



INDEAVOR

Protecting Employees While Ensuring Operational Efficiencies:

**5 Ways Automated Scheduling
Can Empower Facilities During &
Beyond COVID-19**

The New Normal

As we establish a sense of normalcy in our private and professional lives, industries that provide necessities like food and electricity are more responsible than ever for our basic comforts. Such essential industries have been faced with the unique challenge of continuing operations “as usual” while ensuring their employees remain safe. Yet staffing levels everywhere continue to be impacted by COVID-19, and many organizations have seen an increase in both operational volume and absences—a dichotomy that makes it difficult to keep up with demand.

Nearly every essential industry (manufacturing, food processing, energy and utilities, oil and gas, and public service) has faced an unprecedented flux in demand. Having reopening plans occurring in phases only add to the difficulty of forecasting labor needs, particularly for facilities operating in different states.

A quick adoption of new workforce management policies that focus on employee health and continuity plans have long been required. Now, it is time to ensure the longevity of these practices and give employees the tools to address these modern problems in a modern way—proactively, as opposed to responding to them.

A perhaps surprising tool to consider investing in is automated scheduling. Schedulers spend hours creating the schedule, only for an absence or unexpected incident to require last-minute intervention. With COVID-19 only exacerbating these disruptions, a more robust scheduling process that requires little to no manual effort is more pertinent than ever before.

This guide will explore the 5 ways an all-in-one automated employee scheduling and absence management tool can keep your operations smooth and your valuable employees safe.

01

Be Carefree by Going Touch-Free

People call out sick; there's an unexpected change in demand that requires adding more employees to the shift; a machine breaks down and an entire line needs to be de-crewed. Schedules are dynamic and ever-changing, yet the schedule is being communicated via a static process: paper.

From leave request forms that require signatures to schedules being passed around in the breakroom, there's a huge (and costly) reliance on paper. Studies show that upwards of \$14,000 of productivity is lost per worker each year as a result of difficulties in finding data needed to complete their job.¹ That \$5 ream of paper could cost up to \$155 in associated paper costs (storage, copying, printing, postage, disposal and recycling).²

According to a 2018 HSBC survey of more than 8,500 companies in 34 markets, 31% of companies globally plan to make sustainability-related changes to their supply chains over the next three years.

» **Cost efficiencies (84%) and improved revenues and financial performance (84%) are the main motivations.** «

Based on the hidden costs of paper, it makes sense that cost efficiencies (84%) and improved revenues and financial performance (84%) are the main motivations.³

It's not just the hidden costs of paper. To support sanitary working conditions, many facilities and back offices are going paperless (or as close to paperless as possible). A mobile-friendly automated scheduling process helps make paper schedules and leave request forms a thing of the past. There are many health-related benefits for your employees.

Reduce the amount of surfaces your employees need to touch – no more passing around paper schedules and having multiple people mark up the posted roster in the breakroom

Make it easier for employees to practice social distancing – with the ability to access schedules from their mobile devices—limit in-person meetings with managers

Utilize mobile-based capabilities – like overtime volunteering, job swapping, and leave requests—no more interactions with employees who would not otherwise be in contact with each other

02

Provide a Failsafe Plan for Abrupt Absences

In stark contrast with the EU, more than a quarter of US workers surveyed by public health agency NSF said they always go to work when they are ill.⁴

Perhaps the most cataclysmic change the pandemic has brought us is how much this mentality is changing. To increase the health and safety of their employees, front-line managers are involved in the unprecedented practice of creating the vacancies themselves by taking temperatures at the door.

This causes more “unplanned” scheduling scenarios than planned ones. To continue with the same operating plan for the shift or day, these unpredictable vacancies need

to be filled; if not, the operating plan and accompanying schedule need to be re-adjusted. If the operating plan needs to be completely readjusted because there is too much of a dent in the available labor pool (e.g. too many sick workers), schedulers are stuck reassigning 100+ employees in the next 15 minutes.

Paper and other manual processes do not help obtain coverage easily and quickly. Instead, it is the supervisor’s responsibility to call employees who are not scheduled for the day or distribute overtime to those who are already onsite. Automation makes it possible to quickly initiate the replacement of last-minute vacancies with a few clicks of a button.



