

HR and Compliance Trends for 2025 and Beyond





Contents

3	INTRODUCTION
4	7 HR TRENDS FOR 2025
8	5 HR PRIORITIES FOR 2025
13	4 WORKPLACE COMPLIANCE TRENDS OF 2025
18	4 TIPS TO BUDGET FOR COMPLIANCE
20	6 WAYS TO BOOST COMPLIANCE
22	CONCLUSION
23	HOW WE HELP
24	SOURCES

Introduction

As how we work changes, so does HR. Some employees seek growth, community and purpose. Others hope for their employers to respect and promote their well-being – in and out of the office. And new laws and regulations influence how businesses must operate to avoid fines and other penalties.

To be successful in the evolving HR and regulatory landscapes, you must take a proactive step forward. Whether you plan on introducing a new benefit or rebuilding your engagement strategy, it has to be backed by an understanding of employees’ shifting needs.

It can seem daunting, true, but you didn’t enter the field because supporting employees was easy. Luckily, you don’t have to do it alone either. We’ll help you take on 2025 – and beyond – by examining the:

-  **CURRENT EMPLOYMENT TRENDS**
-  **TOP 5 HR PRIORITIES FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY**
-  **LATEST STATE AND LOCAL LEGISLATION INFLUENCING HR COMPLIANCE**

To be successful, you must take a proactive step forward.



HR trends vs. priorities

Note that “trends” and “priorities” are not the same. Think of them this way:

Trends	Priorities
RULES OR CONCEPTS	MORE IMMEDIATE
SPEAK TO THE BIG PICTURE	EASIER TO MEASURE

Even if a trend may not impact your business right away, don’t ignore it. A good example: predictive scheduling laws that haven’t made it to your state ... yet. Priorities, on the other hand, lend themselves to policies and procedures you can follow up on.

Eventually, certain trends can compel you to action. If you never shift them to priorities, you won’t have results.

7 HR Trends for 2025

Last year brought several new ideas to the forefront in addition to long-standing concepts. Here are seven prominent trends that could influence your workplace this year.

1. People analytics and data-driven HR practices

As organizations grow more competitive, more people expect their employers to help enhance their well-being. With this trend comes a renewed need to understand employees on a deeper level and drill down into their motivations.

Since we've emerged from the pandemic, businesses are placing an increased focus on the culture and experience they want to foster. Analyzing their workforce and meaningfully considering this data is key, but it also takes identifying and understanding how employees:

-  **FEEL ABOUT THEIR WORK**
-  **PERCEIVE THEIR DIRECT SUPERVISORS AND LEADERS**
-  **ENGAGE WITH THEIR TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES**
-  **USE THEIR TOOLS AND SOFTWARE**
-  **AND MORE**

**What engaged employees just a few years ago
won't necessarily cut it today.**



2. Employee financial well-being

Economic factors can impact all of us. But as money becomes tighter, more employees expect their organizations to provide resources to help manage it. This isn't exclusive to raises and on-site consulting either. It could also include the access employees have to their compensation and the tech to help them better understand it.

Through 2025, it will become clearer that just getting paid isn't enough — people will also want to learn how to better wield their wages to increase their quality of life overall.

3. AI in the workplace

In 2024, we saw the discussion around AI work explode. While its use for job descriptions and other basic tasks continues to grow, McKinsey & Company predicts AI could help deliver large-scale and in-depth training.

At the same time, generative AI still has ground to cover in terms of reducing bias in hiring and advancement. That's why it's still one of the higher-level trends. Keep an eye on how it's used. It also wouldn't hurt to think about how AI could enhance your role in the near future.

As money becomes tighter, more employees expect their organizations to provide resources to help manage it.





4. Employee mental health

This entry is directly related to financial health and speaks to a broader push for enhanced well-being initiatives. As employees face more stress in their personal lives, work has the potential to amplify it. Forward-thinking organizations shouldn't just offer their workforce a place to escape, but an outlet to help soothe their concerns and improve their outlook.

Even if an employee's mental health isn't in crisis, you should still keep strategies to help alleviate their stress top of mind. Ultimately, improving mental health isn't just about reaching a neutral, baseline state. Pushing for a healthier and more satisfied workforce can also help us boost efficiency and alignment with company values and culture.

