App playbook series

Retail and ecommerce app playbook

How to advise your clients on selecting the right apps to use with Xero

Contents

Cover image: Sara Quilter, Tailor Skincare, New Zealand | Xero customer
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Who the retail and ecommerce industry apps are for

All retailers, whether consumer or B2B-focused, employ at least one of the following retail channels and most use several:

Physical retail store

A physical 'bricks-and-mortar' store

Wholesale

A physical warehouse

Online retailers

A retailer with an online presence only

Omni-channel retailer

A retailer operating through multiple retail channels

Understanding
your client's business

Build a business profile

The first step in recommending the right apps to clients in the retail and ecommerce industry is to learn more about their business.

We suggest building a profile that covers the following areas;

Goal	What is the business trying to achieve over the short and long-term? Do they want to increase efficiency, grow their business, or both?
Pain points	Is your client looking to address specific problems within their business?
Financial health	Assess the current financial health of the business, if you don't already know.
Number of employees	How many employees do they have? Are they looking to grow their employee numbers or stay the same?
Retail type	What retail channels do they have? A single store or multiple stores? Online only, or multi-channel?
Current tools	Which version of Xero do they use? What apps, if any, are they using in their business today?
Technology proficiency	How experienced are they and their team with using apps and other software?

What apps retail and ecommerce clients need

Once you understand your client's business, you can work out which app stack is right for them.

All retail clients will need similar types of apps to support their operations, but the sales performance apps will vary depending on the marketing channels they use.

		Physical store/ wholesaler	Online retailer (ecommerce only)	Omni-channel retailer
Retail sales preformance app types	Xero Business Edition	✔	✔	✔
	Onsite ecommerce		✔	✔
	Marketplace ecommerce (eg, Amazon, eBay, Etsy)		✔	✔
	Payments	✔	✔	✔
	POS & retail management	✔		✔
Retail operational performance app types	Inventory management	✔	✔	✔
	Bill & expense management	✔	✔	✔
	Payroll, scheduling & HR	✔	✔	✔

Nubian Skin | Xero customer

Selecting specific apps

Once you've worked out what types of app your client needs, you'll need to assess which specific app is most suitable for them.

Client needs	Questions to consider when assessing an app
Training and support to use the app effectively	What support is available and where is it located? Is it on-demand or in-person?
Multiple users need access to the app	How many users are included in the licencing? What are the costs for additional users or licences?
Complex business requirements, eg, many products or multiple locations	Does the app have limits on the number of products, suppliers or locations? How easy is it to create additional products? Can it manage locations in different countries, eg, different currencies?
The app needs to be used on the go	Is there a mobile or tablet app? What functionality is included in the mobile app, eg, deleting? Is it just the basics or does it provide full functionality?
Insights into key metrics and reporting	Does the app have a dashboard showing key metrics? Is the dashboard customisable? What reporting is included? Can bespoke reports be created?
Integration with other apps	Does the app integrate with other retail apps? How complex is it to set up the integration?

Cheat sheets

for each functional area

Point of sale (POS)

Mastering point of sale (POS)

Use the client scenarios below and the corresponding recommendations and benefits to ensure your client gets the most value out of using Xero-integrated apps.

Client scenario 1

POS system is outdated and/or doesn't integrate with other technologies, meaning manual data input is required.

Recommendation

Explain the benefits of moving to a Xero-integrated POS system to your client. Ensure it integrates with your client's payment system, and their ecommerce system too if they have one.

A POS system may be all your client needs to manage inventory, but it's worth considering whether a specialist inventory app would be worth integrating with.

Benefits

- Increased data accuracy.

- Decreased manual data entry and admin time.

- Greater visibility into all aspects of the business.

Client scenario 2

Client has a limited selection of payment options, or their payment provider is expensive.

Recommendation

Changing or consolidating a client's payment services to a single supplier may improve their profit margins, so shop around to get the best rate.

Make sure your client is offering the payment methods that are right for their customers, including emerging digital technologies like mobile payments and global payment services like Apple Pay.

Benefits

- Reduced payment provider fees.

- Greater customer satisfaction and selling opportunities.

Client scenario 3

Client operates multiple stores and/or plans to expand.

Recommendation

Ensure the POS system allows for planned growth including allowing additional stores in multiple locations.

