

Bolt

A managed global payroll services case study featuring Papaya Global.



About Bolt

Bolt is a leading mobility 'super-app' offering ride-hailing, e-scooter services, carsharing, and food delivery across more than 50 countries and over 600 cities. Headquartered in Tallinn, Estonia, Bolt employs approximately 4,500 people across 53 countries and continues to expand rapidly into new markets, including North America, Central and Southeast Asia. As a highly regulated technology company, Bolt requires operational licenses to function in each market, making payroll compliance and accuracy mission-critical to its ability to grow and maintain its business presence.

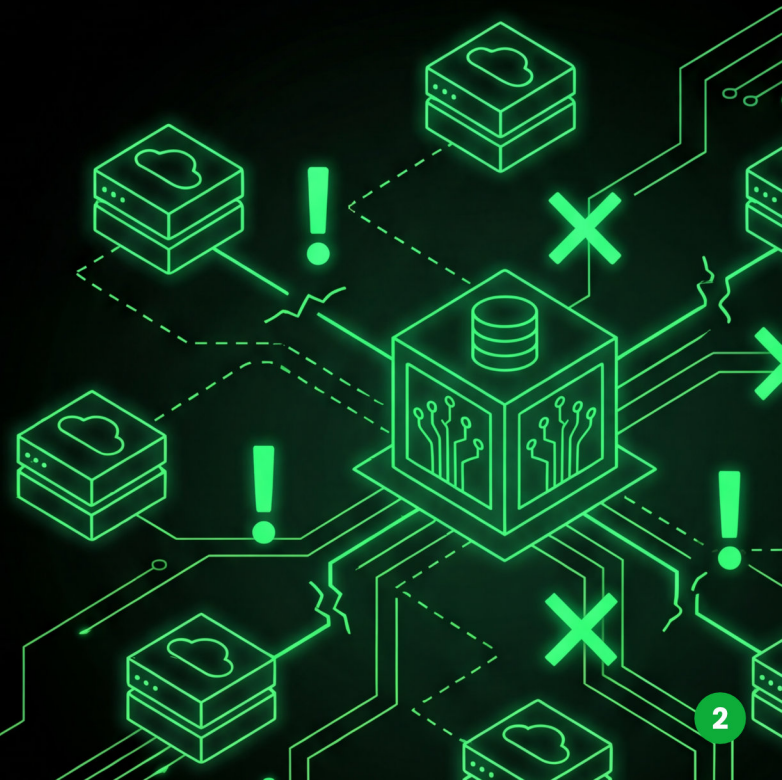
Challenges

When Bolt went to market for a new global payroll solution in late 2024, its global payroll operation was under significant strain. The delivery model was fragmented, inefficient, and lacked modernization to support Bolt's growth plans.

The incumbent provider was costly and fell short of Bolt's expectations for proactive service delivery, advisory services, and continuous process improvement. Multiple handoffs, knowledge gaps, and capability shortfalls among in-country resources led to tax filing errors, underpayment of taxes, late filings, and compliance penalties. For a company operating in a highly regulated industry, where payroll missteps could directly jeopardize its operating licenses, Bolt needed to run its fleet and apps in each market, which posed a material risk to the business and its growth trajectory.

Internally, Bolt's retained payroll team of 16 FTEs was stretched across a complex operation and a fragmented provider stack. Bolt was running its largest payroll in Estonia on an in-house system while relying on several local accounting firms in newer, long-tail markets. The integration between Workday, its core HR technology globally, and its providers required extensive manual intervention and data-quality issues, including outdated records, blank fields, and unconfigured integration mappings, further compounding the operational burden.

Adding urgency to its decision to make a transformative change was a hard contract exit deadline: Bolt needed to fully migrate all in-scope payrolls to a new provider by October 31, 2025, or face a costly one-year extension with the incumbent provider. With implementation kicking off in February 2025, the team had roughly eight months to scope, configure, test, and go live across more than 40 countries, a timeline most in the industry would consider very aggressive. It was a challenge Bolt had to meet, and it turned to Papaya Global to help.



Solution

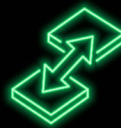
Bolt selected Papaya Global to consolidate, modernize, and manage its global payroll operations, replacing a fragmented provider landscape with a unified platform and scalable, modern managed services model. Papaya's solution now spans over 50 countries across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and North America, and is integrated directly with Bolt's Workday HCM investment through the Papaya OneData Connector.

