

South African Payroll Association  
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### **Engaging and encouraging your employees through your payroll department**

Payroll fulfils many roles within an organisation. Besides being responsible for employees' compensation and ensuring that the business complies with various legislations, payroll can also drive engagement with employees. Christelle Helling, Executive Committee Member of the South African Payroll Association (SAPA), says that payroll managers have many hats to wear within a business.

"Payroll is the custodian of very personal and important information within a business. We create a safe space for people to come and discuss matters relating to their salaries. As payroll managers, we need to be empathetic and make sure we are proactively driving communication about everything from retirement policies and medical aid benefits to smarter saving, budgeting and investing," says Helling.

#### ***Helping employees be smarter with their money***

Many companies offer different employee benefit packages. When policies change, or new options become available to staff, it is payroll's role to engage with workers so that they make the best decisions for themselves, their families, and their financial goals.

"Sometimes a simple email communication is enough to update employees, but other times payroll needs to work more closely with HR to ensure certain topics are addressed within a more appropriate platform for the target audience. Being able to continually communicate what the company offers employees in terms of benefits is also very beneficial to the company because it serves as a live advertisement of how the business takes care of its employees," says Helling.

#### ***Better corporate responsibility and ethics is encouraging***

According to a [2018 study by LRN](#), provider of governance, ethics and compliance management applications and services, whether a company acts ethically is a significant factor in the average American's willingness to work for an employer. Their study showed that one in three employed Americans had actually left a job because they disagreed with a company's business ethics. According to the 2016 [Cone Communications Millennial Employee Engagement Study](#), three-quarters (76%) of Millennials would take a pay cut to work for a socially responsible company.

"In addition to the financial obligations that a company has towards its employees, payroll has to ensure that a company's activities adhere to the country's tax obligations and comply with employment legislation. Employees don't want to work for or engage with unethical businesses. Payroll acts as a watchdog and if payroll can meet payroll deadlines consistently and accurately, then employees have more trust in the company's ability to uphold its commitments to the law, society and the communities in which it operates. A good payroll department encourages employees to work harder for a brand and it upholds the company's reputation in the industry," says Helling.

#### ***Aligning teams for better engagement***

At a departmental level, payroll acts as Switzerland between the finance and the HR team. "Payroll often works very closely with the accounting department as well as the people team. When payroll is closely aligned with these departments, engagement with employees goes up. Ensuring all the departments use the same language and are working towards the same goals has become a core function of the payroll department," concludes Helling.

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**For more information on SAPA please visit:**

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