Benefits

- Easily add stores to the client's POS system as they grow.

- Scale efficiently.

- Greater visibility into all inventory and staff across multiple stores.

Client scenario 4

Client lacks visibility into their customer base, including which customers are the most valuable to the business.

Recommendation

Select a POS system that includes customer relationship management (CRM) functionality, and can be used to understand who the most profitable customers are.

If sophisticated customer relationship management functionality is required, consider integrating with a CRM-specific Xero-integrated app.

Benefits

- View customer insights and their transaction history in one place.

- Categorise customers to highlight those who are most valuable to the business, to reveal where marketing efforts should be focused.

Client scenario 5

Client lacks visibility into their sales performance.

Recommendation

Ensure the POS system integrates with Xero Business Edition so you can view sales data inside the Xero dashboard, eg, daily and weekly sales, COGS and inventory.

Benefits

- Understand what is driving performance and the areas where it can be improved.

The Floral Atelier| Xero customer

POS: comparison of apps

	iZettle	Square	shopify	vend
	iZettle	**Square POS**	**Shopify**	**Vend**
Type and availabilty	POS UK	POS NZ, AU, UK, US, CA	POS NZ, AU, UK, US, CA	POS NZ, AU, UK, US, CA, SA, SGP, HK
Onboarding and support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Phone support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Phone support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Forums	✔ Phone support ✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support
Overview	Ideal for a small retail setup, including those focused on a mobile footprint.	Ideal for a small retail setup, including those focused on a mobile footprint.	Ideal for an ecommerce business that is expanding to a physical presence.	Ideal for a predominantly physical store business.
More information	Find out more about iZettle	Find out more about Square	Find out more about Shopify	Find out more about Vend

		App features			
		iZettle	Square	Shopify	Vend
Store suitability	<3 stores	✔	✔	✔	✔
	3+ stores				✔
	Mobile usage	✔	✔	✔	✔
	eCommerce presence			✔	✔
Payments integration	Credit*	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Debit*	✔	✔	✔	✔
	NFC	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Apple Pay	✔	✔	✔	✔
	PayPal			✔	✔
Customer relationship management	Customer database		✔	✔	✔
	Loyalty and gift card		✔	✔	✔
	Marketing tool integration		✔	✔	✔
Inventory	Inventory management functionality	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Integration with specialist inventory items		✔	✔	✔
Reporting and financial visibility	Sales feed: income displays in Xero	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Invoice feed: amounts display in Xero				✔
	COGS feed: cost displays in Xero				✔
	Point-of-sale reporting (including staff & inventory)	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Advanced point-of-sale reporting				✔

Choice of profiled apps based on Xero App Store data on the volume of connections to Xero, supported by the strength and number of community reviews.

*Available at additional charge

Payment services: comparison of apps

	PayPal	**Stripe**	**GoCardless**
	Paypal	Stripe	GoCardless
Availability	See availability here	See availability here	UK, AU, NZ
Onboarding and support	✔ Set up direct from Xero invoice ✔ Online help centre ✔ Phone support	✔ Set up direct from Xero invoice ✔ Online help centre ✔ Phone support (24/7)	✔ Set up direct from Xero invoice ✔ Online help centre ✔ Phone support
Overview	Accept wallet-to-wallet payments as well as credit and debit cards	Accept credit and debit card payments as well as other online payments such as Apple Pay	Get your invoices paid automatically via direct debit with GoCardless
More information	Find out more about PayPal	Find out more about Stripe	Find out more about GoCardless

	PayPal	Stripe	GoCardless
Invoice 'pay now'	✔	✔	✔
Debit card	✔	✔	
Credit card	✔	✔	
ACH^		✔	
Direct debit			✔
Bank account	✔		✔
Paypal account	✔		
Apple Pay		✔	
Create client surcharge*		✔	
Currency options	✔ All major global currencies**	✔ All major global currencies**	✔ GBP, EUR, AUD, NZD
Create standalone fee account in Xero	✔	✔	✔
Auto match for reconciliation with Xero	✔	✔	✔

* Not available in UK and US / ** Check with provider for full list / ^ ACH only

eCommerce

Running an ecommerce store

Use the client scenarios below and the corresponding recommendations and benefits to ensure your client gets the most value out of using Xero-integrated apps.

