Adapting Your Approval Process to Time & Attendance Approval Workflows

Session 1107

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Contents

Summary

Approval workflows are used in Time & Attendance to guide the approval process for timecards, time-off requests, and hours requests. This Connect 2024 session will provide guidance on how to review your current approval processes and adapt them to the workflow structure used in Time & Attendance.

Background

Understanding Process and Procedure

Process: a group of related, dependent activities that work together to produce a desired output from a defined input.

- Activity: a distinct unit of work with defined inputs and outputs and a procedure for completing the work.

- Input: what you expect to have available when an activity in the process begins.

- Output: what you expect to deliver so the next activity in the process can begin.

Procedure: a defined method for completing an activity that states who performs the procedure and how it is accomplished. Details can vary based on needs.

- High-level: state in general terms what work is needed.

- Low-level: define the work as detailed, step-by-step tasks.

The Goal

Well-defined processes serve several purposes:

- They model the business process showing how it operates.

- They provide a defined standard for completing the business process.

- They eliminate guesswork and improvisation, improving consistency.

Approval Workflows in Time & Attendance

Approval Workflow: a process that contains the activities needed to complete the approval of a business object. The "approval process."

Time & Attendance has three approval workflow types:

- Time-off request approvals

- Hours request approvals

- Timecard approvals

Approvers: the people who participate in an approval workflow type:

- Employees initiate the approval workflow by submitting their timecard.

- Supervisors, payroll admins, and others submit their responses to approve or decline.

Approval step: a defined group of approvers who participate in an approval workflow at the same time. An approval workflow can have one or more steps.

Approval condition: defines the rules that govern the approval workflow.

- How many responses are needed to complete the current workflow step?

    o Does every approver on the step need to reply?

    o Can just one approver on the step reply for everyone?

Approval criteria: defines what the approver is responsible for reviewing.

- Pay codes
- Job costing or project codes
- An assigned schedule

Planning for Success

It is normal for an organization to have many informal practices grouped under the heading of timecard approval or time-off request approval.

The best thing you can do is to take time to review how your approval processes work before you try to map them to the Time & Attendance model. Involve the people who handle approvals now; they are your experts. They know the standard steps and the exceptions.

Bring everyone together to discuss the approval process. Use post-it notes or a whiteboard so that changes can be made quickly. Later you can create flow charts if you have a considerable number of steps or decision points in the process. Having this documentation will make configuration in Time & Attendance much easier.

Review your Current Processes

Identify your Approval Types

Time & Attendance supports creating workflows for timecard approvals, time-off request (accrued) approvals, and hours request (non-accrued) approvals.

For each of these workflow types you will need to review your approval processes and determine how they will map to the approval workflow structure in Time & Attendance. Important decisions need to be made regarding how many groups of approvers participate and what distinct criteria govern the approval process. Time & Attendance workflows are flexible but good decisions here will help ensure your workflows are clearly defined and maintainable.

Discuss your Approval Processes

Participants: Think about who participates in each type of approval workflow. Is there a single person or group that needs to approve? Are there multiple groups that need to approve?

Approval steps: Would all participants approve using a single workflow step, or should some approve first and others second? Does the step require a response from all participants or can a single response count as approval?

Exceptions: Are there special approval conditions like FMLA or overtime that need additional approval? Do all approvers always need to approve, or would one response serve as approval?

Document your Current Approval Processes

Start with a dry-erase board or post-it notes so that it is easy to make changes. Once you have the process outlined, flow chart tools in office products are good for making diagrams of your approval processes. Your diagrams do not need to be complex; they serve as a basic visual representation of your process.

Add approvers to the activities in your diagram and then walk through the diagram thinking about the procedure done for each activity. Think about how exceptions or special procedures are handled and add these to your diagrams.

Mapping your Processes to Time & Attendance Approval Workflows

Adding Approval Steps

Each group of approvers will represent a step in the workflow. Approvers on the same workflow step perform their procedures in parallel. Approvers on different workflow steps perform their procedures sequentially. Each workflow step must be completed before the next step will start. Approvers can only respond when their assigned step is active.

Set the Approval Condition on the Workflow Step

Set the approval condition on the workflow step. This determines if all approvers or one approver needs to respond to complete the workflow step.

Add Approvers and Approval Criteria to the Workflow Step

Each workflow step can contain one or more approvers. Each approver can be assigned one or more approval criteria that determine when they will participate in an approval.

Approvers only participate when their approval criteria match the request. For example, you can set criteria on approvers for specific pay codes, and they only need to participate if the timecard has those pay codes present.

A best practice is to assign the largest criteria unit that will meet your needs. Using granular criteria will result in complex workflow configurations and require increased time for approver management.

Examples of criteria:

- Organizational units

- Location

- Pay codes

- Job costing codes

Deciding How Many Workflow Steps to Use

Workflow steps are used to group similar types of approvers together. An approval step based on an organizational unit could contain all department managers. An approval step based on a functional role could include all payroll administrators.

