

Speaker 1:

Welcome to PayTalk, the podcast for payroll professionals with your host, Nina Talley. In the podcast, we explore the human side of payroll by speaking with global industry leaders who provide their unique insights to help listeners better understand the issues important to them and their careers.

Nina Talley:

Hey everyone, thanks for joining us for PayTalk, the podcast that brings you Payroll's human side. I'm your host, Nina Talley, and today we're joined by our guest Ian Giles, global payroll leader and payroll strategist at Papaya Global. Ian is here to walk us through the vast landscape that is global payroll operating systems. Your payroll OS touches all aspects of a payroller's job, and staying up to date on best practices and emerging trends means making life easier for you, your team, and the people who depend on you to get their paychecks. Ian, before we get started, I'd love it if you could introduce yourself and tell our listeners a little bit about your background.

Ian Giles:

Thanks, Nina. It's my pleasure to be here today. Yes, so like most, I fell into payroll back in the day. There wasn't a career fair with a payroll stand and payroll wasn't the first industry that I ever worked in. Before payroll, I worked in the cinema industry. I organized new cinema openings and red carpet events, got to meet a lot of famous people and even got to look after Richard Attenborough of Jurassic Park fame for the day once upon a many, many years ago.

After all of that glamour, I moved into recruitment where I placed up to a thousand temporary workers a day into client's premises. A large part of that was getting them paid, and after a while I was asked to become the payroll manager, so you could actually say I was even invited into payroll. I've worked in the industry now for almost 25 years. I've had all kinds of roles in industries from retail and beauty to aerospace in all types of businesses, from startup to Time 100 and Fortune 100 across the globe, providing leadership and strategy, as you say, to populations of more than a hundred thousand employees in over 170 countries. Today at Papaya Global, I'm doing something different. I work across the business managing and building external relationships, supporting enterprise clients and solutions, and acting as an advisor.

Nina Talley:

That's quite the background, and I'm sure that all of those various experiences have really fed into your payroll career.

Ian Giles:

They really, really have. I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason and yeah, I think I've kind of grown within the last 25 years into the payroll profession, although I am, if I've not had the opportunities and the chances that I've had in the past, definitely wouldn't be sat here today.

Nina Talley:

I love that. Let's start at the top, and can you provide a bit of an overview of the current landscape of global payroll operating systems? What are the key features and functionalities that businesses should be considering when they select a system?

Ian Giles:

Okay. Yeah, so to your first point, I think the landscape is a hive of activity now, and it's an absolutely fantastic thing. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and RPA are being integrated into tech to automate repetitive tasks, improve data accuracy, and improve and provide intelligent insights. Without this technology, I don't believe that as payrollers as we'll ever get to the level of maturity that we want, nor will we be able to get to those value adding activities that we want to do.

Payroll I think is, it's not quite firefighting, but it's something that we do on a day-to-day basis. If we can take any time out the payroll cycle, we can put improvements into place, we are going to give ourselves time back for the things like audit and governance and the value adding activities. Like I like to say, imagine as a payroll team being able to sit at the end of a Teams or a Zoom call at the end of your payroll cycle in an open environment that anybody in the business can drop into, ask their question as an employee or a function head. The fact that you have time within your cycle to be able to do that tells me that you've got into the place where you want to be. You are adding significant value into something that you never possibly could before.

Nina Talley:

I loved that point of if you have this free time, it is such a good example that you're doing things right.

Ian Giles:

It absolutely is. The more governance and audit, like I say, that you can put into payroll... Today it's all about the now and it's all about the future. If we look at payroll reporting, and I'll touch on it during the conversation, if we look at what it has been like, it's always been after the fact post payroll reporting. At the best, that will tell you what's happened. At the real best, it will allow you to prevent something happening again.

The post payroll reporting has told you that you've overpaid somebody. With realtime data insights and the ability to look at that data before the payroll's committed means you are preventing those things from happening, meaning you're keeping money in the business. It's not going to employees that have left. If you work within the world of payroll, you and I both know that 99 times out of a hundred, you will never get told by an employee that you overpaid them.

It's something that you need to [inaudible 00:05:41]. It's an absolute fact. Just in the same way I've never had a hundred thousand thank yous at the end of the months to tell me that everybody's been paid. You get those-

Nina Talley:

Exactly.