Client scenario 1

Client has no website, a website with limited functionality, and/or they are unable to measure the success of their online store.

Recommendation

Many ecommerce apps include everything needed to get started – designing, building and hosting a website plus reporting and analytics. If clients already have a website, they'll need an app that includes a website migration tool, eg, Shopify or BigCommerce.

Benefits

- Quick, easy, cost-effective way to create an online store without engaging someone to build it.

- Integration with Xero so data is accurate and synced between systems.

- Reporting dashboards and analytics let you see how the business is performing.

Client scenario 2

Client is spending too much time manually inputting line item information from payments made via ecommerce marketplaces such as Amazon.

Recommendation

The large marketplaces often pay periodically in one bulk payment, rather than for each sale. A specialist marketplace ecommerce app can fetch settlement transactions and post summarised transactions to Xero, helping reconcile transactions every time your client gets paid. They also make it easier to manage multiple tax regions and financial periods.

Benefits

- Improve cash flow management.

- Reduce time spent manually inputting and reconciling transactions.

- Improve data quality and reporting through automation.

Client scenario 3

Client has too much or too little stock on hand, and/or they don't have a view of the stock available across all channels (eg, physical store and online).

Recommendation

Make sure the integration between your client's website and inventory management system syncs in real time across channels.

For smaller retailers, the inventory feature within an ecommerce app may be all they need. For retailers with thousands of products, explore using one of the specialist inventory management systems listed in Xero App Store.

Benefits

- Reduce time spent manually inputting transactions.

- Optimise stock levels.

- Provide a better customer experience.

eCommerce: comparison of apps

	Shopify	BigCommerce	Dear Inventory	A2X
Type and availabilty	eCommerce US, CA, AU, NZ, UK	eCommerce US, CA, AU, NZ, UK, EMEA	Inventory US, CA, AU, NZ, UK, EMEA	Payout reconciliation, eCommerce (Amazon and Shopify) US, CA, AU, NZ, UK, EMEA
Onboarding and support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Forums	✔ Email support ✔ Online help centre ✔ Live chat ✔ Email support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Forum ✔ Schedule support call online	✔ Online help centre ✔ Forum
Overview	An ecommerce platform to host and develop an ecommerce presence, whilst seamlessly integrating with the rest of the business, from payments to inventory and accounting.	An ecommerce platform to host and develop an ecommerce presence, whilst seamlessly integrating with the rest of the business, from payments to inventory and accounting.	A specialised inventory solution for ecommerce-focused businesses, both onsite and marketplace, such as Amazon sellers.	A2X is an automated cloud-based service used by Amazon merchants and Shopify stores to import their sales and fee transactions and to post summarised transactions to Xero.
More information	Find out more about Shopify	Find out more about BigCommerce	Find out more about Dear Inventory	Find out more about A2X

		App features			
		Shopify	**BigCommerce**	**Dear Inventory**	**A2X**
Onsite	Website builder (including design)	✔	✔		
	Website migration	✔	✔		
	SEO tools	✔	✔		
	Customer database integration – POS	✔	✔	✔	
	Inventory features	✔	✔	✔	
	Advanced inventory features			✔	
	Specialist inventory integration	✔	✔	✔	
	Leading payment providers	✔	✔	✔	
	COGS integration			✔	
	Syncs sales with Xero income	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Integrates with Xero Expenses				
	Online sales performance reporting	✔	✔		
Marketplace	Web listing integration	✔	✔	✔	
	Inventory integration			✔	
	Revenue management – single platform				✔