The engagement also extends beyond core payroll, with Papaya's in-country partner (ICP) network delivering HR compliance services in long-tail locations where Bolt cannot cost-effectively maintain local staff. A value-added extension of its global payroll relationship covering statutory filings, employee registrations, and regulatory reporting.

Key elements of the Papaya solution



Deployed Papaya's Workforce OS global payroll platform for a single source of truth and control for payroll data, processing, and reporting worldwide.



The Papaya OneData Connector enabled automated bi-directional data flow between Workday HCM and other data sources and Papaya's global payroll platform.



Managed payroll services and localized compliance support for approximately 4,500 employees across 50+ countries.



Cross-border payments and FX through Papaya's wallet solution, covering approximately 90% of Bolt's country footprint.



A flexible, scalable, compliant, and resilient payroll operating model designed to support Bolt's rapid expansion, new market entry, and evolving workforce needs.

Bolt by the numbers

- 50+ Countries
- 4,500 employees paid globally
- ~50% reduction in payroll operating costs
- 37.5% FTE reduction and reallocation
- 8 month migration.

Impact:



Delivered a successful migration of 4 countries, meeting the aggressive October 31st deadline and avoiding a costly one-year contract extension with the prior provider.



Eliminated compliance penalties, interest charges from late tax payments, and incorrect filings that had been recurring under the prior provider.



Reduced retained payroll FTEs from 16 to ~10, a 37.5% reduction, freeing the teams skilled resources to focus on value-added activities like reporting, business insights, tax optimization, and ongoing process improvement.



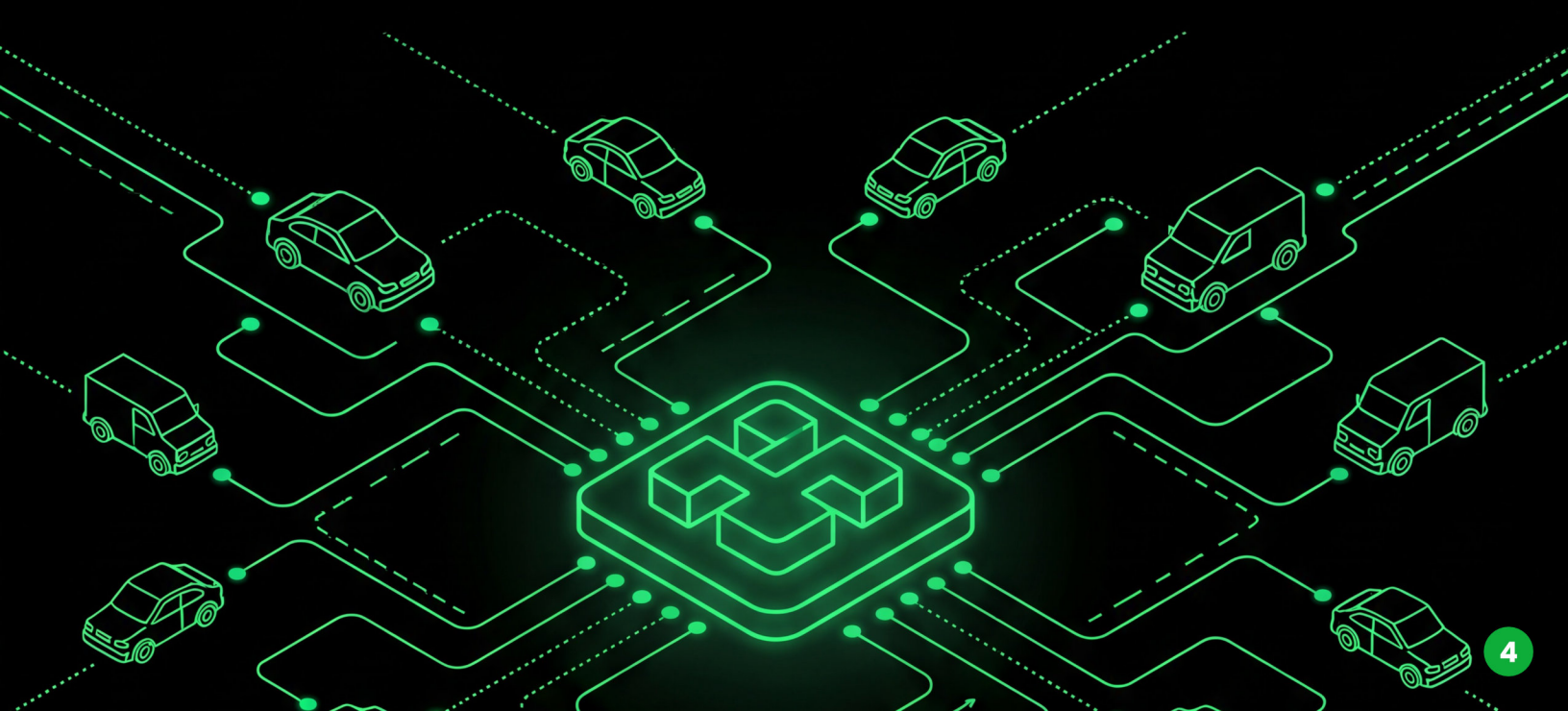
Unlocked new tax savings by leveraging freed-up team capacity to research and capitalize on country-specific tax incentives, such as R&D related tax credits in Romania.