Ian Giles:

... five emails or conversations from senior leaders and employees to tell you something hasn't got it. But imagine being able to keep that money in the business, not having to chase it. It's money that you can do so many other things with. It will keep a business afloat. It will stop it going into any kind of jeopardy. It's bonus payments. It's increases in salaries. It's going to the right people, then ended up with the wrong people.

Nina Talley:

I love that.

Ian Giles:

Those kind of things are where we really want to be, and what's going on now in the current landscape is taking us there. Cloud-based payroll systems are becoming even more increasingly popular than they ever have been before due to their accessibility. The scalability and the ease of implementation; long gone. Well, they're here still in some kind of degree, but long gone are the excessively and lengthy payroll implementations of the past. They don't happen now and they don't need to. We can change the way that we do that and the speed at which we go live.

We're offering realtime access to payroll data. Like I say, wherever there is an internet connection these days you can actually produce payroll. Long gone are the classroom environment offices where nobody can see what's going on in the payroll screen. Nobody really has to work in a payroll office five days a week. We can do it from anywhere, tax and labor laws aside, and those are the kind of things that we need to make sure that we're doing.

Global payroll systems these days are integrating more seamlessly with other HR and finance related software, and this makes it easier for us to connect the entire cycle from the very, very beginning of what we do to the very end of what we do. This integration is helping streamline data sharing wherever we're using it, which is absolutely fantastic. The complexity of payroll and tax laws still varies and will vary forever significantly across-

Nina Talley:

Forever!

Ian Giles:

... countries. Forever. Somebody asked me a little while ago, what do I see the future of payroll as being? A unified payroll and tax system across the globe? Don't think it's really going to happen, but that would be absolutely utopia for every payroller out there, so we do have these complexities, but modern payroll systems are incorporating compliance features and localization capabilities to make this a lot easier than ever has done before. Payroll systems are increasingly providing advanced analytics and have the reporting capabilities that I'm talking about. It is allowing HR and finance teams to gain this valuable information before the facts, not afterwards like we have done before.

Nina Talley:

I've got to tell you Ian, real time data insights have got to be four of my favorite words paired together. Truly, it's such a powerful thing to have inside of your operating system, and I love your take on it that it ends up meaning that you get to put more money where it counts instead of sieving money. I love that outlook.

Ian Giles:

In a world where people are unfortunately losing their jobs, being made redundant and all of those other horrible things, if we can actually keep that money in businesses, it's going to have a much better impact than it not being there. We're in a world of employee engagement and where the employee rules. Employees, they lead with their thoughts and their feelings. If they don't feel appreciated, they don't feel rewarded, they don't have the best suite of benefits within their industry, they are going to walk. If you can offer that, all of those things because you have the money in the business rather than where it shouldn't be, that is a fantastic starting point from my point of view.

To me all about the realtime data insights, but we're going a stage further than that now, and what we're working with and what we're starting to see in the industry and in businesses is looking towards the future. I believe that payroll is the greatest strategic partner that a business never knew it needed. With all the information that we've got, not only can we actually make payroll as compliant as we possibly can, but we can educate an entire business.

Nina Talley:

I love that, and realtime data insights, love that, but predictive analytics is really, as you said, where that true sweet spot sits. Because then especially in the HR and in the payroll space, you do have so much data about hiring, about retaining employees, about raise increases and retention, and that if you can get that type of predictive analytics in there, again it's all about saving the money that you can then return to your employees to continue retaining them. I think retention is such a big thing right now, and payroll plays such a deep part of that. This type of operating system that we're talking about that's offering these types of deep insights can really mean the difference for a business.

Ian Giles:

I think it really can. As they say, knowledge is power, and the more you have of that in the now and having the ability to predict the future as you say is vitally important for a business's survival. Like I say, I do think employees, if they're feeling not even unfairly treated, but they're not quite getting what their significant other is getting in a different business, or their friends or family members, people...

It's not just about salary these days, and there are so many other ways that we can actually do that within businesses. We can't necessarily always offer the salary increases that we're wanting to do, but if there are other elements that people are wanting and there is a enough research going into that at this moment in time to tell you what a good benefits package looks like, invest in them.