Choice of profiled apps based on Xero App Store data on the volume of connections to Xero, supported by the strength and number of community reviews.
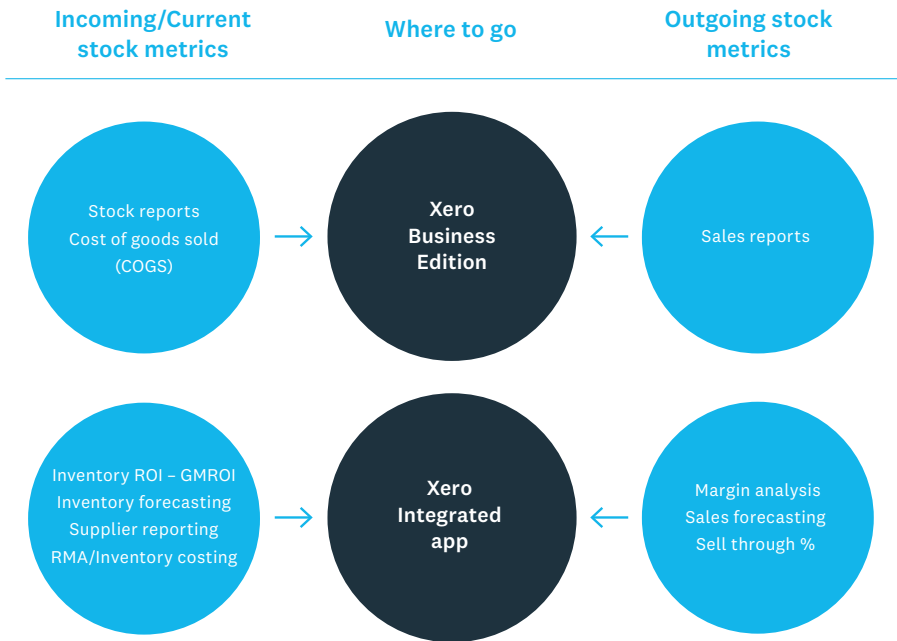
Inventory costs
and COGS

# Inventory reporting and visibility

Xero works seamlessly with inventory providers to translate inventory management to the balance sheet and to the profit and loss report.

This information can be used to set a financial goal or target, but creating a plan for improvement requires a greater level of detail to understand what drives performance. Using the Xero dashboard and integrated apps, you'll be able to create a detailed action plan for your customers.

Incoming/Current stock metrics	Where to go	Outgoing stock metrics
Stock reports Cost of goods sold (COGS)	→ **Xero Business Edition** ←	Sales reports
Inventory ROI – GMROI Inventory forecasting Supplier reporting RMA/Inventory costing	→ **Xero Integrated app** ←	Margin analysis Sales forecasting Sell through %

When you're selecting an app for a client:

- make sure the app you choose integrates into the Xero dashboard
- check that its reporting capability allows you to easily drill down into performance drivers
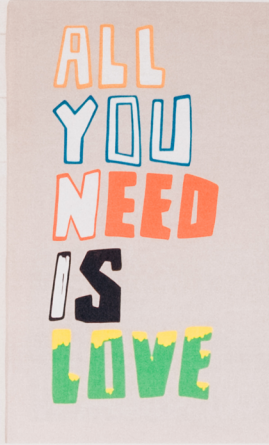
Invoice and expense management

Managing bills and expenses

If you're responsible for activities like processing bills, then it's worth reviewing how you and your clients work together using Xero and apps that connect to it.

It could be that it's more efficient if the client enters certain information. If it will improve cash flow and if that's how you frame the conversation, they may see it as worthwhile.

Client scenario 1

Client's purchase order policy or process not being followed or doesn't exist. Managing bills and payments is inefficient. Bills are paid late and a lot of time is spent on bill administration.

Recommendation

Make sure your client knows how to create purchase orders and is clear about how to manage accounts payable with Xero Business Edition.

For clients with a high volume of bills, investigate Xero-integrated billing automation apps. See the bill automation comparison matrix to find the right one.

Benefits

- Simplify the purchase order process.

- Keep control of purchase orders.

- Save time and effort managing bills, including scheduled and batch payments.

- Bills get paid on time, reducing late payment fees and improving supplier relations.

- Currency exchange may be taken care of automatically.

Client scenario 2

Client's expense claims policy or process is not being followed or doesn't exist. Managing expenses is a lengthy process and takes away from revenue generating activities.

Recommendation

Use Xero Expenses or a Xero-integrated app to automate your expense management process. See the expense automation comparison matrix to find the right solution.

Benefits

- Remove the need for individual submissions: automatically import expenses incurred on personal or company cards.

- Remove the need to enter expense information manually with automatic data extraction.

- Make it easy for staff to upload expenses using the mobile app.

- Remove approvals of every transaction: automatically flag expenses that require approval.

- Integrate with leading travel service providers for a seamless employee experience and compliance with travel policies.

Inventory: comparison of apps

When you're thinking about what type of inventory app meets your client's needs, consider where they focus most of their time and resources, what retail channel generates most of their revenue, and what customer and product types they focus on.