5. Remote and hybrid working

While remote work may have seen a reduction throughout 2024, these and hybrid models will still have relevance in 2025 and beyond. Essentially, no matter where an employee works, they should still have the same level of attention and accessibility to resources that any worker would enjoy. The coming year will likely see new ideas emerge for how to build a community from afar and — like many of 2025's trends — a healthier and more psychologically safe environment.

And for organizations that have increased or switched back to in-person working, their HR teams should consider the significant adjustments employees may have to make to accommodate this change. Anything that makes this transition easier could help offset a wave of disengagement and burnout.

**Improving mental health isn't just about
reaching a neutral, baseline state.**

6. Employee caregiving challenges

It can sometimes be hard enough for someone experiencing stress to focus on their jobs. But when employees have to care for someone outside of work, it can make engaging with their role that much harder.

HR should keep this added responsibility in mind and consider programs that could help alleviate it. For example, employees with young children would likely benefit from a discount on after-school programs or other forms of assistance. A flexible schedule could help those caring for adults to consult with doctors and coordinate appointments.

The best combination of benefits will vary between employees. Still, in 2025, offering these resources could provide relief for those who desperately need it and keep organizational efficiency on track.

7. Challenges and opportunities with corporate DEI programs

Throughout 2024, we've seen significant movement around DEI initiatives — including their decline. Despite gaining traction in recent years, many organizations appear to be scaling back and reducing their focus on DEI. While the exact reason for this isn't abundantly clear, this shouldn't stop HR from considering employees holistically and strategizing around their needs. It may also benefit you to ask employees about their perspective on your DEI programs and if they find them valuable.



5 HR Priorities for 2025

We've seen some of what lies ahead. Now let's dive into HR's specific areas of focus. To help, Paycom commissioned a survey from PSB Insights in September 2024 of 1,000 U.S. HR pros to see their most common concerns, goals and challenges for 2025. Here's where their priorities landed.

1. Employee retention

A staggering 56% of HR pros listed employee retention as one of their top priorities. This isn't a surprise either, given this issue topped last year's survey.

Keeping people and protecting their well-being are unquestionably vital to the long-term health of your company. They also help reduce the overall cost of recruitment, which continues to climb. The Society for Human Resource Management estimates the average cost of a new hire is \$4,700, and it's far more efficient to keep an exceptional employee than recruit, onboard and train one of the same quality.

But it's not always clear how to turn off turnover. Fortunately, a possible solution is probably closer than you think. Start by asking employees what makes it good to work at your company. A tool to anonymously gather feedback is great for this, and conducting stay interviews can help you dial into specific motivations. The comments you gather also help you identify what could make your employees' experience better — before they look elsewhere.

You should also reexamine onboarding to ensure it sets up new hires for long-term success and engagement. Companies with a solid onboarding experience strengthen their retention, and most new hires will likely form the defining perception of their company during their first few weeks.





Virtually all of 2025's HR trends, especially those centered on mental, physical and financial well-being, feed into retention. Those pushes all reflect the need to foster an environment of care and support, one that employees will actually want to work in. At the same time, it's vital that HR continues to study and analyze data around retention and engagement. Using tools to help measure this need will be instrumental to:

 **UNDERSTANDING RETENTION DATA**

 **IDENTIFYING AREAS OF CONCERN**

 **HELPING KEEP MANAGERS AND LEADERS INFORMED**

Finally, be honest with your people about how you're working to improve retention. Constantly including employees in the process will help them feel heard and might even lead you to a few unexpected ideas.

2. Employee training

Employee training is close behind retention. According to PSB Insights, just over 51% of HR pros cited it in their top priorities — a slight uptick from last year. This isn't a new priority for HR, but it's clearly one that's gaining traction.

While close to career development, employee training speaks more to professional development or upskilling and reskilling programs. It can be a way to ignite advancement, but it also helps your people enhance the traits they need to become more comfortable in their roles.

And people definitely want that comfort. In a recent Gallup survey, 65% of employees said training opportunities were “very important” to them when evaluating new jobs. In fact, 48% in the same survey said they would seek a new job if it offered a greater chance to upskill. Gallup also found the newest generations of workers value employer-provided training the most — even more than PTO.

Learning management software can provide a great framework to engage employees with training. Plus, they can fill their skill gaps in a way that truly speaks to them.