Nina Talley:

I love that, and that you could sort of even, with this type of analytics, tailor your benefits package to the specific team that you have and their specific needs. I think that that's such an excellent point. We've talked a lot about the current landscape and a lot of the benefits of these types of predictive analytics and what you can do with it, but let's get real about it. What are some of the challenges, the common challenges of implementing these types of systems and then managing these systems, and what can our listeners look out for when they begin to implement their own payroll operating system?

Ian Giles:

There are a few. Well, actually no, there's more than a few. There are lots of pain points in payroll and everybody's going to have a different opinion. I would have to say that the three biggest challenges that organizations face are inefficiency, complexity, and compliance. Different countries have unique tax laws, labor regulations, and reporting requirements. Staying compliant is a daunting task.

An effective payroll operating system needs to be equipped to handle multiple jurisdictions and automatically update tax rates and other relevant information based on those local laws. Dealing with various currencies and fluctuating exchange rates can complicate payroll calculations. A robust system or solution, depending on whether or not you're in-house payroll, you are using an aggregated model or you're decentralized, because there are lots of different ways of looking at payroll. Your system and solution should be robust enough to be able to have the capability to handle those currencies, convert wages correctly. And track exchange rates where need to.

Payroll data is obviously very, very sensitive, includes personal employee details, financial data, making sure that we ensure that security and privacy is absolutely crucial, especially when we're dealing with data from different countries because they have differing laws. An effective payroll operating system should implement robust security measures to comply with data protection requirements and regulations in each of those jurisdictions. Payroll's closely tied to HR and finance functions.

Systems needs to be efficient in the way that they seamlessly integrate with those functions and their software because they won't necessarily be using the same thing. We need to make sure we have all of the right connectors in place to remove smooth data flow, reduce manual data entry, and minimize errors. Those organizations that do have a global presence may have employees spread across different time zones. Coordinating that payroll activity is difficult at time, and deadlines are particularly challenging.

It's not just looking at where that employee might be working or when they're working. If your payroll is being processed from a different country, you've got different public holidays. You've got different days where banks are closed. There's lots to take into account. I remember doing a piece of work with a client not that long ago and they had payrolls in just over 20 countries. I actually did an exercise based on banking and reporting as well as when things need to happen, payroll calendars and windows, and within those plus 20 countries, within a period of 365 days there were four 450 public holidays. Now-

Nina Talley:

Wow.

Ian Giles:

... it's not something that you necessarily think about-

Nina Talley:

Yeah.

Ian Giles:

... and you want to sit there and you want to do the maths. There's lots of great calendars and tools out there, but it is a massive challenge making sure the land dates and send dates of data and banking are actually aligned. It can be particularly difficult. Then when you factor in different languages and formatting, that can be cumbersome, so an effective payroll solution should be supplying you reports in a single currency and a single language.

Now that way you're not taking data from multiple data points, having to work with it before you've actually got your answer. Going back to the realtime data insights, single currency, a single language, is going to get you that information a lot faster than trying to do that in 20 or 30 or 50 or even more countries. Compliance varies absolutely everywhere and there is demand to be as accurate and as comprehensive as we possibly can. An efficient payrolls operating system should generate audit trails, should give you flags when something isn't right and needs to be looked at. It should be doing the hard for you so that you can be actually doing the more important tasks that require the human element.

Nina Talley:

Yes.

Ian Giles:

I don't believe for a second that machine learning, AI, RPA are going to take every payroll job in the world. Not every-

Nina Talley:

No.

Ian Giles:

... robot is a job stealing robot. People who are using this are going to end up taking the jobs of people or businesses that choose not to use technology.

Nina Talley:

Yes, the technology itself isn't powerful enough. It's about harnessing it appropriately, and that's really where the human element is. Your machine learning algorithms are only as strong as the data and the person training it. You need to have a firm understanding if you want it to be effective.

Ian Giles:

Absolutely. I believe there's always going to need to be that human touch within payroll. There are things that we need to do, and I don't think that technology or AI is going to be the total or absolute replacement for people working within payroll.

Nina Talley:

We all understand the importance of staying up to date on the latest payroll laws, regulations, and information. Payroll Source Plus provides you with all the information you need to keep your company's payroll operations in compliance. The online subscription-based payroll reference library makes it easy to quickly find the answers you need to stay compliant and informed. To learn more about the Payroll Source Plus go to www.payroll.org/source. Again, that's www.payroll.org/source.

