



SUCCESS STORY

Criterion Helps Electric Cooperative Get Current on Human Capital Management



INDUSTRY

Energy Solutions

ABOUT

Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative, Inc., (CHELCO) is a not-for-profit electric distribution cooperative employing more than 150 people and serving more than 53,000 accounts in Walton, Okaloosa, Holmes and Santa Rosa counties in the panhandle of Florida.

GOAL

Be aware of human capital management

RESULTS

Criterion has done some customization to fill other unique needs, such as help the co-op move their Paid Time Off data out of their old payroll system and into the new one.

Imagine looking for a robust Human Capital Management system and what would later become one of your favorite features wasn't even on your radar when you started.

That is exactly what happened to Susan Neumans Van Buren and her team at the Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative, Inc., more commonly referred to as CHELCO. Van Buren, Manager of Human Resources and Training, had a lengthy list of features the cooperative was looking for when they had narrowed down a list of six possible vendors to three.

“The Carrier Connect feature was not even something I knew to look for. When Criterion came in for a demonstration they talked about how much easier it makes entering, changing and managing benefits.”

Carrier Connect captures the employee's benefit information such as dependents and plan choices directly from the employee. After a review by an HR generalist, the information can be sent to the benefit providers directly with a click.

CHELCO is a not-for-profit electric distribution cooperative serving three counties in Western Florida. The cooperative owns and maintains over 4,100 miles of power lines, including those on Eglin Air Force Base. With more than 150 people on its payroll, the co-op used a payroll system to maintain HR records as best it could for many years. It was an add-on to a financial information system still in use by the rest of the organization, a suite of programs created specifically for electric utility cooperatives. Now those routine tasks are streamlined, and CHELCO's HR department has time to tend to more important tasks and provide employees better service.

A Different Kind of Operation

Being an electric utility cooperative means CHELCO has some special needs, but they are also in the position of being a defense contractor because of their relationship with Eglin Air Force Base.

“The military has special requirements, such as assigning job title codes for purposes of Equal Employment Opportunity initiatives,” Van Buren said. “Whether EEO or a worker’s comp status, our old payroll system had to be forced to accept a code, tied to an individual, not a job title.” Van Buren said this ability to assign codes to job positions was even absent from many of the new systems they looked at, as well as the ability to customize field names, a much-loved feature of Criterion’s system.

“That’s the way it should be. Now when there is a new hire, the codes go with the position and will automatically populate all the job-specific stuff.”

Criterion has done some customization to fill other unique needs, such as help the co-op move their Paid Time Off data out of their old payroll system and into the new one. Criterion also helped CHELCO get their 1095 reporting system—made more challenging because the cooperative is self-insured through a consortium of electric coops—down to literally a push of a button.

“The first year there were some hiccups,” Van Buren said. “But before it was an ordeal because so much of the process that is now integrated was manual.

Other benefits include a simple process for handling annual increases and capturing relevant information directly from the employee such as change of address, bank, and W4 form updates. The workers compensation activity log allows restricted access but makes it so anyone on her team with that access can find a status very quickly, without any manual logs. Another time-saver was Criterion’s ability to accommodate the co-op’s need to track family disaster plans for each employee that needs to be updated annually.

“Because we live in a hurricane-prone area, we need all hands on deck to restore power after a storm. In their family disaster plan, employees identify their emergency contacts and who will evacuate or care for dependent children or others requiring special care.”

There is a team whose job it is to do minor mitigation for the employee after a disaster, such as board up broken windows, so the employees are free to do the job of restoring power.

“Having that information allows us to know what supplies are required should we need to do these minor interventions,” Van Buren said. “This data used to be all on paper. Criterion has functionality that will pull the data collected and put it in a spreadsheet with a click of a few buttons instead of having to have someone type it up.”