		Xero	Vend	Unleashed	Dear Inventory
Retail channel	Physical store	✔	✔		✔
	eCommerce store	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Marketplace ecommerce	✔		✔	✔
Product focus	Manufacturing	✔		✔	✔
	Wholesale	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Distribution	✔		✔	✔
	General retail	✔	✔		✔
	Food & drink	✔		✔	✔
	Health	✔		✔	✔

✔	Suitable for light usage
✔	Suitable if this is the main focus of the business
✔	Maybe suitable but not designed specifically for this use

Bill automation: comparison of apps

	Xero	Hubdoc	Dext Prepare	AutoEntry	Datamolino	ApprovalMax
Type and availabilty	Online accounting Available worldwide	Bill automation AU, UK, IRE, US, CA, SA, SGP, HK	Bill & expense automation NZ, AU, UK, IRE, US, CA, SA, SGP, HK	Bill automation NZ, AU, UK, IRE, US, CA, SA, SGP, HK	Bill automation AU, UK, IRE, US, CA, SA, SGP, HK	Approval management AU, NZ, US, CA, UK, IRE, SA, HK, SGP
Onboarding and support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Phone support ✔ Video tutorials	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Phone support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Phone support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Phone support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Phone support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available
Overview	Brings all data together in one place. Includes invoice entry and automated integration with leading automation providers.	Works across cloud storage and mobile devices. Imports scanned documents.	Works across cloud storage, mobile devices and even physical invoices to bring fully automated invoice uploads into Xero, including a live feed to Xero HQ.	Automates invoice extraction to Xero using a mobile phone, email or scanning.	Works across mobile devices. Imports scanned documents.	Advanced spend control and approval workflows.
More information	Find out more about Xero	Find out more about Hubdoc	Find out more about Dext Prepare	Find out more about AutoEntry	Find out more about Datamolino	Find out more about ApprovalMax

		App features					
		Xero	Hubdoc	Dext Prepare	AutoEntry	Datamolino	ApprovalMax
Submit	Send documents to Xero	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	View side by side in Xero	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Send data directly to Xero	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Email submission to Xero	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Automatically submit documents to Xero		✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Source bills directly from common suppliers		✔	✔			
	Source bills directly from bank statements	✔	✔	✔			
	PDF	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Other files***		✔	✔	✔	✔	
Extract	Line item extraction*		✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Advanced line item extraction**	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Auto currency exchange	✔		✔	✔	✔	
Practice management	Single approval workflow	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Auto-locate bank statement information		✔	✔			
	Bespoke payment approval process						✔
	Client communication			✔ ^			
	HQ Integration	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Auto archive		✔	✔	✔	✔	

		App features					
		Xero	Hubdoc	Dext Prepare	AutoEntry	Datamolino	ApprovalMax
Practice management	Auto archive to leading storage providers		✔	✔			
	Archive reporting	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Team efficiency/workload analysis			✔ ^			
Client management	Create and approve purchase orders	✔					✔
	Purchase order sync	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
	Mobile application	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
	Submit and upload bills on the move	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
	Submit and review purchase orders on the move						✔
	Submission reminders			✔			✔
	Bespoke approval processes (multi-step, multi-approval)						✔
	Exception handling (delegation, forced approval)						✔
	Fraud detection policy management						✔

*   Basic line item extraction includes total, date and supplier

**   Advanced line item extraction includes additional information.

***   Other files include scanned paper documents, PDFs, and photos sent through email (including HTML receipts), web, or app

^   Available on selected plans only

Expense automation: comparison of apps

	Xero Expenses	Expensify
Type and availabilty	Expense claims and management within Xero Available worldwide	Expense management NZ, AU, UK, US, CA, SA, SGP, HK
Onboarding and support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available
Overview	Easily track, claim and manage expenses.	Fully automate expense approvals, including mileage.
More information	Find out more about Xero Expenses	Find out more about Expensify