We've talked about the challenges and we've talked about how to choose one, but I want to dive into, what are some of the best practices of implementing a new payroll operating system in a global business, and what should a payroll manager consider to ensure a successful implementation? It's not easy, especially like you said, if you're operating in 20 countries.

Ian Giles:

Absolutely. It's not easy and I don't even believe that there is a one solution fits all. There isn't a technology out there that is absolutely correct for everybody. One of the first things that I believe people need to consider and in my opinion is best practice isn't even the technology side of things. I'll touch on that in a moment, but I really do believe before starting the implementation process, you need to develop a detailed project plan outlining the necessary steps and the responsibilities that you want to take.

You need to get the discovery phase absolutely right, because 50% of all implementations go south. They don't end up being exactly what you want them to be. If you don't involve the relevant stakeholders at the relevant points in time through the implementation process, it is doomed to fail. There could be somebody in say, Manila for example, who is running an Excel spreadsheet every single month under the radar of absolutely everybody, but if that isn't factored into the things and the steps that you need to consider, that one tiny thing could just be the complete undoing of the entire

implementation, so make sure that obviously payroll is involved, HR, finance, IT, legal and local payroll teams.

Don't leave anybody out of this. Take as holistic an approach as you possibly can. Make sure that you've got a senior stakeholder in there as an exec sponsor to keep things moving, but you have got to have those right people in the right places all of the time, as I say. Different countries have different regulations, so you need to make sure that you're taking those into account. Ensuring global payroll system is compliant to all relevant local laws is an absolute must.

Aim to standardize payroll processes and data before you've even got there. In my opinion, if you are going into an implementation, this is the opportunity to get as vanilla as you possibly can. I've seen businesses with 2000 payroll components and elements who use 20,50, maybe even 200, but through merger, acquisition, and implementation from one system to another 3, 4, 5 times, everything has built up. It becomes so cluttered and unnecessary. It's an opportunity to clean house as far as I'm concerned and get the best process that you could possibly imagine with the best tech, and that's the way to get that done.

As I said, your systems need to integrate with HR and finance systems in as automated fashion as you can possibly imagine. Let's not have payrollers keying information from one system that they've got on a PDF document, a Word document, or an Excel spreadsheet. This information needs to flow through every system that it possibly can without the humans getting involved or touching everything.

We are there to make sure that everything happens, but RPA bots can work 24 hours a day, stay on task for as long as we need them to, and unlike a payroller they do not need 10 cups of coffee a day to get through the day. They just get on with it. If you don't set yourself up to succeed, you really are not going to succeed. Once you've done that and you've got everything that you want to, you obviously need to make sure that you conduct thorough testing throughout the entire process.

Nina Talley:

Yes.

Ian Giles:

Get this payroller in Manila who's operating this payroll spreadsheet involved. At the end of the day, senior leaders and exec sponsors are not going to be the end user of the product of the solution-

Nina Talley:

Nope.

Ian Giles:

... so that's why I'm saying payrollers need to be heavily involved throughout the entire process.

Nina Talley:

Yes.

Ian Giles:

One of the things that I would say is make sure that you are resourced in as good a manner as you can possibly be as well. We've all been in implementations where we don't backfill. We're doing our day jobs as well as implementation, parallel running and everything else. Make sure the right volume of people

are in the place doing the right task. If you need to take part of your payroll team out to be responsible for the implementation, get resource from somewhere else, or if you want your payroll and your payroll teams to carry on doing their day jobs, make sure you get the right kind of fixed term contractors in or whatever it might be to get that side of everything done as well.

Nina Talley:

I really love the point you made about using this time as like a blank slate, and working with your payroll team, the actual people who are implementing your global payroll, to make sure that we're creating a system that's working for the people who are using it, and that's really how you get the buy-in to adopt these new processes and standards as you show your distributed teams that it's going to work for you. You want this. A clean slate is such a beautiful thing to start from, and it gives you a chance to collect clean data. I think that what you said about having that sort of integrative team buy-in is such an important aspect of these type of large scale software implementations.