As you continue to research and expand training, assess the talent your workforce already has. This won't just help fill existing job openings, but also inform the positions your organization will eventually need — and the skills tied to them.

3. Employee engagement

After training, PSB Insights found 48% of HR pros prioritize employee engagement. This year, engagement overtook talent acquisition as more organizations focus on keeping and satisfying their current workforce.

Listen to what your employees want and genuinely act on it. Your attempts to boost engagement should never be a secret. After all, employees should be the first to know about the impact of your initiative. With a renewed focus on our next priority, you'll notice that when employees *feel* their workplace prioritizing their well-being, engagement naturally rises.

**Learning management software can provide a
great framework to engage employees with training.**





4. Employee well-being initiatives

In a direct response to the well-being trends we saw, programs to address this issue have knocked career development out of the list of priorities. According to PSB Insights, 48% of HR pros will make this one of their primary focuses of 2025.

It's crucial to take care of your workforce. Once they know you value their well-being — and prove it with benefits and resources — workplace engagement, satisfaction and even retention rise. However, you shouldn't believe addressing well-being has a single solution. Your employees are unique, and so are the issues they face.

Gather feedback and take the time to truly assess it. It might take time for employees to get comfortable with asking for help. But if you put effort into creating a safe environment for them to do so, they'll guide you toward a path to keeping them longer. Plus, when employees believe their employer cares, they'll let their peers know their organization is a great place to work.

5. Talent acquisition

In a dramatic shift from last year, just 43% of HR pros told PSB Insights that talent acquisition was among their top priorities in 2025. This result reflects a switch from organizations expanding their workforce to focusing on keeping who they have.

Essentially, talent acquisition encompasses a spectrum of HR responsibilities, including:

- » workforce planning
- » recruiting
- » applicant tracking
- » interviewing
- » assessing
- » hiring
- » onboarding

Hiring tends to be the biggest struggle companies face in talent acquisition. Recruiting and HR tend to create distinctions between each other, but they must tear down the wall to form a connection. They need to focus on the specific processes and spot the hand-off points. Maybe you'll find an issue with the HR platform or discover that hiring managers aren't following up with applicants fast enough.

Additionally, HR should work on understanding where people fall out in the hiring process. Understanding these people-driven analytics can be a significant help for organization in general, but data is absolutely key for understanding and enhancing talent acquisition. You should make the most of reporting over:

- » job posting, advertising and interview effectiveness
- » application rates and drop-offs
- » progress through your recruitment funnel
- » offer letter acceptance
- » and more

And once you identify where your talent acquisition strategy falls short, you can start to correct it. And it will need to be adjusted; even once-reliable hiring processes have an expiration date. One of the most common mistakes organizations make involves keeping hiring practices stagnant. Your business's success depends on adapting.

Lean on easy-to-use HR tech to streamline talent acquisition. If you work with a vendor for recruitment, ask them to share their expertise and be candid about where your strategy needs a boost.



4 Workplace Compliance Trends of 2025

While not every new law will impact your organization, we don't work in silos. Unique state rules that gain traction can emerge elsewhere. For example, several states recently changed and expanded their rules around family and medical leave. Given how rampant this kind of legislation was in 2024, it wouldn't be a stretch to see these laws gain momentum elsewhere.

From cybersecurity to time-off policies, the new year brings rules and updates that can transform the way we operate. Here are four of the most prominent trends.

1. Consistency in policy

As employee rights expand across the country, so does the lens placed on employment laws. In certain states — like those with at-will employment — organizations need to ensure they don't overstep their rights and veer into noncompliance.

But the greatest way to protect your business could be easier than you think. It may seem small, but ensuring consistency across all policies and procedures can help defend against wrongful termination suits.

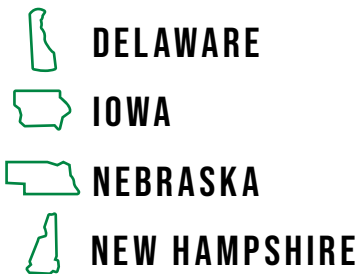
Take Jones v. Georgia Ports Authority, for example. In February, a former employee filed a lawsuit after they were fired for an unsigned return-to-work letter. The court ultimately dismissed the case since it determined the termination wasn't rooted in discrimination, but the Authority's policy to not accept any return-to-work letters not signed by a health care provider.