03

Make Contact Tracing Simple

Pre-pandemic, there were certainly benefits of knowing where and when a certain employee was working, and for how long. Having an accurate payroll is the most obvious reason; you need to pay the right people for the right amount of time worked. With an automated scheduling solution, you can minimize payroll errors by ensuring that the most recent schedule—with shift/job swaps, call outs and coverage, etc.—is sent to the payroll department.

The other benefit is accountability. In the event of an onsite disturbance (e.g. accidents, poor sanitary measures, broken equipment), you want to know who was working. Between call offs, swapped shifts, unexpected absences, and job switches, the only way you can track these changes without an automated, centralized employee scheduling solution is for the floor supervisor to write down changes to the original schedule as they happen—with time markers for down-to-the-minute traceability.

» Identifying those who may have come into contact with an infected person has become a major responsibility. «

3 Benefits of Employee Traceability



Ensure an Accurate Payroll Process



Monitor Employee Performance & Production Fall-Off



Streamline Contact Tracing for Public Health

This realistically isn't happening. This leads us to a new and arguably more pressing reason to invest in a system that creates an audit log of where employees were and when: contact tracing.

Identifying those who may have come into contact with an infected person has become a major responsibility placed on employers, particularly HR.⁵ Some organizations are investing in one-point solutions like wearable proximity devices, which records when employees come within six feet of each other to generate a contact list in the event someone is positive.

With one optimized scheduling tool, however, organizations can solve all their employee traceability problems (while generating their schedules quickly and accurately). You can eliminate payroll errors while providing transparency into employee whereabouts. And if you do have an employee test positive, you will have a centralized record of who was working with them so you can responsibly notify everyone.

04

Leverage Schedule Restructuring to Limit Employee Interactions

To add an extra layer of protection, restructure the shifts to minimize the amount of people each employee comes in contact with. By using a system that allows for the reconfiguration of your scheduling algorithms, the schedules can be transformed to accommodate whatever changes work best for your needs.

» Stop Shifts from Mixing

- » Eliminate hold over and come in early overtime
- » Reduce meeting frequencies and pre-shift huddles

» Have less people work on a given day

- » Reduce number of changeovers per day (e.g. go from 8-hour schedules to 12)



05

Track Critical Metrics for Projection Reporting

Employers will need to have absence and qualification data to plan for the next “unprecedented event”. Scheduling automation software helps facilitate data acquisition and reporting, since real-time employee data gets hosted automatically as opposed to manually.

There are many variables to consider when comparing employee absence data against projected demands. Do you need to hire; is your operational demand decreasing, causing layoffs; will you be expecting a lot of overtime this/next month; is it necessary to work with a temp agency to fill gaps?

Qualification data illustrates the spread of skills your available employees have. It not only shows how many employees have the certifications to fill a vacant position, but it also shows how cross-qualified employees are. If you find that the majority of your employees can only fill in for one other position outside of their home job, you may not be able to withstand huge disruptions. Only now can you plan and cross-train your employees better.

Closing Thoughts

2020 has provided unforeseen challenges for organizations everywhere. In the face of sudden production disruptions spurred by changes in demand and high levels of layoffs and absences, every industry has had to change the way they work. Perhaps the most important lesson here is that organizations cannot thrive if employees are not taken care of.

Indeavor's goal is to make scheduling something that not only improves operations, but also improves employees' safety and satisfaction.

Resources

- ¹ [QLS Solutions Group](#)
- ² [Seattle.gov](#)
- ³ [Supply Chain Management Review](#)
- ⁴ [BBC News](#)
- ⁵ [Society for Human Resource Management](#)

About Indeavor

Indeavor's solution offers clients an end-to-end, cloud-based employee scheduling and absence management system. By integrating with your human capital management and enterprise resource planning systems, you can leverage a robust platform that provides you with real-time employee data. Relieve your supervisors of manual tasks and the constant mental fatigue brought upon by scheduling changes by automating the entire process, connecting the data to all of your existing corporate systems, and ensuring you always have the right qualified employee in each position.

Interested in partnering with us to ensure continuous operations at your facilities without sacrificing employee safety?

Go to indeavor.com and request a demo.