Ian Giles:

I think it absolutely is. If you do not have these people involved, as you say, they are not going to buy into the end product and what they have got to do. There are too many of us out there in payroll land who accept what we've got. There are lots of decisions made, quite rightly in some instances by senior leaders who have an agenda to move the business forward, and in lots of occasions they're looking at the next two years, three years, five years when a payroller who is constantly firefighting every single payroll cycle is working from one payroll cycle, whether or not that be biweekly, semi-monthly, monthly, weekly or whatever it might be, that's how they're operating.

Being able to come up for air has to be what this is all about for me. If we can get ourselves into a place where we aren't working back to back, we're moving ourselves away from... I talk about payroll maturity a lot. To me payroll is measured in its maturity in four different categories. You have an immature payroll, which is one that is potentially a new business or a new function, or people that haven't been necessarily working in the environment for a while. I do believe that the next level is reactive, and this is where most payroll sits.

We work from cycle to cycle, not really improving, but just getting past that line to get into the next one. You then have a controlled payroll, which is improving knowledge and processes every single time they do it, aiming towards what is then the gold standard of payroll, a strategic one where you are shaving time or processes, where you do have the level of controls that you want, where you're not being managed by exceptions, and that's quite an important part of that. We need to get away from everything being an exception and just manage those 3, 4, 5, maybe different things that need to be done out of a mammoth list of a thousand activities within the month.

That's where we need to get to, and involving all of those people is going to help shape that strategic payroll. Not only will the payroll become strategic, the business will become strategic. Payroll will end up being this business partner, like I say, that you never knew you wanted, that you never knew even existed. Payroll flies under the radar in pretty much most businesses unrecognized, unloved, and that's the way that it is.

We don't do the job because we do want those a hundred thousand thank yous every single month. We know how important payroll is. It's the biggest cost to any business, so we need to be making sure that it is helping drive those decisions for the entire business rather than just what's happening within a very, very small window of the payroll cycle.

Nina Talley:

In speaking of strategic payroll, I would love to discuss a little bit of the trends that you see that are helping facilitate this more strategic take on payroll operations.

Ian Giles:

Okay, a lot of what is being rolled out now at the moment I think should already be table stakes. It's the bare minimum of what we should be doing, not really add-ons, nice to haves or anything like that.

There's a lot of emerging technology out there at this moment in time that is helping to get us to this gold standard, this strategic payroll. We have been very, very slow to join the automation revolution. If you look at payments tech at this moment in time, it's absolutely unbelievable.

The first time I actually zapped my phone onto a restaurant table and was able to pay the bill with a QR code. I carry my wallet around and cash just on the off chance that somebody's machine is broken or my phone is out of battery or whatever it be. They're an absolute backup now. Technology is advancing so much, but it does feel like it has been slow.

The last two or three years have been absolutely fantastic. COVID and the pandemic, it wasn't a great thing, but good things came out of it. I think that the demands employees have had on their businesses have generated a very, very big movement in what we're doing now and more companies are adopting AI, RPA, and machine learning to improve efficiencies, accuracy, and remove human error. Removing that human element, but only... Again, not every robot is a job stealing robot, but if we can actually get them to do the mundane, the repetitive tasks, we are getting ourselves to a good place so that we can actually do this value adding stuff.

Companies are going to end up using a one-stop self-service product in terms of the employee lifecycle, in my opinion, everything in a single platform with a lens on the world, reducing the amount of vendors that we have to interact with and to trust. We are going to be getting to a place where we are able to recruit, onboard, and actually pay those employees as well as third party providers, local governments in a single platform.

I think banking is going to be one of the biggest changes that we're going to see over the next few years or so. Banking, those rails were never intended for payroll payments. It's not that kind of infrastructure, so there's a lot of change going on at this moment in time in terms of the last mile payment side of things, lots of people that consider payroll and payments to be segregated. But I feel that they're only segregated because of the way that we've actually actually been dealing with them over the last 30 years.

It's time to bring everything together in one place so that we can see it. We can deal with it without having to go into multiple systems, work with these multiple vendors that I'm talking about. The more we move information around, the more of a security risk that it potentially becomes.

Nina Talley:

That's such a wonderful point is that with all of the different data access points or data exchange points, that is a weak point in your security armor, and that's really not something we talk a lot about here at PayTalk. But I think that as you begin linking up these global systems and automating it all it becomes more and more important to keep that in mind.