In this case, the organization avoided what could've been a substantial legal battle because it clearly communicated its policies to all employees. While your company may inevitably terminate employees, you should ensure every reason for doing so is clearly documented and compliant with your own policies.

2. Cybersecurity

When new workplace technology emerges, new laws regulating it aren't far behind. Often, data protections vary by state, so employers should pay close attention to the rules affecting the tech and practices where they operate.

On Jan. 1, these four states will join a growing list of jurisdictions enforcing data protection:



While each of the laws vary, they all cover how employers can collect and use consumer data. And given the ever-growing risk of cybersecurity attacks, it's vital for organizations to understand what threats look like and how to defend against them.

Often, data protections vary by state, so employers should pay close attention to the rules affecting the tech and practices where they operate.

Ideally, all employees with access to company tech should have regular, engaging and informative cybersecurity training. Your workforce should also understand how to identify and safely report suspected:

- » phishing
- » vishing
- » spear phishing
- » social engineering
- » and more, depending on your business needs

You should also use formally audited technology that only grants access to consumer and employee data for those who truly need it. If it's clear a certain department or position doesn't benefit from this access, consider limiting or prohibiting it to help minimize potential threats.

These rules seek to level the playing field to address historical pay disparities. Ideally, doing so helps create equity, especially among women and people of color who have had fewer opportunities to negotiate pay.

All employees with access to company tech should have regular, engaging and informative cybersecurity training.





3. Time off and leave laws

In 2024, legislation related to leave and time-off policies was proposed and took effect across the nation. As you consider reevaluating your employee leave policies, keep these new laws top of mind.

Effective Jan. 1, 2025, privately employed workers in New York will receive an additional 20 hours of paid sick leave to use for doctor's appointments and any other time off related to the employee's pregnancy.

On Jan. 1, 2025, contributions for the Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program will start, with benefits going into effect May 1, 2026. (These payroll contributions are made in advance to help pay for the benefits and ongoing maintenance of the PFML program.) This initiative will grant up to 12 weeks of protected paid leave benefits to employees in Maine for reasons related to:

-  **MEDICAL ISSUES**
-  **FAMILY MATTERS**
-  **SAFETY**
-  **A FAMILY MEMBER'S PENDING MILITARY DEPLOYMENT**

Effective Feb. 21, 2025, Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act will replace the state's Paid Medical Leave Act. As Michigan's most aggressive time-off mandate, the law allows all nonfederal government employees in the state to accrue time off at a rate of one hour for every 30 worked for up to 72 hours per year.

Contributions for Delaware's PFML program begin Jan. 1, 2025, with benefits starting Jan. 1, 2026.

Under this law, eligible workers will receive 12 weeks of parental leave per year and up to six more weeks every two years for:

- » medical needs
- » family care
- » military service

Time-off laws can be among the most complex, so it's crucial for employers to ensure they understand these policies and readily answer their workforce's questions. Using a tool to automatically sort – and even answer – employees' concerns about these laws could help limit your liability.

Automating your time-off processes could also shore up your compliance and ensure consistent approvals. Rather than require your managers to meticulously verify if their decision complies, automated tech provides employees with an immediate response based on criteria you set, including for a local or state-specific law.

This wave of legislation stresses the importance of supporting employees through personal, family and other complex situations.

“When an employer provides a pillar related to preventive health care or a way in which lifestyle management can be helpful for the employee,” Cecchi-Dimeglio said, “we see a return on investment.”

“When an employer provides a pillar related to preventive health care, we see a return on investment.”

—Paola Cecchi-Dimeglio, Harvard Law School





4. Onboarding

A wave of increased fines and new federal requirements amplify the need for employers to ensure their workforce understands their rights.

Take informative posters, for example. Effective Jan. 16, 2025, the U.S. Department of Labor recently increased the maximum fines associated for not making these posters visible:

- » Family Medical Leave Act (\$211 per violation, up from \$204)
- » Job Safety and Health: It's the Law (\$16,131 per violation, up from \$15,625)
- » Employee Polygraph Protection Act (\$25,597 per violation, up from \$24,793)

Since remote workers may not have a physical location to view these posters, the Department of Labor authorizes providing these employees with an electronic poster only if they:

- » exclusively work remotely
- » typically receive information from their employer electronically
- » can easily access electronic postings at any time

Plus, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently increased its fines for Form I-9 and E-Verify violations. For issues related to I-9 paperwork, organizations could face fines ranging from \$281 to \$2,789 per violation. Those required to use E-Verify could face fines of \$973 to \$1,942 per violation and be subject to an I-9 inspection.

