EMPACTIS

Create Healthy, High-Performing Workforces

Absence of control: why spreadsheets are unsuitable for employee health and absence management

Covid-19 has brought employee health and the challenge of managing absence to the top of the agenda in organisations of all sizes and types.

Managers and HR teams must track higher levels of absence, manage new activities such as arranging coronavirus tests, and still manage returns to work after illness or self-isolation.

Some have turned to spreadsheets to corral the new deluge of information and manage associated activities.

These can seem an obvious solution. They are on every desktop, highly familiar, flexible, and already paid for by the organisation.

Spreadsheets may seem the answer, but have some costly hidden risks.

There are many drawbacks to using them for such important information, and to support such essential activities.

THE TROUBLE WITH SPREADSHEETS

1 **Protecting and securing sensitive data** – the ease of copy, paste and email makes office documents of any kind a bad place to keep sensitive data such as employee health or absence records. Files are easy to duplicate and almost effortless to share by email, internally and externally. It is very easy to breach your duties of data protection.

2 **Managing access to private information** – office documents contain rudimentary security features making effective data privacy from unauthorised access almost impossible. Unlike databases, you cannot define who has access to what information, either on an individual basis or based on a set of criteria, presenting a GDPR risk.

3 **Ensuring data accuracy** – humans are prone to error, and so are spreadsheets. It has been estimated that almost 90% of spreadsheet contain errors of one kind or another, and some famous spreadsheet errors have cost organisations millions as a result. While making mistakes is easy, finding them is very hard – and gets harder, the larger and more multi-tabbed and connected a spreadsheet or workbook becomes.

4 **Collaborating around information** – shared workspaces and drives coupled with cloud platforms such as Microsoft 365, Google Drive and Dropbox enable a degree of file sharing and collaborative working with spreadsheets. However sharing data this way not only raises the issues of data protection and privacy mentioned above, but also provides limited capabilities to manage changes or identify when and how errors have crept in.

5 **Effective reporting and exporting** – spreadsheets were not designed to enable you to query them to extract information or generate complex reports. Although it is possible to filter and sort data, reporting from spreadsheets is limited either to direct printouts or exporting data for use in other systems. There are generic export formats that can enable import into HR management systems, but the process is clunky and time-consuming. The only way to bridge the gap is to use programming or third-party tools.

6 **Acting on your data** – spreadsheets are only documents, disconnected from essential operational workflows such as the management of return to work after absences. They cannot alert HR owners or line managers when the data suggests a problem is brewing. They cannot trigger a manager action and inform them when it is time to take the next step in a process, nor alert them when it is time for an employee's next risk assessment. Spreadsheets can highlight data with formatting if certain criteria are met – but that is of little value unless someone both spots it and knows what action to take.

Compared to spreadsheets, employee data managed with Empactis is more

Complete   Connected

Secure   Scaleable

Actionable   Auditable

SPREADSHEETS SIMPLY AREN'T SUITABLE

Spreadsheets are brilliantly designed to give people powerful features at their fingertips to manage figures, finances, and calculations. However, they were never designed to act as databases, nor to store and manage data about people, absence, or health.

The limitations outlined above present cogent reasons not to use them as a mainstay of managing absence and protecting workforce health. Nor can they effectively protect the organisation itself, being limited in terms of scale, with a set maximum number of records. This means they cannot be used to build complete and auditable records over time.

Employee health is not only increasingly vital during the time of Covid-19, but there is also a growing Government imperative for all workers to gain access to occupational health services. Spreadsheets simply have no role to play in a modern, secure, fit for purpose system for managing employee and occupational health.

EMPACTIS ENABLES INTEGRATED INSIGHT AND ACTION

The Empactis platform was designed to help organisations manage, connect, and take actions around sensitive and critical data related to absence, health, and employee relations.

Employee data is managed securely and connected to your unique organisational hierarchy, ensuring that the right people have access to the right information. Empactis integrates your workflows and best-practice processes to ensure that HR and line managers receive the right alerts, at the right time, and can easily execute the right next actions to support staff.

Developed within the Microsoft environment, it can integrate flawlessly with Microsoft 365 assuring smooth and secure communication and scheduling for managers, staff, and occupational health clinicians, and enabling seamless and real-time reporting of essential employee absence and other data.

As a modular cloud solution, it can evolve and scale with your needs, be up and running fast, and require little support from internal IT resources.

Empactis can help you support policy and regulatory compliance to meet your duties of care for the health and wellbeing of your staff today, and as the situation evolves.

It is already fully optimised to help you manage many connected challenges of Covid-19, including managing and reporting on surges of absence, engaging with employees for testing and returns to work, as well as aiding wider workforce health, absence and HR case management.

Empactis could help you escape rapidly from the risks and limitations of spreadsheets for essential employee management – starting with today's priorities then shaping and growing to meet your wider needs.

The Empactis platform

Absence Manager – a complete solution to manage unplanned and planned absence

Health Manager – empowers your organisation to manage all aspects of employee health

HR Case Manager – customised workflow to manage all HR and ER case types

Organisation – helping you manage hierarchies and gain dashboard views in real-time

Insights – a reporting tool enabling analytics around all aspects of employee health

Let's work together to equip you with the tools you really need for the challenges you face today. Contact us for a chat.