Different approval conditions can also indicate when a step is needed. Approval steps should be used to separate a group of approvers where only one approver needs to respond from a group of approvers where all need to respond.

Using a single step for all approvers can work well for time-off and hours requests. Timecard approvals can become complex and involve many approvers. Adding additional workflow steps for timecard approvals will keep the approval process organized and easier to maintain.

Time-Off Request Approval Workflows

Scenario

The time-off approval process begins with the employee submitting a time-off request. Submitting the request constitutes the employee's approval and starts the supervisor approval workflow. The supervisor time-off approval workflow includes two approvers:

- The employee's supervisor.

- An FMLA supervisor that only approves FMLA requests.

The employee's supervisor uses criteria based on organizational unit and always participates in the approval workflow. The FMLA supervisor uses criteria based on organizational unit and pay code. This person only participates in the approval workflow when the time-off requests is for FMLA.

Your process diagram would look like this:
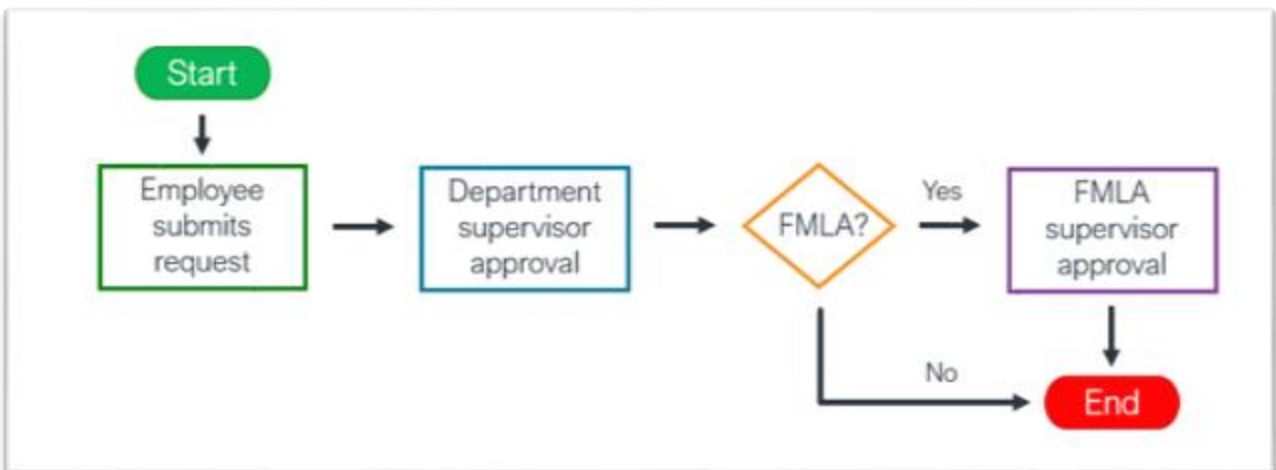
Add the Time-off Request Workflow to Time & Attendance

Setting up the workflow in Time & Attendance would look like this:

1. Add a workflow step for the time-off request workflow type.

Actions		Step ↑	Name	Approvers Required	Active	Primary Approvers
✏️	🗑️	10	Dept. 1	All	☑	👥 2

2. Add the employee's supervisor as an approver. The criteria are:

   a. Organizational Type = Department

   b. Organizational Unit = the employee's department

Actions		Location	Organization Type	Organizational Unit(s)	Attribute
✏️	🗑️	❶ Choose one or more ▾	Select one Department ▾	❶ Choose one or more 1 option selected ▾	Select a Type None ▾

3. Add the FMLA supervisor as an approver. The criteria are:

   a. Organizational Type = Department

   b. Organizational Unit = the employee's department (minimum)

   c. Attribute Type = Pay Code

   d. Attribute value = FMLA

Actions		Location	Organization Type	Organizational Unit(s)	Attribute
✏️	🗑️	❶ Choose one or more ▾	Select one Department ▾	❶ Choose one or more 1 option selected ▾	Select a Type Pay Code ▾
					❶ *Choose one or more 1 option selected ▾

Time-off Approval Workflow Behavior

This time-off approval workflow will always require the employee manager's approval. The FMLA supervisor's approval is only required when the time-off request uses an FMLA pay code. Additional department supervisors can be added to the same workflow step to handle approvals for all departments.

With an approver like FMLA, if the approver would review requests for the whole organization, the organization type should be changed to "Company" and the appropriate organizational unit. This will

create one approval rule. Leaving organization type set to "Department" and selecting all departments will create approval rules for each department and lead to complex calculations internally.

Having fewer total approval rules and using the largest organizational unit is the best approach when creating approval rules.

Timecard Approval Workflow

Scenario

The timecard approval process begins with the employee reviewing and submitting their timecard for approval. Submitting the request constitutes the employee's approval and starts the supervisor-level approval workflow.

The supervisor-level timecard approval workflow has three approvers:

- The employee's supervisor.

- An overtime supervisor that only approves overtime entries.

- The payroll supervisor who approves all timecards in the organization.