Since remote work can complicate I-9 compliance, DHS released a [short video](#) to help simplify the review process in 2024. Share it with your HR team so they can better help the business avoid costly penalties for noncompliance.



4 Tips to Budget for Compliance

With proper prep and consideration, adjusting for compliance doesn't always have to be a costly exercise. Keep these tips in mind as you form and adapt a strategy.

1. Determine your exposure

Conduct a comprehensive compliance risk assessment. It may sound daunting, but doing so helps identify vulnerable areas and evaluate potential financial impacts. It could be as simple as asking your team questions like:

- » If we were required to share salary information in our job postings, how would that impact our recruitment process?
- » Would our current time-off policy be significantly affected by a new wage and hour law like what we're seeing in other states?
- » How do the states and cities where we operate differ in terms of compliance? How are they similar?
- » If we employ a lot of app-based workers, are we prepared to accommodate a new time-off requirement or a minimum hourly wage?

2. Create a training program

Help keep your workforce on top of emerging compliance trends through:



ONGOING TRAINING



FLEXIBLE BUDGETING FRAMEWORKS



EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The right learning management software simplifies this push by making it easy to regularly train your people and help reduce your overall compliance risk.

3. Invest in reliable compliance tech

Don't underestimate the power of the right tools. Investing in powerful government and compliance software helps you streamline error-prone processes and extensive reporting.

As you narrow your list of tech vendors, a thorough request for proposal (RFP) helps ensure your HR and payroll partner can meet your current needs and adapt to the future. While your RFP should be informed by your company's specific needs, it also should include:

-  **BUDGET LIMITATIONS**
-  **CLEAR EXPECTATIONS**
-  **TIMELINES**
-  **GOALS**

Don't forget to verify if a provider can automate processes around far-reaching federal laws. Paycom's Government and Compliance tool, for example, updates based on changes to the most relevant employment legislation and authorities, including:

- » Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- » Fair Labor Standards Act
- » Family and Medical Leave Act
- » Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- » COBRA

Software to streamline interactions with the federal government's E-Verify service also reduces the time and stress involved with verifying a new hire is legally eligible to work.

4. Set aside provisions for legal counsel

Alongside the rest of the year's financial planning, be sure to include estimates for legal services and — if necessary — the cost of dedicated general counsel. This will help you secure timely access to legal expertise, which helps you pivot in the face of unexpected regulatory issues.

After all, understanding the laws that impact your operations matters, but that knowledge still should be backed by a licensed legal professional.



6 Ways to Boost Compliance

Every area of your business houses opportunities for improvement. Since compliance can shift, the best defense against fines, audits and penalties involves continuously vetting your team members and their resources. Consider these six tips to help you comply with confidence.

1. Specialized compliance management team

Within your HR team, you should have representatives dedicated to monitoring for new changes and updates. This team should be aware of emerging trends, even if they don't directly affect your company yet.

Whomever you choose should consider the best way to communicate with the rest of the workforce. This can't always be a unilateral approach. For example, C-suite executives may prefer a brief, high-end summary, whereas employees could benefit from an engaging presentation with examples, assessments and news coverage.

2. Updated legal library

Keep an updated legal library — ideally in a single HR management software — to give your team quick, direct access to information about the latest laws and regulations. This could include:

- » text of federal, state and local laws
- » articles and videos about upcoming employment legislation
- » summaries and resources from reliable sites

Regardless, the material should be *relevant* to help ensure informed decisions.



3. Continuous compliance audits and monitoring

Preparing for unexpected audits requires you to, well, *expect* them. Consider auditing and monitoring tools that track your compliance in real time. Your HR software should work seamlessly to ensure your data is accurate and:

- » send automated alerts to highlight potential noncompliance
- » help mitigate exposure with clear and concise organization
- » analyze employee demographic data for compliance requirements
- » generate reports in government-required formats

While compliance is your organization's responsibility, the right software helps you manage it with confidence.

4. Streamlined document management

Compliance depends on companywide understanding. Your organization's HR tech should make it easy to create and distribute compliance-related documents for employees to sign and acknowledge.

Ideally, this document management software should be secure and accessible to create a digital trail for future reference.

