

The PEO Purchasing Guide

Everything You Need To Know About Hiring
A Professional Employer Organization (PEO)





What is a PEO?

PEO stands for **Professional Employer Organization**. A PEO allows business owners to outsource many of the administrative functions associated with human resources (HR), such as payroll, compliance and employee benefits administration.

There are various ways to structure an administrative or HR outsourcing arrangement, and most full-service PEOs can structure their offering to match your needs.

One outsourcing structure unique to PEOs is **co-employment**. In a co-employment relationship, a PEO becomes the employer of record for your workers, assuming much of the responsibilities (and sharing the risks) of your company's complex employment matters while you continue to direct your employees' day-to-day activities.



Why do companies need a PEO?

PEOs provide proven processes and advanced technologies that help growing companies more effectively and efficiently manage their day-to-day HR functions like recruiting, payroll administration and employee benefits. And because PEOs maintain teams of accredited HR experts, they can also handle the more complex HR matters that often confound business owners – things like claims administration and compliance issues.

Some business owners choose to employ a PEO so they can focus more on their core business, others so they can achieve greater operating efficiencies, and still others so they can save money. Companies that use PEOs often realize all of these benefits and more.

Does your business need a PEO?

Find out by asking yourself these questions:

1. Are your employees asking for benefits you can't afford or aren't equipped to administer properly?
2. Are you completely confident your company is in compliance with all local, state and federal employment regulations?
3. Is your employee turnover rate adversely affecting your company's performance?
4. Do you have a dedicated HR department? If so, is your HR department as effective or as efficient as you'd like it to be?
5. Do you have access to integrated technology that allows you to facilitate efficiency during the various stages of the employee lifecycle?
6. Are you paying too much for workers' compensation insurance?
7. How does your organization source new employees? Is your recruitment process as efficient as you would like it to be?
8. How much time does your staff spend manually collecting/entering time and attendance data?

Selecting the right PEO for your business

Selecting a PEO should be a process conducted by engaged decision-makers who understand your company's business goals and know what the business needs from an HR provider.

A steady, slow-growth business may merely want to alleviate some of its administrative burdens. In that case, an a la carte model that allows the company to outsource several select functions, like payroll and benefits administration, and retain others, may be appropriate. On the other hand, a more dynamic, faster-growth business may decide it wants more strategic, comprehensive HR services to support its growth objectives.

What services do PEOs offer?

Decision makers also need to understand the breadth of a PEO's service offering to determine whether or not that firm can help the company achieve its goals and contribute to greater operating efficiencies.

A PEO's service offering will distinguish it from other PEOs. Some PEOs try to commoditize tactical services, while others can deliver strategic services that are both high-tech and high-touch. Knowing the breadth of available services can aid decision makers in selecting the right PEO partner for their business.

Over the next few pages we've outlined a list of services G&A Partners provides to its PEO clients. **Which of these services could help your business operate more efficiently or achieve greater productivity?**

Recruitment

- + Sourcing of candidates
- + Web-based applicant tracking system (ATS)
- + Job description review and classification
- + Job description support
- + Job postings
- + Resume screening based on client criteria
- + Access to pre-hire job assessments, substance abuse testing, background screening and medical exams

Payroll

- + Payroll setup
- + Client training
- + Payroll tax filing
- + Form W-2 & W-4 printing, filing and mailing
- + Direct deposit
- + Payroll processing of weekly/bi-weekly/semi-monthly/monthly payroll cycles
- + PTO, vacation and sick leave accrual
- + Employment verification of current or past employees
- + Online payroll submission
- + Automated standard deductions
- + Standard payroll reporting
- + Garnishment, levy and child support administration
- + New hire reporting
- + Access to integrated time and attendance system



PEO & HR Outsourcing Industry Statistics

Did you know?