Ian Giles:

It absolutely does, and if I think back over the last maybe 10 years or so, lots of things haven't changed. We do have this technology, but I think as payrollers we can be very skeptical. We don't like change. We like to do things the way that we always have done, and that isn't the right way to go about it. Security, obviously it's extremely important these days, and when you look at the facts that eight in 10 payroll errors are generated generally because of bad HR data and information that isn't correct, it is a risk.

When you actually then start passing that information around the world, if you do get it wrong, if you send the Portuguese bank file to China, for example, you're breaking no end of laws. Going back to the point that I was making, over the last 10 years or so I've worked with lots of businesses and we don't change. I see and have seen lots of Excel spreadsheets flying around the world. I believe that if I went back into one or two of them, it wouldn't be that difficult to get into their data because we are creatures of habits.

Our Excel spreadsheets generally tends to be the year that we're actually processing them in, plus the month, plus the name of the country and name and owner of the business so the formatting doesn't particularly change if we don't actually have to move that information around, because it's in one single system. We're preventing all kinds of problems, and that has to be the best way to do something. Removing risk from payroll is one of the key things that we should be doing and we should be improving on every single time we process a payroll.

Nina Talley:

You know, I really can't think of a better transition into the section of PayTalk that we like to call payroll nightmares. Now is the time in our podcast that we sort of like to share the darker side of payroll, the sadder side of payroll. Sometimes something goes terribly wrong. But I would love to hear from you, Ian, on when something like that happened and then what you did to remediate the issue.

Ian Giles:

Okay, so I am happy to talk about it now. At the point in time that it did happen, I was far from happy to talk about it, and every now and again I think about it and I do beat myself up a little bit about it, but not nearly as much as I did back in the day. My biggest payroll nightmare would have to be sending quarter of a million pounds to employees two days before they were due to get paid.

The reason that happened was because we were using a new banking system, a new bank, and we were wanting to improve our processes and change what we were doing. We got the payroll complete. We got the bank file ready. Previously and historically we've been able to actually create payments on the bank, put a date in there that we actually wanted them to land in the account that we were sending them to, and it did.

I did a few trials. I paid myself a day early by setting the dates they wanted to, and the members of the business got the green light from them that everything was what it was supposed to be. Loaded, the bank file, put the dates in there, did everything that I was supposed to do, and it just didn't work. The second I hit the submit button, well 10 seconds after that I actually got a text message on my phone to tell me that I had been paid.

I asked a few of the payroll team based in the UK if that was the same for them, and sure enough, I'd pay all of them two days early as well. Wasn't happy about it in the slightest. Something didn't work, and yeah, it wasn't great, so the next conversation was obviously with the leaders of the business to tell them what I'd done, half expecting to have to write my letter of resignation if not being sacked right there on the spot.

They were absolutely fantastic about it. We paid people two days early rather than two days late, which would've been a much bigger no-no obviously. My lesson from that was to make sure that what we were doing had an even bigger level of rigor and testing and all of that kind of stuff. I'm happy to say I've not done anything like that since, and probably would not want to be the person pressing that button the next time we actually put that kind of test.

Nina Talley:

It's so true, and I do love that at least it wasn't late. You know? There is always-

Ian Giles:

It wasn't late.

Nina Talley:

It wasn't late.

Ian Giles:

Yeah, it wasn't late. Yeah. I mean, like I say, the leaders of the business were absolutely fantastic about it, couldn't actually understand why I was beating myself up about it because we had actually paid people early. To me, it was a point of failure. I wanted to do something. The way that we were making the payments previously was time consuming. It was something that we had to stop doing other things for to actually do this.

Because we were making the payments on the day, they were never at seven o'clock in the morning every single time. They were at seven o'clock. They were at nine o'clock. They were at 12 o'clock depending on what had happened in that given month. I wanted people to wake up to their pay on the morning of payday. Who doesn't like waking up to an increased amount of deposits within their bank account on payday? That's what we all look forward to, not, "Okay, it's 12:00. I've still not got it. It's 1:00. I've still not got it." I wanted people to wake up to pay and it didn't happen. Yeah, I wasn't very, very happy about it.