Reduced total payroll operating costs by nearly 50% through lower processing fees and a leaner, more efficient retained team.



Consolidated a fragmented, multi-vendor payroll landscape into a single unified platform partner and scalable operating model, enabling consistent, compliant processing and reporting across all countries.



Why Papaya Global?



A total global payroll solution providing real-time visibility, process consistency, and harmonized reporting across all 50+ countries, enabling Bolt's leadership to compare regions, monitor operating costs, and make rapid strategic market entry or exit decisions.



A flexible, scalable, and resilient operating model that grows with Bolt, including the ability to rapidly onboard new countries and source local partners to match Bolt's expansion pace.



A true partnership approach with senior leadership engagement, proactive advisory on process improvement, and the willingness to accommodate Bolt's unique, fast-moving requirements rather than a rigid one-size-fits-all operating model.



Competitive pricing at approximately half the cost of the prior provider, combined with a broader service scope covering payments, HR compliance, and payroll processing.



The Papaya OneData Connector integration enables a streamlined, automated data flow from Workday HCM, reducing manual payroll intervention.



Local compliance expertise through Papaya's in-country partner network, extended beyond standard payroll to cover HR-related statutory requirements in long-tail markets, ensuring compliance and reducing the need for costly local staffing.

Looking Ahead

The partnership between Bolt and Papaya Global continues to mature and expand. Key priorities include migrating remaining countries, including Bolt's largest payroll in Estonia, onto the Papaya platform, expanding Papaya OneData Connector integrations across all countries, and rolling out Papaya's payment solution to additional markets as wallet coverage grows. Bolt is also focused on continuous process improvement, strengthening internal process adherence, and further maturing its retained shared services operating model to maximize the efficiency and value of the partnership and enable its strategic growth plans.



About Papaya Global

Papaya Global provides an AI-powered global workforce management platform that enables enterprises to hire, manage, and pay employees, EOR and contractors anywhere in the world through a single unified system. The platform brings together global payroll, workforce management, compliance, and embedded cross-border payments across 180+ countries.

At the core of the platform is Papaya's AI-driven compliance engine, which continuously monitors regulatory changes worldwide and leverages a proprietary global knowledge base to help organizations stay compliant as they scale. This AI-powered monitoring automates complex compliance processes, reduces risk, and ensures that workforce operations remain aligned with evolving local labor and tax regulations.

Papaya also embeds global payments directly into the payroll workflow, enabling real-time and automated workforce payments through a fully integrated infrastructure. By combining payroll, compliance intelligence, and embedded payments into a single platform, Papaya Global provides enterprises with the visibility, automation, and scalability required to support global workforce growth.

About Pete A. Tiliakos:



Pete is globally recognized for his extensive knowledge, coverage, research, and advisory in the payroll, employer-of-record services, payments, and HCM technology markets. Both practitioners and providers widely leverage his research and thought leadership, as he regularly contributes to industry publications, associations, and events. Pete is the co-creator and co-host of the HR and Payroll 2.0 podcast and host of The Source by DailyPay podcast.

About Payroll Influences:



Payroll is not just a process - it's a crucial component of human capital management that influences and enables strategic outcomes, organizational agility, employee engagement, and financial wellness. Our mission is to provide THE premier ecosystem to unite the world's most essential professionals through a community of like-minded leaders eager to explore, share, learn, and advance as payroll executives. Founded, curated, and led by payroll and for payroll, Pi is the world's first virtual ecosystem dedicated to fostering a deeper understanding of the critical payroll profession and empowering its current and future leaders to shape its next chapter.