The average cost of managing HR and administrative functions "in house" is **\$2,000 per employee, per year.**¹

Organizations that outsource multiple functions to a single vendor (like a PEO) **save an average of 32%**¹ on administering these functions than those using multiple vendors.

Companies using a PEO **grow 7 - 9% faster.**²

PEO clients are **50% less likely to go out of business.**²

Companies using a PEO **experience 23 - 32% less employee turnover.**²

Businesses that use a PEO are **28% more satisfied** with their selection of health care benefits.³

PEO clients are **15% more satisfied with the quality of new hires.**³

¹ "The Hidden Reality of Payroll & HR Administration Costs." PwC. 2011

² "Professional Employer Organizations: Keeping Turnover Low and Survival High." McBassi & Company. 2014

³ "PEO: Taking Outsourcing a Step Beyond Pays Off for Small and Mid-Sized Companies." Aberdeen Group. 2011

Benefits Administration

- + Access to group medical, dental, vision, life, STD, LTD, etc.
- + Access to voluntary benefits
- + Access to employee assistance program
- + Onsite assistance for open enrollment
- + Web-based benefits enrollment tool
- + Adding/deleting employees in carrier system
- + Handling employee calls regarding coverage and claims
- + Reconciling carrier invoices and remitting payments
- + COBRA administration
- + 401(k) plan and administration
- + Section 125 Plan administration
- + PTO tracking

Human Resources

- + HR manager/employee web-based self service portal
- + Customer Care Center (7:30am – 7pm, Mon – Fri)
- + Customized employee handbook
- + Access to electronic new hire onboarding tool
- + Employment practices liability insurance
- + Required worksite postings
- + EEO-1 reports
- + Annual HR audit
- + HR investigations
- + Assistance with employee performance management
- + Web-based employee performance management tool
- + Employee disciplinary support
- + Employee termination support
- + Employee exit interview support
- + Unemployment insurance (UI) claims administration
- + Monthly HR updates/bulletins
- + Access to online/onsite supervisory HR training
- + Web-based eLearning and employee development tool

Risk Management & Safety Services

- + Workers' compensation coverage and claims administration
- + Written accident prevention plan
- + Safety training
- + Onsite safety inspections
- + Post-accident investigations
- + OSHA assistance
- + Safety and risk management consulting services



Setting a budget for PEO services

As with any product or service, the old adage that “you get what you pay for” also holds true for PEOs.

When evaluating price, pay particular attention to the **services that are included**, if the PEO has a **local presence** and what kind of **client experience** they provide in terms of customer service and engagement. There should always be a fair correlation between value and price.

In most cases PEOs charge in two ways: either a flat per-employee, per-year charge (PEPY), or as a percentage of total payroll (typically between 3-8 percent). A good PEO can charge by either method depending on your requirements and preference.

In both scenarios, the client might also see additional fees because of other value-added offerings such as additional employee benefits, talent management products, HR technology usage and recruitment services.

Still, growing companies often find that the cost of PEO services is less than the cost of hiring one additional full-time employee, and the value of having access to an entire team of HR, benefits and payroll experts makes it a worthwhile investment.

Initiating the buying process

Once you've identified one or more PEOs that are qualified to deliver the services your business needs, you are ready to begin the buying process. Engaging a PEO is a smart move for growing companies, but the process of purchasing services and transitioning your company's HR functions can be daunting. Understanding the steps involved will help make the process run more smoothly for you and the PEO you select as your future business partner.

The PEO buying process generally consists of four steps:

- + Choosing services
- + Gathering information
- + Generating a quote
- + Client onboarding

Choosing services

When deciding which PEO services your company needs, it is important to recognize your organization's own strengths and weaknesses so you can determine precisely which services will best support you and your employees. Knowing your needs, as well as the different services each PEO provides, can help you make a better buying decision.

Here's another tip to keep in mind when selecting services you may want for your business – don't skimp. PEOs may be able to offer you a better price per service if they can group multiple services together at the outset of the engagement, rather than having new services added piecemeal throughout the life of the contract. Certain services, like payroll administration and other critical functions, are also often required in order for a firm to provide PEO services.