5. Automated employment agreement updates

Alongside versatile document management tools, your HR tech should allow you to seamlessly update contracts in the face of legislative updates. With automated distribution, you can quickly ensure employees re-sign updated agreements — or follow up if they don't. This helps you stay ahead of any new legal requirements.

6. Integration of workplace tech

As you've probably gathered, strong compliance puts *a lot* on HR's plate. Fortunately, tools exist to simplify tedious compliance-related tasks. Automation should bolster your policy and procedures, but you'll also benefit from software that helps you monitor and build consistency across:

- » training
- » communication
- » employee tech usage

Ultimately, compliance depends on your ability to be proactive, adaptable and accountable. These traits — along with the right HR software — prime your organization for the future.

Compliance depends on **companywide understanding.**

Conclusion

As you pivot your processes and implement new strategies, don't forget whom they benefit most: *employees*. Keep their interests top of mind, and don't be afraid to ask for their feedback.

Yes, these trends speak broadly to what many employees want and expect, as well as technology to enhance their well-being and development. Still, what determines your success isn't how well you adhere to these trends, but how well you use this understanding to assist your people.

The right HR software pulls you out of tedious data entry, so you can instead focus on value-adding aspects of your role. Self-service tech — like a tool that empowers employees to verify their paycheck before payroll runs — also supports your efforts by giving them the same level of control and convenience they enjoy with apps at home.

HR isn't the field to just “wait and see.” It values those who genuinely look ahead. You've already taken a proactive step forward by reading this guide. It's time to wield what you've learned to create a better workplace.

Don't forget who benefits most from processes and strategies: **employees.**



How We Help

Paycom's easy-to-use HR tech is indispensable for any forward-thinking strategy. Plus, our self-service software gives newer workforce generations the functionality they expect — without sacrificing simplicity and accessibility for established employees.

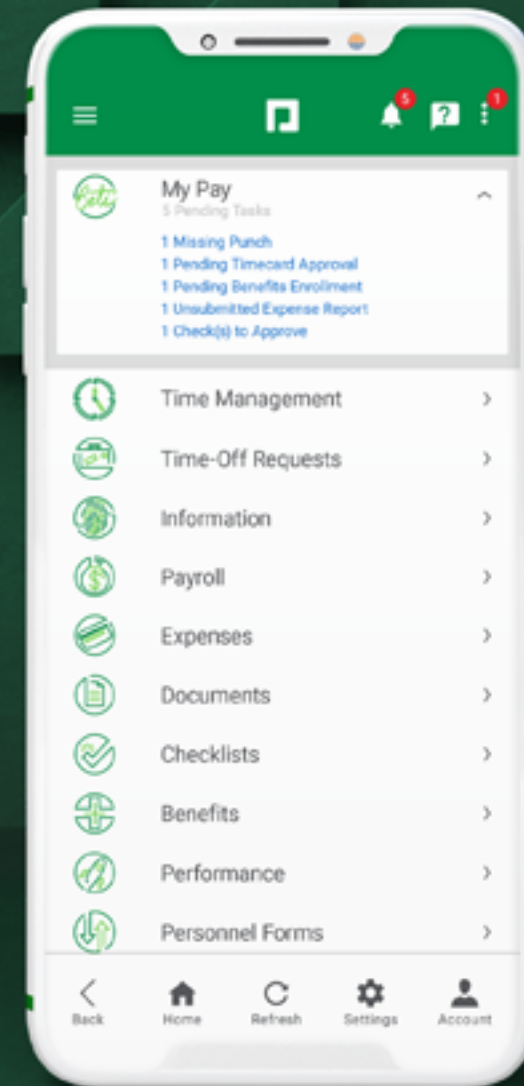
Compensation, for example, is one of the most important factors to employees. Beti®, Paycom's payroll tool, automatically flags payroll errors, then guides employees to fix them *before* submission — right in the Paycom app.

Your supervisors need support, too. Right from their mobile devices, Manager on-the-Go® simplifies:

- » time-off approvals
- » scheduling
- » personnel action forms
- » and other supervisory tasks

Speaking of time off, Time-Off Requests featuring GONE® automates decisions around those requests by allowing you to set policies, lightening leadership's load while giving employees the quick responses they expect. GONE even assists you with lowering your liability in the face of complex time-off and leave laws.

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