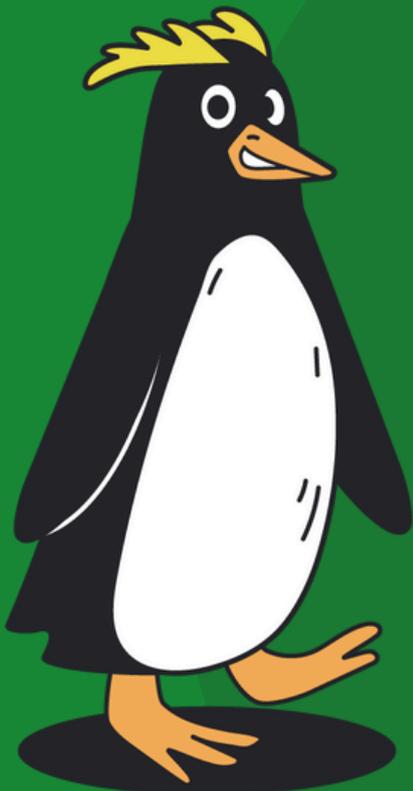


Marlborough Tour Company Case Study

Managing payroll and people
management during peak season



How Marlborough Tour



Company streamlined hiring, onboarding and payroll checks with Smartly.

The challenge: growing fast with processes that didn't scale

As Marlborough's largest tourism operator, Marlborough Tour Company manages a diverse, seasonal workforce across multiple businesses, including Furneaux Lodge, Punga Cove, Cougar Line, Pelorous Mail Boat, Marlborough Tours, Marlborough Sounds Adventure Co and Wilderness Guides.

Like many growing Kiwi businesses, their people processes had evolved organically over time.

- Timesheets were paper-based
- Employee information lived across emails and folders
- Onboarding tasks were handled manually, often via back-and-forth emails

“We thought it was working beforehand...but we were spending a lot of time searching through emails, and things weren't always saved properly.”

When seasonality exposed the cracks

With seasonal hiring patterns that shift between quieter winters and busy summers, the cracks only really showed when volume increased. Tasks ramped up after summer, and important steps were easily missed.

The result was more admin, more double-checking, and less confidence that everything had been done properly.

“It's easy to miss an email. There was a lot of back and forward, both internally and externally.”

Why Smartly

One system that could grow with them

Marlborough Tour Company moved to Smartly as part of a broader effort to modernise and streamline how the business operated as it grew.

The appeal was simple:

- One system for payroll and people management
- An app their team could actually use
- Less admin, fewer emails, more visibility

As seasonal recruitment increased, hiring and onboarding quickly became a key focus.

“We went to Smartly because we’re a growing company. We wanted to get rid of paper timesheets, streamline things, and have everything in one place.”

The solution: Smartly’s People Management

By using Smartly’s People Management platform, Marlborough Tour Company moved into a clear, structured way of managing hiring, onboarding and payroll checks as they scaled.

Instead of relying on memory or long email threads, key people processes now live in one place, connected directly to payroll.

A clear hiring and onboarding workflow

Using Smartly’s Hiring and Onboarding functionality, they’ve been able to replace manual processes with a structured workflow that supports them from candidate through to new hire.

- Onboarding steps are clearly assigned and tracked, nothing slips through the cracks, and payroll setup aligns naturally with onboarding.
- The Task section became central to how the team works day to day and is used alongside pay runs as a practical double check.

This shift has reduced reliance on inboxes and made it easier to see what is done, what is outstanding, and what needs attention before payroll runs.

Clear ownership across teams and roles

Running multiple businesses and roles meant access control was critical. The team uses Manage Access to control who can see and do what, helping ensure the right people have access to the right information across the organisation. This clarity supports accountability and reduces risk as staff numbers change throughout the year.

Better visibility, better compliance, more confidence

Smartly's Company Files and Reports added another layer of confidence.

With Company Files, it is easy to see which staff have received key documents and who has not acknowledged them yet, without chasing or guessing. Reporting then provides regular sense checks across the business, covering fixed term end dates, health and safety requirements, timesheets still in draft, and payroll readiness.

For a business with fluctuating staff numbers and compliance obligations, this visibility has been a game changer.

The impact

Less admin, fewer risks and confidence during peak season

By bringing their people operations admin and payroll together in Smartly, Marlborough Tour Company has reduced time spent searching emails and files, cut down internal and external back and forth, and improved confidence that onboarding and payroll are done properly.

With clearer workflows and better visibility across hiring, onboarding, and payroll checks, day to day people processes are easier to manage, even as staff numbers fluctuate throughout the year. This has reduced reliance on manual follow ups and helped the business stay on top of key requirements during busy periods.

Most importantly, they now feel in control, even during peak season, with the reassurance that their people processes are supported as the business continues to scale.

Why this matters for other New Zealand businesses

For tourism, hospitality, and other seasonal employers, Marlborough Tour Company's experience is a familiar one.

As teams grow and hiring ramps up at certain times of the year, manual people processes can quickly become harder to manage. Information ends up spread across emails and folders, important steps are easier to miss, and the pressure increases around payroll and compliance.

Smartly's People Management tools provide a practical way to bring structure and visibility to these processes, without adding complexity. By keeping hiring, onboarding, and payroll checks connected in one place, businesses can stay on top of key requirements, even as staff numbers change.

In their words

“Smartly gives us a clear, trackable way to manage people as we grow – especially when things get busy. It’s taken a lot of the stress out of hiring, onboarding and payroll checks.”



About Marlborough Tour Company

Marlborough Tour Company is Marlborough’s largest tourism operator, offering a diverse range of experiences that showcase the very best of the region. Their family of businesses includes Furneaux Lodge, Punga Cove, Cougar Line, Pelorous Mail Boat, Marlborough Tours, Marlborough Sounds Adventure Co and Wilderness Guides.

With a strong focus on exceptional customer service, their biggest asset is their people – friendly, focused teams who go the extra mile for every guest.



Ready to simplify payroll and people management?

If managing hiring, onboarding, and payroll feels harder as your business grows, Smartly can help bring everything together in one place.

See how Smartly supports growing New Zealand businesses with payroll and people management that scales with them.

To [book in a demo](#), email us at solutions@smartly.co.nz or call us on 0800 101 038