Gathering information

When you have narrowed a list of prospective PEOs to the few that can best meet your company's needs, you can request price quotes. To generate accurate quotes, PEOs need to collect considerable information about your company and its business goals. This information-gathering process may seem cumbersome, but providing accurate information during this stage is crucial. When you provide complete and current data, you make it easier for prospective PEOs to understand your specific needs and give you the best, most precise pricing.

To give you a more detailed example, G&A Partners collects the following information from prospective clients:

+ Contact Information and Company Demographics

In addition to general company contact information, G&A asks prospective clients to provide their federal ID number, number of years in business, website addresses, business sectors, number of employees and their locations, SIC codes, NAICS codes, and whether or not they are involved in government contracts.

In addition, we ask that the companies compile a list of people who will be involved in the buying and onboarding processes and their contact information.

+ Accounting

G&A Partners also asks prospective clients to let us know what accounting software platforms they currently use, and whether it allows for the integration of the client's payroll and accounting systems.

+ Workers' Compensation and Risk

Before a quote can be generated, G&A needs to assess a company's exposure to risk and learn about its existing workers' compensation insurance.

Below is an example of a table prospective clients are asked to complete for G&A Partners during the information gathering stage of the buying process. For each job type per state, the company would need to provide a workers' compensation code, a brief description of the job, the number of full-time employees, the number of part-time employees, and the annual wage for the position.

Annual Payroll by Workers' Compensation Classification Code					
STATE	WC CODE	SKILL / JOB DESCRIPTION / GROUP	FT	PT	ANNUAL WAGE
		TOTAL:			

At this point, G&A also asks prospective clients to let us know about any workers' compensation providers they are currently using, how many years they have been with them, what they pay in annual premiums, and what kind of deposit they put down originally. We also ask that prospective clients supply a copy of their current declaration pages, NCCI experience modifier worksheet, and a copy of loss runs for the past three to five years.

Additionally, a PEO may ask prospective clients to complete a questionnaire like the one below to further assess the company's risk exposure and workers' compensation requirements.

1. Is your company engaged in any other type of business?
2. Does your company have a light duty return-to-work program for injured employees?
3. In the past 3 years, has your company had any employment-related lawsuits, grievances, or EEOC claims?
4. Does your company use subcontractors?
5. Does your company have a formal safety program in place?
6. Has your company ever been cited by OSHA, EPA, or the state for violation of a law, regulation, or ordinance?
7. Do you conduct safety meetings?

+ Human Resources

To generate a thorough quote, G&A Partners inquires about the HR initiatives prospective clients currently perform, as well as those they need to put in place in order to improve their productivity.

For example, G&A may ask about a prospective client's hiring methods and whether or not they could benefit from recruiting services. We would also ask if the company has an up-to-date employee handbook, or what written policies are already in place, if any.

For any prospective clients that are already using or have used a PEO in the past, G&A will also ask for the name of their current/previous service provider and the date they initiated that relationship.

+ Payroll

One of the first questions a PEO will ask regarding a prospective client's payroll systems is likely to be, "How do you track your employees' time and attendance?"

Automated tracking of time and attendance is a proven way for companies to more effectively and more accurately generate payroll information. G&A Partners provides its clients with access to its own time and attendance system as part of its service offering, but can also accommodate other systems as well as manual time and attendance records uploaded by the client.

In addition to providing information about their existing payroll software and its requirements, G&A also asks prospective clients to gather W-2 information for the prior two years as well as general payroll information, like gross wages and overtime hours. At this point, we also ask about any changes they client might be making or would like to make in the near future that would require a large number of new employees to be added to the payroll, such as a new office location or an acquisition.

Finally, G&A asks to review prospective clients' last two payroll reports/register AND their state unemployment insurance (UI) tax return.

