used to be a limited email or physical flyer is now a digital, accessible touchpoint for every employee. The tool fundamentally shifted how the company shares vital information, cutting back on meetings and empowering employees to connect and share in new ways. Crucially, the organic employee excitement around Community’s interest groups and features led to higher adoption and use of self-service tools. This translated into less ad-hoc HR requests and greater processes automation. The platform usage also powered more actionable data insights for HR.

Learning Management System Helps Employees Grow in their Careers

Alaska Mill and Feed needed a [learning management system](#) (LMS) that could keep pace with its employees’ many skillsets and safety needs. In a business with heavy equipment and always changing safety regulations, being able to reach employees quickly and effectively was key. Paylocity’s LMS makes it easy for employees to dig in when and where it’s most convenient for them. The flexibility of on-demand, digital training means the team now spends less time gathering people into classrooms and more time focusing on the business.

Performance Reviews Are Faster and Provide Better Insights

By using Paylocity's modern [performance management](#) solution, Alaska Mill and Feed now has all their vital employee records in one place. Not only does this enable faster processing and automation of scheduled activities like review sign-offs and raise calculations, but it allows for more meaningful data insights across the company showing HR the bigger picture and giving them the confidence to take action.



Onboarding makes it simple to get new employees up and running without bogging down HR.



Benefits Administration saves HR time and helps employees get the most out of their experience.



Learning Management System simplifies tracking of ongoing safety education.



Performance Management ensures equitable compensation.



Community connects employees across roles and departments.



Mobile App enhances employee autonomy and accessibility.



Premium Video makes communication engaging.



The Results

Alaska Mill and Feed Saves Time and Engages Employees

Tasks that used to take hours can now be done in a simple click for the HR team.

Automated Onboarding Recoups 120 Hours for the HR Team

Before Paylocity, onboarding took six hours per employee and involved HR observing and checking in frequently, making it impossible to focus on other responsibilities. During gardening season, when the company onboards an average of 20 employees in a short time frame, wasted time was the name of the game. The HR team used Paylocity Surveys to request feedback at each step of the onboarding process. The feedback led to overall process changes and ultimately an improved employee onboarding experience. Now employees can complete onboarding at home before they come to work. As a result, Alaska Mill and Feed saves 120 hours during the ramp-up to the busy season.

Modernized Benefits Administration Saves 180 Hours Per Year

Paylocity's Benefits Administration saves Alaska Mill and Feed 180 hours annually by eliminating paperwork and automating the process. Chimena says, "Even if employees don't want benefits, our HR team had to sit down and have each employee sign off." It used to take one team member up to three hours per employee to review benefits options. Now, employees can work through the process autonomously, eliminating the HR burden. Moreover, Alaska Mill and Feed benefits from Paylocity's many integrations, particularly to its 401k provider.

Community Builds Employee Rapport through Personal Connections

Perhaps the most significant benefit of switching to Paylocity is how Community brought people together more than ever before, while also bringing employees into the platform who were previously resistant to using the system at all. When one employee's picture of his 77-lb halibut catch went viral at the company, it spurred an increase in employee engagement that hasn't stopped since. "If these guys post videos like the fish one, all of a sudden you've got like 50 or 60 views. So you know that everyone saw it. We love it," shares Chimena.

But the benefits go deeper than a friendly competition for who lands the biggest fish. The impressions, views, and shares on Community reflect the enhanced connection between employees. Alaska Mill and Feed's culture has become valuable beyond the paycheck. Employees are now proactively sharing that they love being a part of the company and their teams. Instead of disconnection, employees feel a part of the family and are in it for the long haul.



"Our warehouse guys went fishing and got this 77-pound halibut. They posted the picture on Paylocity. It went viral internally. Other employees were drawn into Community to post pictures and comment more often. That really helped get our employees to use the system more frequently for other things, too."

Chimena Campbell, Controller