The employee's supervisor uses the same organizational unit criteria and always participates in the approval workflow.

The overtime supervisor uses criteria based on organizational unit and pay code like the FMLA supervisor. This person only participates in the approval workflow when the timecard contains overtime entries.

The payroll supervisor uses organizational unit criteria and always participates in the approval workflow.

There are two approval steps in this workflow:

- Step 1 has an approval condition of "all required" and participants are the employee's supervisor and the overtime supervisor.

- Step 2 has an approval condition of "all required" and the participant is the payroll supervisor.

Your process diagram would look like this:
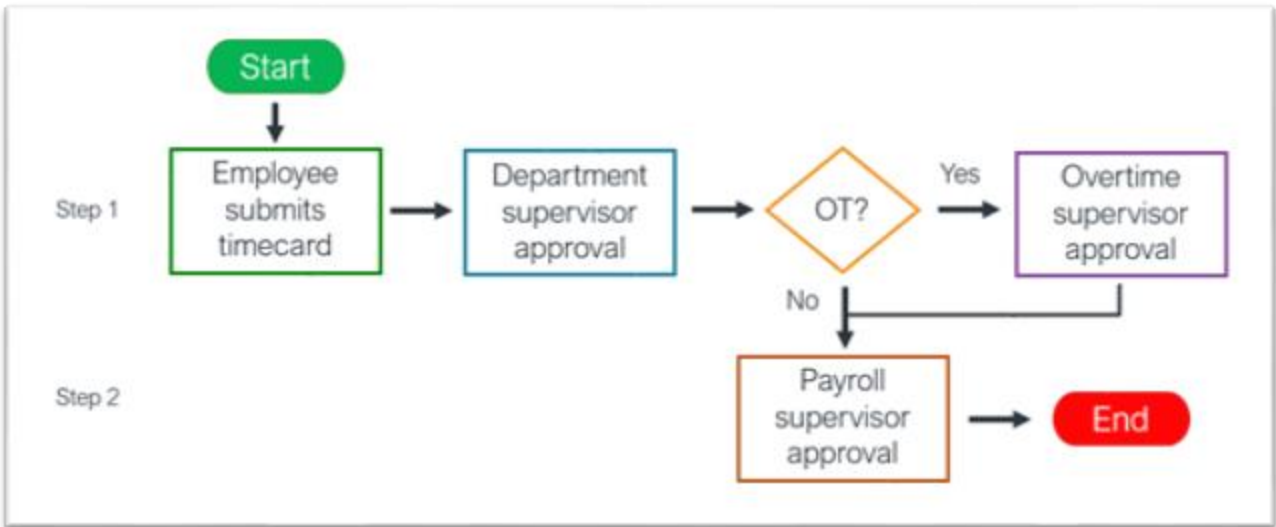
Add the Timecard Workflow to Time & Attendance

Setting up the workflow in Time & Attendance would look like this:

1. Add a workflow step for the timecard workflow type. Add two workflow steps so that the approval process is divided between the department and overtime supervisors and the payroll supervisor.

2. Add the employee's supervisor as an approver on the "Dept.1" step. The criteria are:

   a. Organizational Type = Department

   b. Organizational Unit = the employee's department

3. Add the overtime supervisor as an approver on the "Dept. 1" step. The criteria are:

a. Organizational Type = Department

b. Organizational Unit = the employee's department (minimum)

c. Attribute Type = Pay Code

d. Attribute value = OT

4. Add the payroll supervisor as an approver on the "Payroll" step. The criteria are:

a. Organizational Type = Company

b. Organizational Unit = the company-level unit

Timecard Approval Workflow Behavior

This timecard approval workflow will always require the employee manager's approval. The overtime supervisor's approval is only required when the timecard contains an overtime pay code.

Additional department supervisors can be added to the same workflow step to handle approvals for all departments.

Additional overtime supervisors can be added to handle overtime approval for all departments or the current supervisor's criteria could be changed to use the company. If there is only one overtime supervisor, it is best to update the criteria of the existing approver and not add more department-level criteria.

Using the largest unit and the fewest number of rules is best for performance and for maintenance.

Conclusion

The goal of this document is to present an effective method for assessing your organization's approval processes and transferring them to the workflow structure used in Time & Attendance. Taking time to diagram and discuss your existing approval processes will aid in making decisions about workflow steps and the rules that govern who approves and when.
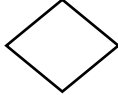
Starting with general rules using the largest organizational unit that is practical is recommended. Workflow rules are flexible and only apply when they match the request's time entries. Use this to your advantage and avoid getting too granular with workflow steps and approval rules.

Appendix

Notes on Diagrams Used

The diagrams used to illustrate workflows were made with the Microsoft Office drawing tools found under the Draw menu in Word and PowerPoint. The flowchart shapes, the textbox shape and icons were used. PowerPoint is easier to use since shapes can be placed anywhere on a slide.

Workflow Task	
Yes/No Decision	
Connector	
Start/End	