+ Group Benefits

During the information gathering stage, G&A will also ask about the types of insurance a prospective client currently provides and whether they would like to offer any additional benefits.

Coverage options G&A and other PEOs offer generally include: medical, dental, vision, short-term disability, long-term disability, group life, flexible spending accounts, 401(k) plans and Section 125 accounts. The account representative you're working with should be able to answer any questions you have about employee benefits at this stage.

If a prospective client currently provides insurance for its employees, G&A will ask about their current carrier, how many years they have been with them, their renewal date, current contribution strategy and the premium rates for each of the various plans they offer. This information is often conveniently compiled within a recent group medical invoice and benefit plan summary.

Once all the necessary information previously outlined is gathered and turned over to your prospective PEO, they may still follow up with additional questions to clarify your existing services or future needs as they proceed to generate a detailed price quote.

Generating a quote

Unlike other service providers, the process of generating a quote for PEO services can be quite complex. Because no two companies are exactly alike, every proposal and price quote must be customized to each prospective client. Once a quote has been created, your prospective PEO will present their service proposals and answer any questions you may have to help you understand the nuances of their proposals and their associated pricing.

Most PEOs charge for their services in one of two ways: either as a percentage of total payroll (typically between 3-8 percent), or as a flat per-employee-per-year (PEPY) fee. In both of these cases, the exact price or rate will often depend on what services your company will be receiving from the PEO.

Client onboarding

Once you have selected the best PEO for your company and have executed a CSA (Customer Service Agreement) with your new PEO, you will enter the client onboarding process. Often, this process will begin with a kick-off meeting with the people in your organization who will be involved in the transition to the PEO, as well as members of your assigned account team. During this meeting, you and your account team will outline the transition process, clarify the scope, define goals and establish a process timeline.

Throughout the implementation process, which is often completed based on a 90-day timeline, the transition of your company and its employees to your PEO is watched closely to ensure that all systems are working properly and all the necessary deadlines have been met. As your new PEO systems are being set up, your PEO's subject matter experts will likely engage with you and appropriate members of your team to learn more about your company's payroll, benefits, workers' compensation, workplace safety, and other HR and administrative process to understand your company's current policies and processes in more detail, and identify opportunities where they can increase efficiency or effectiveness.

Once the initial implementation process is finalized and all of the action items you outlined in your initial kick-off meeting have been completed, your account will then be transitioned to your permanent account service team; however, all PEO representatives who assisted in the onboarding process will remain accessible to your company throughout the remainder of your contract.

Final thoughts

Beyond a typical HR outsourcing relationship (often called an administrative services organization or "ASO" relationship), when you engage a Professional Employer Organization (PEO), you gain an HR partner that is truly invested in your company's success and that can provide an added layer of protection and service to your business and its employees.

Throughout the life of your partnership with your PEO, you will have at your disposal all the HR experience, qualifications, and hands-on support your company could possibly need, all for roughly what it would cost to hire just one HR professional.

If your business or organization has made the decision to partner with a PEO, congratulations!

You're well on your way to enjoying **greater operating efficiencies, minimized liabilities, lower overhead costs** and the many other benefits companies that outsource their HR enjoy. But how do you start your search for the perfect PEO for your company?

A great place to start is right here, at **G&A Partners**.

G&A Partners has been a leader in the PEO and HR outsourcing industry for more than 20 years. Unlike other providers that promise more than they can deliver, G&A Partners is a forward-looking HR partner with unrivaled human resources expertise, innovative technology and reliable service that helps business leaders focus more of their time on what matters most: **growing their business**.

Whether you need full-service HR support or help in a few key areas, G&A Partners provides the people, processes and technology you need to grow your business faster and take better care of your employees.

Visit us online or give us a call today to learn more about how G&A Partners' comprehensive HR solutions can help you achieve your business goals and spend less time dealing with human resources, benefits and payroll.

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