		App features	
		Xero Expenses	**Expensify**
Submit	Submit report via a scan (desktop)	✔	✔
	Submit report via a mobile app	✔	✔
	Allocate to billable time within Xero Projects	✔	
	Automatically create an expense via postal mail	✔	✔
	Auto-import from leading business travel service providers (eg, Uber)		✔
	Auto-import from leading business travel management providers		✔
	Automatically import expenses from company or personal cards		✔
	Extraction of vendor, date and currency	✔	✔
	Full line-item extraction*		✔
Manage	Create an expense account code within Xero	✔	✔
	Multi-user permissions	✔	✔
	Multi-currency conversion	✔	✔
	Expense approval directly within Xero	✔	✔
	Expense reporting	✔	✔
	Immediate job applicant reimbursement		✔
	Automatically archive an expense via a third party storage solution		✔
	Create approval rules to remove unnecessary delays and admin		✔
	Integration with Xero HQ		✔

Choice of profiled apps based on Xero App Store data on the volume of connections to Xero, supported by the strength and number of community reviews.

*Available at additional charge

HR, scheduling and payroll

Mastering human resources

Use the client scenarios below, and the corresponding recommendations and benefits, to ensure your client gets the most value out of using apps.

Client scenario 1

Client is spending a lot of time on leave and payroll management or it is error-prone.

Recommendation

Ensure your client is clear on how to manage payroll and leave within Xero Business Edition.

Benefits

- Payroll is accurate, compliant and easy for employees to understand.

- Leave is easy to approve and manage without viewing personal employee information.

- Both payroll and leave information are easy for employees and their managers to access.

Client scenario 2

Client is struggling to get a clear view of employee availability.

Recommendation

Investigate using a Xero-integrated payroll and HR app with Xero Business Edition. Refer to the payroll and HR comparison matrix to find the right app to help.

Benefits

- It's easy to understand where an employee's time is invested.

- It's simple to track staff availability and view rosters for all members of the team.

Client scenario 3

There is no easy way to communicate with staff or share company announcements and product information.

Recommendation

Investigate using a Xero-integrated HR app with Xero Business Edition. Refer to the payroll and HR comparison matrix to find the right app to help.

Benefits

- Key information can be shared and collaboration is encouraged by making staff communication easy and effective.

- Staff engagement improves.

Client scenario 4

Client has no clear view of staff performance, or no plans for training and development.

Recommendation

Investigate using a Xero-integrated HR app with Xero Business Edition. Refer to the payroll and HR comparison matrix to find the right app to help.

Benefits

- It's easy to manage employee performance and keep on top of training and development plans.

Payroll and HR: comparison of apps

	Xero Payroll	Deputy	Tanda
Type and availabilty	Payroll processing NZ, AU, UK, US (35+ states)	HR & scheduling NZ, AU, UK, US, CA, SA, SGP, HK	HR & scheduling NZ, AU, US
Onboarding and support	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Partner training available	✔ Online help centre ✔ Email support ✔ Video tutorials ✔ Partner training available	✔ Online help centre ✔ Online chat ✔ Partner training available
Overview	Easy-to-use payroll software and online accounting where all business information can be organised.	Full scheduling and human resource management solutions to fit the needs of retail businesses. Includes employee development tools.	Scheduling and human resource management solutions to fit the needs of most businesses.
More information	Find out more about Xero Payroll	Find out more about Deputy	Find out more about Tanda

		App features		
		Xero Payroll	**Deputy**	**Tanda**
Payroll & leave	Pay employees direct from Xero	✔		
	Customisable pay run	✔		
	Automatic tax and leave calculation	✔		
	Regional legislative compliance, including document upload	✔		
	Multi-employee approval	✔		
	Collaborate with payroll admin/consultant	✔		
	Employee app for viewing and submitting information	✔		
	Auto-sync with Xero Payroll (in regions where it's available)	N/A	✔	✔
Schedule	Integration with leading POS systems		✔	✔
	Onsite clock-In		✔	✔
	Timesheet management		✔	✔
	Availability dashboard		✔	✔
Connect & educate	Recruitment and onboarding workflow			✔
	SMS and email communication		✔	✔
	Internal social media platform		✔*	✔
	Single app to use for all HR and communication		✔	✔
	Document management (including e-sign)			✔
Nurture	Employee performance plans		✔*	
	Employee training plans		✔*	

Choice of profiled apps based on Xero App Store data on the volume of connections to Xero, supported by the strength and number of community reviews. *Available at additional charge

Junk & Disorderly | Xero customer

www.xero.com