Nina Talley:

Well, I do really appreciate you sharing that insight of it, and then also sharing a bit of insight into how the business handled it. I think that we're all our harshest critic. We always strive for perfection. Unfortunately, perfection is not possible. Literally not possible, so we'll just have to settle for our best efforts.

Ian Giles:

I think so. We are human. We can only do our best, as you say, but the good thing about it is that we learn from the things that we do. Would I ever do that again? I think absolutely. I can say hand on heart 100% that will never ever be the case. It is what it is. Like we're saying, we didn't pay people two days late. That would've been the worst thing that we possibly could have done. Nobody comes to work to get paid late, and as payrollers it's never our intention to ever let that happen.

Nina Talley:

Do you want to hear how our expert guests would've handled the payroll nightmare that you are familiar with? Send an email to podcasts@payroll.org or leave us a comment on Payroll Org's Facebook

page to get involved in the conversation. We don't like to leave things on a negative note, and so my last question for you is a really positive one. I want to know, what is the best piece of payroll advice that you have ever been given, or what's the piece of payroll advice that you wish somebody had given you?

Ian Giles:

I think for me, it would have to be the more we talk about payroll, the more we get it on people's radars, the better. It is such a significant part of any business, and it is probably one of the things that we don't talk about nearly enough. There are so many good things going on within the industry at this moment in time. There are lots of thought leaders sharing all kinds of information, and that information, that knowledge is out there.

It is being shared with people, so what I would say for anybody, whether or not they are getting into payroll, they have been in it for five years, they have been in it for 25 years like I have, is continue to learn. Continue to share information. That to me is the really important thing. I would say make sure your business knows what you are doing and how difficult it can be. There are ways to make your working life as well as everybody else's easier, so let's talk about it and let's find out what we can do. It's always going to be complex. It's always going to be difficult, but it doesn't have to be as difficult as it is in some instances and some businesses. Let's just improve things wherever we possibly can.

Nina Talley:

That's really great advice. Be loud. Take up space. You know your payroll system. You know your team. You know their needs. You know your expertise. This is a big thing for me lately is just take up space with your expertise. It's okay. I love your advice-

Ian Giles:

It absolutely is.

Nina Talley:

... there of making sure that your bosses, the upper management at your business knows what you're doing, knows the efforts that you're taking. Mention casually in conversation something that came up in one of those WhatsApp groups for payroll operations. I do also love the advice to get in there and either find a mentor or be a mentor, and there is never a time to stop learning. Like you said, if you're 15-

Ian Giles:

Absolutely.

Nina Talley:

... years in your career, you can always learn something new.

Ian Giles:

Absolutely. The one thing that I would also add to that is if you are actually going to have formal conversations with business leaders, make sure you know your facts. Make sure that you have-

Nina Talley:

Yes.

Ian Giles:

You've got the answers, your own answers to the questions that you're going to ask them. Going in unprepared is a big no-no. Have your business case ready. Know what you want and go to it as professionally as you possibly can. If there is a shadow of doubt in somebody's mind that they don't have to do something or it's not a good idea, they probably won't do it. But if you've got that developed business case and can actually state why it is needed, what it will improve, and how it's going to remove complexity and all of the things that we don't want, that is the way to go about it.

Nina Talley:

What a wonderful way to wrap this episode, Ian, and thank you so much for taking some time to join us and share your insights with our listeners. Being a global payroll professional means having a strong handle on your payroll OS, and I think you've given us an excellent overview on a path forward for our listeners.

Ian Giles:

No, I've really enjoyed talking to you. It's like I say, I don't do payroll on a day-to-day basis. Now I get to talk to people about payroll every single day of the week. It's something that I'm extremely passionate about. It's something that we should all be passionate about. It's an extremely important function. People don't come to work not to get paid, so we will always have a job and we always need to carry on making sure that everything happens on our watch.

Nina Talley:

What a great point, and I also want to take a moment to thank all of our loyal listeners out there. Without you PayTalk would not be possible, so make sure you rate, review, and subscribe on your preferred podcast streaming service. That is the best way to support this podcast and ensure that we can continue to bring you the human stories that make payroll so personal. Until next time, folks, this has been your host, Nina Talley with PayTalk.

Speaker 1:

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