



Case Study:
**Brooklyn Urban Garden
Charter School's Switch from
a Big-Box PEO to ExtensisHR**

Background and Challenge

[Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School \(BUGS\)](#), a progressive charter school focused on real-world problem solving and the exploration of environmental, social, and economic sustainability, had partnered with a big-box professional employer organization (PEO) for HR services since its opening in 2013.

While this big-box PEO provided a framework for payroll and HR management, the BUGS leadership team sought a solution that could better support their unique needs, prioritizing responsiveness, personalized service, and transparency.

“We felt like a small fish in a big pond,” said Cay Tolson, Director of Operations at BUGS. “In times of urgent HR situations, our concerns wouldn’t always be addressed promptly. It often felt like we were chasing them for answers, which was not only frustrating but also impacted our ability to operate effectively. And while our HR Managers were qualified, frequent turnover in other areas led to a lack of consistency, which was crucial for us.”

This sentiment was echoed across the board, with many in the school’s administration feeling underserved. The need for a PEO that could offer a higher level of customer support for BUGS became increasingly apparent.

Cay played a pivotal role in steering the institution towards exploring new PEO options. She was determined to find a solution that aligned with their values and operational requirements.

“The lack of personalized attention and responsiveness combined with a one-size-fits-all approach was not suitable for us. This experience was a wake-up call, highlighting the importance of a PEO that prioritizes customer service and understands the nuances of a school setting,” said Cay.





The Search for a New Partner

Recognizing the importance of expert guidance, Cay leveraged a benefits consultant to navigate the complex PEO landscape. The consultant's shortlist included several reputable PEOs, with ExtensisHR highlighted for its customer service and solutions tailored to educational institutions.

The school's administrative team embarked on a comprehensive evaluation of 3-4 different PEOs, delving into each organization's offerings, customer service reputation, and alignment with the school's criteria. Throughout this process, ExtensisHR consistently stood out, not just for the breadth of its services, but for its exceptional customer support ethos.

The phrase "We are here for you, and we will help you get the answer you need" resonated deeply with the school's leadership, signaling ExtensisHR's commitment to being more than just a service provider. The charter school sought a PEO that was willing to 'jump in with both feet' and provide dedicated support, understanding the challenges and opportunities for BUGS. ExtensisHR demonstrated a genuine interest in the school's mission and worked collaboratively toward achieving its goals.

"ExtensisHR immediately stood out to us with their responsiveness and the way they valued our partnership. They were quick to turn around with questions, and there was complete consistency in their communication," Cay remarked. The school felt that ExtensisHR sincerely understood their priorities and was prepared to address them head-on.



The Decision to Switch

After careful consideration, BUGS decided to switch its PEO services to ExtensisHR. Ultimately, the choice to partner with ExtensisHR stemmed from a sense of true partnership and unwavering customer support.

The decision was driven by ExtensisHR's reputation for unparalleled customer service, ability to 'think outside the big-box,' and approach to transparency. The way ExtensisHR emphasized partnership was particularly appealing to BUGS, a small organization with a tight-knit community.

The school was not looking for a vendor but a partner—a partner willing to invest time, resources, and expertise to support the school's mission. ExtensisHR's commitment to being there for BUGS, ready to assist with any hurdle and provide tailored solutions, sealed the deal.

“Finally moving on from a big-box PEO to ExtensisHR was pivotal for us at BUGS. We needed a provider that not only offered robust HR solutions, but truly understood our school and staff,” Cay added. “We believe ExtensisHR genuinely cares for our people’s well-being.”



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Positive Outcomes

“Our experience with ExtensisHR has been nothing short of remarkable. ‘I can’t sing their praises loud enough,’ is how I’d describe our relationship,” remarked Leah Miles, People Operations Manager. “Every interaction, every contact with their team reaffirms their mindset and approach. They bring an amazing level of calm to the fast-paced environment of our school, always providing quick turnarounds to our time-sensitive questions. It’s this level of service and understanding that has made ExtensisHR not just a provider, but a valued partner in our educational mission.”



- Outstanding Customer Support:** BUGS benefited immensely from ExtensisHR’s customer service. Any time the school had an HR-related issue or query, the response from ExtensisHR was prompt, caring, and thorough. This level of support not only solved immediate problems but also built a strong trust and reliance between the school and ExtensisHR, ensuring a stable and supportive partnership.

- Focus on People:** One of the most significant impacts was the enhanced focus on people—both staff and students. By taking over cumbersome administrative HR tasks, ExtensisHR allowed the school’s educators and administrators to concentrate on their primary goal: enriching student learning and experience. This people-first approach fostered a more positive school culture, where staff felt valued, leading to students receiving better educational support.

- Understanding of the Charter School Sector:** ExtensisHR’s deep knowledge of the challenges and intricacies of the charter school environment set it apart from other PEOs. This insight enabled them to offer relevant advice and solutions, particularly in areas like regulatory compliance and staff training and development. The BUGS team is pleased that ExtensisHR continues to expand services and programs specifically tailored to charter schools.

- Customized HR Solutions:** ExtensisHR provided BUGS with HR solutions that perfectly aligned with the school’s requirements and educational programs. This significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of its HR processes, including training, compliance, and managing labor laws like the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Leave of Absence (LOA). Teachers and staff found that the ExtensisHR team was more responsive, leading to a smoother overall process.

“ExtensisHR’s hands-on approach gave BUGS the confidence that our HR needs would be handled efficiently and effectively. They have been extremely helpful with managing FMLA and LOA, among other HR complexities, something we struggled with before,” added Leah.





Conclusion

Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School's decision to leave a big-box PEO for ExtensisHR was driven by the need for more responsive, personalized, and transparent HR services. This transition alleviated previous pain-points and enhanced the school's operational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and focus on educational excellence.

With customized HR solutions, world-class customer service, and a partnership that values the school's time, mission, and people, BUGS is now in a stronger position to focus on its core objective of providing innovative and inclusive education.

"This switch wasn't just about changing service providers; it was about partnering with a team that aligned with our values and was dedicated to helping us nurture an environment where educators and students succeed," concluded Cay. "ExtensisHR has been a game-changer for us, providing the support and expertise to help BUGS fulfill our obligation to educate our students for a sustainable, fairer, and greener future where all living systems can thrive."

To learn more about how ExtensisHR supports charter schools, visit

extensishr.com/charter-schools
or call us at 888-473-6398.

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